

UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BELIEFS ABOUT  
DEMOCRACY AND PRACTICE: HOW THREE BEGINNING SOCIAL STUDIES  
TEACHERS ENACT PERSONAL PRACTICAL THEORIES

A dissertation submitted to the  
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by

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TEACHING, LEARNING,  
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UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BELIEFS ABOUT  
DEMOCRACY AND PRACTICE: HOW THREE BEGINNING SOCIAL STUDIES  
TEACHERS ENACT PERSONAL PRACTICAL THEORIES (332 pp.)

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This study addressed the gap between teacher beliefs studies that claim beliefs of teachers influence practice and the recommendations for democratic practice presented in much of the literature on democracy in education. A collective case study methodology was selected to explore the processes and ways in which three beginning teachers' beliefs about democracy in education were related to their teaching behaviors and decision-making. The question guiding this study was, in what ways are these beginning social studies teachers with democratic purposes influenced by their personal practical theories of democracy in the secondary classroom?

To address this question, three participants were selected for this study based on the criteria assumed by the questions. Data was collected from in-depth semi-structured interviews, post-observation debriefing interviews, observation field notes, and artifacts from teaching practice. The results of this research included three to five personal practical theories of democracy for each participant, a substantive theory of how these three teachers enacted their personal practical theories of democracy, and three major findings. These findings included: conceptualizing democratic living; mediating factors in the belief-practice dialectic; and purpose and practice in social studies. These results are presented in this dissertation in support of an argument for the need for social studies

teacher candidates to engage in a process of refining purpose by exploring beliefs, images, assumptions, and notions of what it means to teach social studies and the potentially problematic concepts in the field of social studies as they relate to practice, namely democracy.

**Key words:** teacher beliefs, democratic education, social studies, citizenship education, beginning teachers, secondary education, purpose in practice, practical inquiry

To Claire and Carter

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

### **Defining the Problem**

As a secondary social studies teacher of seven years, I often thought my purpose for teaching social studies was democratic in nature. Through my own journey of education and understanding I have come to believe that what I thought of as democratic was too often more in line with capitalist values and imperatives (Brosio, 1994; Price, 2008). This is not surprising since, in some ways, capitalist values overlap with democratic values (Ochoa-Becker, 2007). For example, Menand (2001) argued, echoing Dewey, that freedom and liberty are often understood as “less restriction”. Blending laissez-faire economic philosophy with the rights and values of democratic theory is easy when one is raised in a society that places value on both and often fails to clearly distinguish between the two.

In many ways, the skills necessary to work with other people are applicable to both our economic life and sociopolitical life. However, the underlying motives or values often differ. In our economic lives, a competitive capitalism suggests that the ability to work well with others is necessary so that we, as individuals, can succeed, be more productive, get promotions, or earn more money to get the things we want (Brosio, 1994). Parker (2003) recognized the need to work well with others in his argument for creating *publics* where listening across difference is an essential skill for deliberation. In our sociopolitical lives, democracy suggests that we should be able to work well with others for the benefit of the community, to effectively deliberate as a way to solve

problems and improve life for all, not just ourselves. As a result, the natures of our sociopolitical and economic lives are in conflict. The skill of working well with others underpinned by a capitalist imperative is focused on individual needs and wants while the democratic imperative in an effort to improve community is focused on the group. While the skill to work well with others is potentially useful in our economic and sociopolitical lives, the conflicting imperatives of competitive individualism and communal deliberation creates a tension in purpose. Parker (2003) identified similar tensions between the group and the individual, for example, the need for unity to achieve goals and the valuing of diversity. Given these tensions in and between our economic and sociopolitical lives, there is a need for social studies teachers, who often teach about democracy and capitalism, to negotiate such tensions in their own beliefs and purposes as they are related to practical activity in the classroom.

As a teacher, I frequently encouraged students to work independently, be responsible for themselves, to hold themselves accountable, and discussed how hard work in our “free” society could lead to a better life. After years of academic study, I have come to believe that I, like some of my colleagues I interviewed in a pilot study conducted in the spring of 2010, frequently confused democratic values with capitalist values. This is not to suggest that the learning outcomes my colleagues and I worked toward were “wrong” or “bad” as much as they were un-interrogated. I had not explored these ideas prior to graduate school and certainly had not considered the consequences of my teaching for society beyond my students’ economic lives.

There was an overlap between what I thought of as democratic beliefs and economic imperatives that underpinned much of what I did in the classroom. When students asked why they had to work in groups, I explained that when they had a job they would have to be able to work in a group. While I still believe this was a correct claim, I have come to new understandings of my own purpose for teaching social studies. I have clarified my views in terms of the values, skills, dispositions, and knowledge necessary for democratic living and how as well as why I might teach more effectively toward democratic citizenship. My own purpose for teaching social studies is focused on teaching for democratic living in ways that take into account the development of critical, communal, and personal perspectives that are necessary for such a life.

As a researcher, I may have served as a teacher to inform, socialize, or liberate; an advocate or arguer for the participants or a cause; an evaluator of a program, person, or agency; a biographer to describe a person in depth; and an interpreter to substantiate or recognize new meaning (Stake, 1995). Given the potential for democracy and related values and practices to be conceptualized differently, it was necessary during the research process to discuss the ways each participant was characterizing the relationship between their beliefs about democracy and their teaching practice. One of my roles, then, was to recognize meaning and attempt to solicit clear explanations of what the participants meant by their use of words and concepts that may be interpreted differently. For example, concepts like freedom, rights, equality, liberty, choice, and decision-making and the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for each were typically discussed as a part of our conversations.

In this collective case study I have considered these roles of the researcher as possible ways I, through a position of power, may have influenced the participant, context, and report during the collection of data, analysis of data, and writing of the final report. Maxwell (2005) warned of the importance of being aware of your own goals as they will influence and drive the research in some way. My own beliefs about democracy as related to social studies purposes include a communal, personal, and critical perspectives of democratic living as a part of citizenship education. These personal views regarding the purpose of teaching and learning social studies inevitably influenced the research

### **Understanding Purpose in Social Studies**

Purpose matters in social studies (Hullfish & Smith, 1961; Thornton, 2006), and that purpose, according to scholars, is education for citizenship, for living in a democratic society (Barton & Levstik, 2010; Dewey, 1916/2009; Ediger, 1995; Hahn, 2001; Houser, 2005; Parker, 2003; Pryor, 2003). If the purpose of social studies education remains teaching for citizenship in a democratic society (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2002) and the beliefs of teachers influence their decisions (Korthagen, 2004), then social studies teachers' beliefs regarding democracy and its enactment in the classroom are of particular importance in researching teaching and learning in the field of social studies education. In addition, a focus on specific types of beliefs, like beliefs about democracy, can make the research more feasible and useful in education through increased accessibility and relevant focus. The real value in researching teacher beliefs is in providing insights into the relationships between beliefs and practice (Pajares, 1992).

For example, existing research on democratic education in the United States is limited in its exploration of what happens inside classrooms when teaching and learning of democracy occurs in practice (Kahne, Rodriguez, Smith, & Thiede, 2000; Walsh, 2008).

Scholarly work on democracy and social studies education connects the concept of democracy, as an aim of social studies, with citizenship education (see Boyle-Baise, 2003; Hursh & Ross, 2000; Kincheloe, 2001; Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Parker, 2003; Pearl & Pryor, 2005). This connection is often made through scholarship characterized as theoretical or conceptual work, and is primarily focused on frameworks for, or descriptions of, how to teach or be more democratic in teaching for democratic ends (see Dewey, 1916/2009; Gutmann, 1999; Kincheloe, 2001; Parker, 2003). As described in Chapter II, democratic ends in social studies education may vary, but broadly they include the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are useful for effective citizenship, and necessary for life in a democratic society (NCSS, 2001). Dewey (1916/2009) described living in a democratic society as a mode of “associated living and conjoined communicated experience” (p. 84). Teaching for democratic living then includes considering and actively teaching for the development of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are necessary for democratic living.

Teaching for democratic living is particularly relevant for social studies teachers, who are teaching content that often includes ideas and discussion regarding matters of democracy in society. Do social studies teachers only teach about democracy? Or, do they in some ways teach for democratic living? And, what is the difference? Social studies teachers’ beliefs about democracy, and the ways they think those beliefs are

related to their practice become important to these questions. In social studies little attention has been paid to teachers' backgrounds and beliefs as they influence the teaching of social studies (Adler & Confer, 1998; Johnston, 1990). Furthermore, Wade (2001) suggested that in scholarly work on democratic education personal accounts of what teachers are doing in classrooms are less common than theoretical assertions but often more powerful. Given the claims made by scholars such as Wade (2001) and Adler and Confer (1998), the field of social studies lacks research on teachers' beliefs about pedagogy and content. Moreover, there exists a need for research seeking to understand the specific ways in which those beliefs are related to practice. The study presented in this dissertation sought to address the noticeable research gap in the field of social studies education.

### **The Purpose Statement and Design Overview**

The purpose of this interpretive research was to better understand the ways beginning social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy were related to their practical experiences. This was accomplished in part by asking three beginning teachers who agreed to participate to develop personal practical theories (Cornett, 1987, 1990) of democracy and reflect on the ways their experiences might be related to their theories. With this in mind, the research was designed as a collective case study with three participants in which each participant was a case, bound and connected by the overarching research question.

According to Cornett (1987, 1990), personal practical theories refer to the teachers' beliefs about teaching or learning and the way(s) in which the teacher thinks

those beliefs will or should be a part of, or influence, their practice. Cornett (1987, 1990) recognized personal practical theories could include beliefs about content. Therefore, for this research, I have adapted Cornett's notion of personal practical theories to focus on the social studies concept of *democracy* that is often a part of social studies content. These personal practical theories of democracy, were constructed by the participants with my facilitation, and were generally defined as the teachers' personal beliefs about democracy that the teacher also thought could and should be enacted or emergent through teaching practice. The participants' personal practical theories of democracy were used as a way for the teachers to begin to articulate their beliefs about democracy and the relationship(s) of those beliefs to practice. Working within this structure made the teachers' beliefs more accessible and the research more feasible.

### **The Research Questions**

The gap in the social studies literature between democratic education and what teachers believe about the concept of democracy related to the practice of teaching, implies a need for research that addresses what social studies teachers believe about democracy and the ways those beliefs are related to their teaching practice. Therefore, the following questions guided the design and research process of this study:

*Overarching question:* In what ways are these beginning social studies teachers' personal practical theories of democracy in teaching related to their practice in the secondary classroom?

*Sub-questions:*

1. What do these social studies teachers' identify as beliefs about democracy?



2. Where do the participants believe their beliefs in democracy come from?
3. Which beliefs in, or characteristics of, democracy do these participants think are or should be a part of teaching social studies?
4. How do these social studies teachers enact beliefs about democracy as personal practical theories of teaching?

### **Overview of Methods**

To investigate these research questions, I relied on multiple cases bound by the same questions with instrumental purposes. More specifically, this research study was a collective case study as frame by Stake (1995). For each of the three participants, data was collected through two in-depth interviews, at least three post-observation debriefing sessions, at least nine observations, and the collection of artifacts from each teacher's practice including lesson plans, instruction sheets, projects, and other resources they developed and used with students. A constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) approach to analysis was used to gain a deeper understanding of the thinking and process these three teachers used when they enacted and reflected on personal practical theories and their relationship to practice. These methods are discussed at greater length in Chapter III of this dissertation.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Democracy:** The word democracy is used throughout this research. The participants and researcher use democracy in varying ways. For example, to describe or refer to the systems, institutions, and processes that characterize a society organized to allow individual members to participate in, and maintain an expectation of, certain ways

of living that include protecting rights and promoting certain values and ideals.

Throughout the interviews and post-observation debriefing the participants in this research were provided space to consider and define democracy and the rights, values, ideals, and other expectations of the people, institutions, and structures in a democratic society.

**Democratic living:** Dewey (1916/2009) suggested democracy was a mode of “associated living in a conjoined experience” (p. 84). When using the phrase democratic living I intend it to reference, not a political system, but a way of living by citizens of a society that works to change and hopefully improve the systems, institutions, structures, and lives of the people in that society. This way of life is constituted through three perspectives including critical, communal, and personal, which are explained in more depth in later sections. Individuals and groups, when acting democratically are thinking and behaving in ways that influence these systems, institutions, structures, and others for the purpose of making communities, the nation, or the world a place with a deeper democracy (Green, 1999).

**Beliefs:** Beliefs are synonymous with thought (Dewey, 1998/1933). Beliefs are in a reciprocal relationship with experience. An understanding of what it means to teach is the product of a teacher’s personal and professional experiences as they are related to beliefs, perceptions of the world, and other factors. This assumes personal practical knowledge is imbued with experience that makes up a person’s being, or identity (Clandinin, 1985). Beliefs, though, are often considered irrational thoughts. But when explored through a process of identifying and analyzing personal practical theories the

reflective nature of the activity offers teachers the opportunity to rationally isolate an area of practice open for improvement (Chant, 2009).

In educational discourse “beliefs” tend to be referred to using a number of synonyms: attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideologies, and perceptions to name a few (Pajares, 1992). In this study, beliefs were defined as personal philosophies of teaching that are “theoretical expressions of practical meaning” and as with theoretical statements, which express theoretical meaning, personal theoretical statements were “torn from the reality” to which they referred and only partially and selectively accounted for that reality (Connelly & Clandinin, 1982, p. 17).

**Personal Practical Theories:** Cornett (1987, 1990) drew heavily on the practical theories work of Connelly and Clandinin (1984) and Clandinin (1985) for his dissertation. Cornett’s work inquired into the influence of personal practical theories on the instructional decisions of a social studies teacher. In doing so he worked with the teacher to develop her personal practical theories of teaching. Here I use personal practical theories of democracy in much the same way as Cornett. I intend personal practical theories of democracy to refer to the teachers’ beliefs about democracy and the way(s) in which they think those beliefs will or should be a part of, or influence their practice. These beliefs are not necessarily ‘good’ or ‘bad’ ideas about teaching or democracy in practice. The teachers’ beliefs about democracy did and do not have to be something I agree with or something I believe to be democratic.

**Novice or Beginning Social Studies Teacher:** For the purposes of this study, I am defining a novice or beginning teacher as one who has been employed part-time or full-time to teach social studies at a school for three years or less.

**Secondary School or Secondary Public School:** For this study participant criteria allowed for social studies teachers who were licensed by the State of Ohio. State licensure requirements allow certified teachers to teach 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade social studies. Therefore, the *secondary school* or *secondary public school* will be a phrase used to describe any public school that teaches 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students. All three participants in this study were licensed to teach in the 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms, but all taught in high school settings with 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, or 11<sup>th</sup> grade students.

### Summary

This study is organized around the problem of conceptualizing democracy as a part of content and pedagogy in social studies secondary education. Democracy, as a concept, includes a range of values and ideals that are subject to a variety of interpretations and understandings. In social studies education, content frequently includes topics relevant to democracy and its tenants. When teaching American or World History, like Amber and Katharine<sup>1</sup> in this study, democracy may often discussed in terms of its emergence, growth, and expansion by including units of learning that included The Enlightenment, French Revolution, Westward Expansion, World War II,

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<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the first interview, all three participants selected pseudonyms to protect their privacy and anonymity. Those pseudonyms were “Amber”, “Katharine”, and “Mitch”.

and the Cold War. When teaching American Government courses, teachers like Mitch, another participant in this study, often spend the entire year discussing the structural and institutional aspects of American democratic society including the branches of government, the bureaucracy, and the electoral process at the state and national levels of government. Other disciplines in social studies like economics, geography, psychology, and sociology include similar but sometimes less explicit connections to democratic ideas as they explore human interaction.

Guided by the research questions this study accepted a view of human interaction that considered critical, communal, and personal aspects of life in American democratic society. These aspects of democratic life were used as a framework for understanding Amber's, Katharine's, and Mitch's beliefs about democracy and democratic living.

The argument for this research lies in the need for rich descriptions of the ways in which social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy and life in a democracy are related to their teaching practice. A gap exists in scholarly work on teacher beliefs and democracy in social studies. Teacher beliefs studies explore teachers beliefs about teaching but frequently fall short of offering rich descriptions of specific ways beliefs influence and are influenced by practice in the classroom (Adler & Confer, 1998). Scholarship on democracy in social studies has often been conceptual or theoretical and typically argues for what teachers should be doing (Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Parker, 2003), consequently lacking a focus on what teachers are thinking and the decisions they make in practice.

The wealth of theoretical and conceptual scholarship on democracy in education would benefit from scholarly work that offers a deeper understanding of the ways social studies teachers think about potentially problematic concepts and purposes, as they are related to their decision-making, planning, behavior in the classroom, and reflective thinking. One of those potentially problematic concepts is democracy. A deeper understanding of relationship between teachers' beliefs about democracy and their teaching practice, will add to the collective body of work on teaching for democratic citizenship in social studies. As a result of this research, I argue there is a need for social studies teacher candidates to explore their beliefs about social studies concepts and purposes, in particular democracy, through an ongoing process of refinement.

In Chapter I, I have provided the rationale for this study, statement of purpose, and a brief overview of the research design. In Chapter II, I present a review of relevant literature. The literature selected in support of this research was theoretical, conceptual, and empirical work in the fields of democracy in social studies education, teacher beliefs studies, and personal practical theories. In particular, literature was included when it related to one or more of these three fields and addressed issues with, needs of, or the socialization process for beginning teachers. The review of this literature led to the research questions and a framework for understanding beliefs about democracy as they may be related to critical, communal, and/or personal perspectives on democracy in social studies education.

In Chapter III, the methodology is presented. This chapter includes the research questions related to the ways the three beginning social studies teachers' beliefs about

democracy were related to their teaching practice. Also, in the third chapter the theoretical framework of a pragmatic philosophy that works to deepen democracy (Green, 1999, 2008) is developed as it informed research design and process. This study was designed as interpretive research using collective case study (Stake, 1995). I relied on interviews as primary data to be analyzed and observations and artifacts as secondary data to add context. Finally, the data analysis process relied on constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) and included systematic inductive coding, memoing, member checking, and peer review.

In Chapter IV, the context of the research and each participant are offered to build the cases and help the reader develop a deeper understanding of each teacher in the study. In addition, the fourth chapter offers a rich description of the development of each teacher's personal practical theories of democracy in teaching. The context and personal practical theories are presented together as they help to paint a clear picture of each participant and who they are as a social studies teacher and what they believe about democracy in their contexts. A deeper understanding of context and the development of the participants' theories are necessary for contextualizing the findings and appreciating the relevance of the argument supported by these findings.

In Chapter V, the findings of the research are presented. Included are three major findings and a substantive theory of the three teachers' enactment of personal practical theories of democracy in teaching. The first finding, *conceptualizing democratic living in practice*, includes the specific values and related actions and intended learning outcomes for students. The second finding, *mediating the belief-practice dialectic*, emerged in

recognition of the complex relationship between beliefs about democracy and the participants' teaching practice. The third finding, *pedagogy and purpose in social studies*, was a result of the ways the participants' reasons for teaching and in particular reasons for teaching social studies emerged within the context of thinking about the concept of democracy.

In the final chapter, Chapter VI, the findings from this research are discussed in the context of relevant scholarly work. This includes scholarship related to beliefs about democracy, democracy in education, the relationship between teacher beliefs and practice, and the pressures and struggles of beginning teacher socialization. In Chapter VI I also offer the implications of the findings for social studies teacher education including recommendations for programs, practice, and future research.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This research included three areas of study including democracy in social studies education, teacher education with a focus on beginning teachers, and teacher beliefs with a focus on personal practical theories. These areas were brought together in the interest of understanding purposes and practices in social studies education. Here purposes and practices included the relationship between beginning social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy and their practice. The guiding question, informed by a review of literature related to these areas of study, was: In what ways are these beginning social studies teachers' personal practical theories of democracy in teaching related to their practice in the secondary classroom? Theoretical, conceptual, and empirical scholarship was selected based on its relevance to democracy in social studies education, beginning teachers and teacher beliefs, and personal practical theories.

As part of developing an argument for the need for this research, what follows are sections devoted to discussing scholarship on democracy in social studies education, beginning teachers and teacher beliefs, and personal practical theories. These three areas of study are related to the broader fields of teacher cognition and teacher education. This chapter concludes by identifying the relationship of these three areas of study to the overarching research question. The overarching question guided this study of beginning teachers' beliefs about democracy and the ways in which those beliefs, in the form of personal practical theories, were related to their classroom teaching.

### **Democracy and Social Studies Education**

My assumptions about democracy in social studies education are: (a) because of the value of plurality in social studies (Ross & Marker, 2005; Stanly, 2005) democracy is largely *indefinable* but has characteristics and should be defined democratically and locally, through deliberation, and (b) as a result of definitional obstacles in the field, teachers are often left to their own definitions, beliefs, and assumptions regarding democracy and its place in social studies education. Similarly, Ochoa-Becker (2007) recognized that capitalist values (individualism, unregulated living, hard work, upward mobility) often overlap with or come into conflict with democratic values (freedom, equality, voice). Thus, a democratic teaching practice can be difficult to conceptualize despite efforts by top scholars (Dewey, 1916/2009; Greene, 1988, 1995; Gutmann, 1999; Hess, 2009; Lund & Carr, 2008; Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Parker, 2003). Some attempts at conceptualizing a democratic practice have even been made outside of the field of education (see Dahl, 1998; Zinn & Macado, 2005).

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) (2008) adopted a purpose statement for building effective citizens that included powerful social studies would be integrative, meaningful, value-based, challenging, and active. In addition, NCSS (2002) stated that a primary goal of public education is to prepare students to be engaged and effective citizens. The National Council for the Social Studies has defined an effective citizen as one who has the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to assume the “office of citizen” in America’s democratic republic. But what are the forms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes asked of citizens? The professional organization for teachers of

social studies goes on to offer seemingly more specific characteristics of what an effective citizenship education includes. However, NCSS frequently used words and phrases in their position statements (NCSS, 2002, 2008) like “democratic values” and “collaborate effectively” that are defined differently depending on person, place, culture, and community. What is more widely accepted is that purpose matters in social studies (Hawley, 2010; Hullfish & Smith, 1961; Thornton, 2006), and generally speaking scholars suggest the purpose of social studies education is citizenship, for living in a democratic society (Barton & Levstik, 2010; Dewey, 1916/2009; Ediger, 1995; Hahn, 2001; Houser, 2005; Parker, 2003; Pryor, 2003). This is one of the reasons I sought to understand beginning social studies teachers’ beliefs about democracy and the ways in which they think those beliefs about democracy are related to their teaching practice.

### **Purpose of Social Studies**

Because social studies curriculum tends to place the nation state at the center of the content, citizenship education for living in that nation state is a natural fit (Oliner, 1983; Shaver, 1981). The broad notion of *citizenship education*, then, is the purpose of social studies. But why? If the field refuses to clearly define the purpose, why bother suggesting there is one? What follows is a discussion in response to these questions where it is argued that purpose does matter, so the field maintains there is a purpose, but pluralism is essential to democracy so variations on the definitions of that purpose must be allowed to exist. This paradoxical dilemma is discussed and followed by an overview of democracy and citizenship education as the purpose of social studies.

**Purpose matters.** In social studies education, purpose matters (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Hawley, 2010; Hullfish & Smith, 1961; Thornton, 2006). Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the purpose of social studies as the field was conceived was to develop patriotism through the teaching of history and a few other subjects (Hunt & Metcalf, 1968). Since the start of the Cold War, however, social studies' aims have been widely recognized as citizenship education for participation in a democratic society. Except for a broad sense of citizenship education, the purpose of social studies continues to be debated (Ross & Marker, 2005). Such broadness has allowed social studies' purposes to be co-opted at times and often characterized by misguided, misdirected, or ill-conceived goals such as anti-communist values and teaching constructs (Hepburn, 1990). In terms of a pedagogy for teaching citizenship, or the process and content choices teachers make with the purpose of citizenship education in mind, three traditions have emerged including: citizenship transmission, social science, and reflective inquiry (Barr, Barth, & Shermis, 1977). Other scholars, like Nelson (2001), have suggested that the preservation of the democratic society is a common concern in the social studies field. If this is central to teaching and learning in social studies, then democracy and citizenship are through virtue of the discourse a partial, if not the central, goal of social studies education.

**Pluralism.** Vinson (1998) found that teachers generally identify more strongly with reflective inquiry and personal development as approaches to teaching social studies. In addition, Vinson (1998) found that teachers tend not to operate from one tradition (see Barr, Barth, & Shermis, 1977) all the time, although they may favor one. This suggests that despite a general agreement there is room within the field to come

from different perspectives and rely on different approaches to teach for democratic citizenship. Such pluralism has come to be valued in social studies education. Some scholars have argued pluralism is not simply the acceptance of different ideas and approaches but a value within the field of social studies, a value of plurality (Ross & Marker, 2005; Stanly, 2005).

Normalizing practices in the social studies need interrogated to prevent the legitimization of the dominant way of thinking and acting (Cary, 2001). Students, and teachers, need to learn the independent thinking required by democracy, to avoid blind obedience to the systems, structures, institutions, and people who hold power. Imposing a single set or pattern of beliefs and values diminishes pluralism in society and works to prevent the independent thinking necessary to democratic living (Griffin, 1940). Valuing pluralism then is essential to independent thinking. Without pluralism and independent thinking, citizens would fail to create the kinds of public spaces and communities that lead to change (Parker, 2003). Moreover, individuals would be ignorantly going about their daily routines in unreasoned and uncritical ways, avoiding the discussions and deliberations necessary to sustaining and remaking, or deepening democracy (Green, 1999; Parker, 2003; Stanly, 2005).

**Democracy and citizenship education.** Citizenship education is a process of democratic transformation through critical thinking, decision-making, and social action (Dilworth, 2003). These three central points suggest a move beyond the teaching of facts in social studies (Griffin, 1942/1992; Kincheloe, 2001) toward problematizing content that is often unproblematic and frequently viewed as value-free, or accepted without

question (Giroux, 1988). Teaching for democratic citizenship then, involves socialization and counter-socialization (Ochoa-Becker, 2007). In other words, to teach to maintain and reconstruct society at the same time is necessary (Stanley, 2005). Citizenship, in this sense, should be viewed in the historical, social, cultural, political, and economic contexts that influence its constantly shifting and dynamic definitions (Vinson, 2001). Schooling is an important part of this learning about (Hepburn, 1990) and interpreting the role of citizen, in terms of students considering what it means to be a citizen and developing the agency necessary for participation in ways that support the democratic aims of social studies education (Preston-Grimes, 2007).

Democracy relies on a conscious social reproduction through education.

Therefore, as a democratic professional, the teacher is expected to uphold the principle of non-repression by cultivating a capacity for democratic deliberation (Gutmann, 1999). Through this guiding principle of non-repression teachers can involve both socialization and counter-socialization making learning social studies, learning citizenship skills, knowledge, and dispositions, a process of reasoned commitment to democratic principles with emphasis on freedom, equity, and self-governance (Ochoa-Becker, 1999, 2007; Pryor, 2003).

According to the literature, then, some essential aspects of teaching social studies should include social justice (Wade, 2001), active participation for change (Wade, 2001; Wile, 2000), empowering individuals through deliberation, and encouraging social and political discussion (Hess, 2009; Parker, 2003; Wile, 2000) in ways that foster independent thinking and self-directed learning (Pryor, 2003) and are emancipatory in

nature (Freire, 1970/2009; Giroux, 2001). This variety of *essential* aspects of citizenship suggests that a range of beliefs about democracy and citizenship exist among scholars and teachers (Barton & Levsitk, 2010; Chin & Barber, 2010). It becomes important then to call for research that seeks to understand those beliefs and the ways in which they may be related to teachers' practice in social studies education.

### **Conceptualizing Democracy**

There is a body of conceptual and theoretical work on democracy in education (see Dewey, 1916/2009, 1927; Greene, 1988; Griffin, 1940, 1942/1992; Gutmann, 1999). However, little empirical research exists on what teachers believe about democracy or what happens in the classroom with regard to democratic education. There is a need for a push to leap from principles to action, from understanding to active engagement with the ideas in practice (Ross, 2001). The following is an account of how a limited understanding of teachers' practice with regard to democratic education, has led to democracy being a messy concept, conflict and tension in schools, and my own notion of democratic living.

**Democracy is messy.** In a democracy it is necessary to have student-citizens who learn to work toward increasing freedoms but do so with an understanding of what it means to be free (Hullfish & Smith, 1961). Freedom is one example of how notions of specific democratic values can be understood differently (Greene, 1988; Menand, 2001). On occasion, these notions of democratic values may be understood in economic terms rather than social-political terms. For example, freedom might be viewed by many as unrestricted living (Claubach, 2008; Morrison, 2008) or even unrestricted economic

living and choices, like the choice in a job, choices as a consumer, or choice to live in the most affluent suburb (Griffin, 1940).

Democracy as a concept is culturally constructed and sensitive, to some degree, to the contexts and situations in which it has been produced. This means a variety of notions will exist and typically allows for only general characteristics to be agreed upon. Pluralism and variety in thinking highlights the need for clearer democratic values and simultaneously reflects the need to allow different voices and interpretations of what constitutes democracy. More importantly, this suggests that democracy, while not yet realized (Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Rozycki, 2008), may never be perfect. Democracy is a way of living that needs attended to and worked toward. Democracy is about building a better society through community while considering values and voices of those in minority positions. With this in mind, it becomes important to consider the ways in which individuals, as members of dominant or minority groups, understand democracy and democratic values.

What individuals believe about democracy and democratic society is a result of the time, place, and communities in which they were raised and educated. Johnson (2006) recognized the ways the system, in particular capitalism, helped to create, support, and perpetuate privilege by widening the gaps between the wealthy and the poor, the powerful and those without power, and constructing social categories so inherent in American life they are recognized by all. The benefits of this capitalist system, and its privilege, are accepted by individuals and bestowed on individuals by other people who recognize them as members of a group that has privilege (Johnson, 2006).



For example, when considering Johnson's (2006) work regarding privilege, it is possible to recognize that someone raised with all of the social, political, and economic privileges and benefits of an upper-middle class, white, protestant male might be more satisfied with the ways society works. Such a person would value the systems that have worked to his benefit over the years, giving him a decent opportunity to secure a job and his life. He does not want or need change because he has everything he needs and with hard work believes he can get everything he wants. However, not everyone in society has this luxury or these privileges. The problem is not as much with his narrow view of living in a democratic society that has benefited him, as it is with his unawareness and ignorance toward the lives and oppression of others.

This hypothetical man believes that hard work can lead to a good life but fails to recognize that this only worked for him when he was given opportunities and in times of failure, the benefit of the doubt. He has only achieved because he is in a system that encourages and allows his achievement; the system therefore reinforces his beliefs that hard work and economic freedom can lead to a better life, which means better things, through increased wealth. This perception highlights one possible understanding of freedom in democracy as economic freedom, or freedom of economic choices and combines with a value of hard work that ignores the plight of others in a way that might suggest others are simply not working hard enough. Such a view of the world may be left unchallenged, or even encouraged, if teachers approach teaching social studies in ways that fail to challenge it. This perspective should be challenged to promote and sustain democratic living by pushing purposes for teaching social studies beyond preparation for

economic life and into preparation for social and political aspects of life in a democratic society.

**Conflict and tension.** If democratic society is something citizens simultaneously try to maintain and reconstruct (Stanley, 2005) there are bound to be tensions. Pressure to negotiate the maintenance of democracy while at the same time working to change it often leads to conflict and tension. One example of this is the tension between unity and diversity (Adler & Confer, 1998; Dewey, 1927; Green, 1999; Greene, 1995; Griffin, 1940; Parker, 1997a, 1997b, 2003; Rozycki, 2008; Walsh, 2008). This unity/diversity tension manifests in different ways throughout the literature. Typically, it is conceived as a tension between valuing diversity, difference, and the individual positioned against valuing the community, society as a whole, or unity among citizens. This is important because failure to unify as a citizenry limits the power and potential for change that rests within democratically oriented groups. What good is recognizing a need for change if citizens cannot build support for their cause? Shinew (2001) looked to a feminist approach to citizenship education as a way to challenge binaries such as the unity/diversity tension. By interrogating the authority of the existing curriculum, teachers and students can push beyond narrow definitions and limiting binaries to a better understanding of how to live in a society that needs both diversity and unity.

In addition to the unity/diversity tension, a number of scholars recognized economic tensions between capitalism, its values, and democracy, and its values (Brosio, 1994; Giroux, 2001; Giroux & McLaren, 1994; Hunt & Metcalf, 1968; Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Walsh, 2008). Walsh (2008), in a review of empirical and theoretical work on

democratic education as a social practice, found that student discourse showed tensions. Students' tensions resulted from teachers with democratic purposes using language that undermines democratic ends by sustaining liberal and capitalist hegemonic values. It is possible, then, that teachers might think about, and believe in, democratic education while continuing to teach in ways that undermine democratic ends and values in favor of economic and capitalist values. One example, offered by Beyer (1996b), suggested that rationalization and routinization of life in schools reinforces the status quo and works to support "dominant cultural conventions and institutional norms" (p. 92). Routines are designed to maintain order and efficiency, an outgrowth of industrial economic life and the need for productive workers in an orderly environment. If reconstructing society (Stanley, 2005) to make it better is supposed to be a part of maintaining democratic society, this becomes difficult in practice under the systems and routines established by schools. The over-routinization of schools may in turn limit the potential for teachers to foster the development of the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for citizenship education.

**My notion of democratic living.** Democratic living is a "mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (Dewey, 1916/2009, p. 73). This is the notion of democracy I wish to promote, but what does it mean? Beyer (1996a) highlighted this idea as he focused on community and acting for the common good, while integrating into the world rather than adapting to it through reflection on choices (personal), criticism of dominant cultural ways (critical), and consideration of the common good (communal). His view embodied the three perspectives on democracy

found in the literature including the personal, the critical, and the communal, which are discussed at greater length in coming sections of this chapter. A number of scholars have considered and applied Dewey's broad view of democratic living in their work (see Carr, 2007; Green, 1999, 2008; Greene, 1988; Griffin, 1942/1992; Gutmann, 1999; Hess, 2009; Menand, 2001; Parker, 2003).

Democratic living involves community, personal reflection, and critical questioning toward a deepening of democracy. Dewey (1927) suggested the cure for problems in democracy is more democracy. By *deepening democracy*, I mean being more democratic, more democratic living, more community action, more deliberation, more reflection, more critical questioning and action for change. Communal, critical, and personal perspectives, however, are not all necessary all the time, or to the same degree.

All three perspectives are necessary in some way at different points in time, for different situations, but all have the end goal of change for deepening democracy (Green, 1999). For example, it is necessary to build community for the purpose of change. To identify what needs changed and the ways it might be changed requires a critical perspective of society and the systems, structures, and institutions that need changed (critical). Also, the need for change is found in oppression and anti-democratic situations and circumstances through a critical view of society. The influence of a group on changing society is often greater than the influence of an individual. This requires discussion, deliberation, and considering different points of view (communal). To engage in community in this way it becomes necessary to be both reflective and open minded (Dewey, 1933/1998) as well as view of one's self as an actor in history, or agent

(personal). What follows is a discussion of how these perspectives emerge in the literature on democracy in social studies education, which provides a framework for understanding teachers' beliefs about democracy in their teaching practice.

### **Three Perspectives as a Framework for Understanding Beliefs About Democracy**

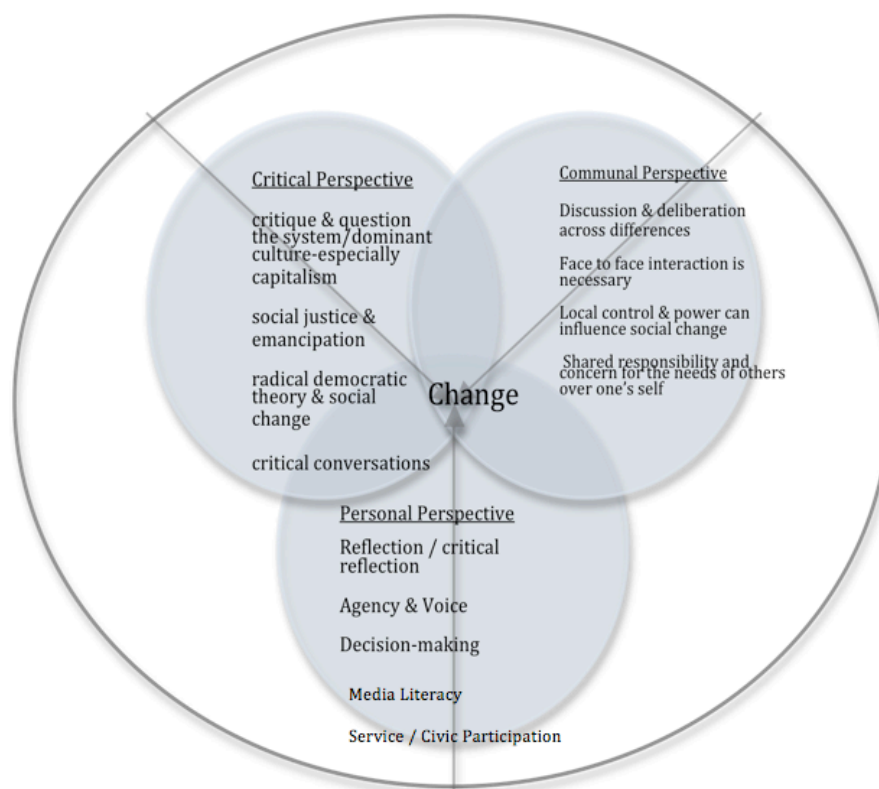
Vinson (2001) recognized the need for a democratic citizenship that is connected in, and includes, multiple disciplines, anti-oppressive, global, cross-cultural, and community-based. Similarly, Chance (1993) argued for a democratic citizenship that consisted of encouraging equality, fraternity, and freedom. Also, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) argued for three kinds of citizens, justice oriented, participatory, and personally responsible.

The above examples are views of democratic citizenship that fit neatly within the conceptual framework, which consists of three perspectives pervasive throughout existing literature. The first perspective is the critical including but not limited to what Vinson suggested is the anti-oppressive discipline, Chance called equality, and Westheimer and Kahne identified as the justice oriented citizen. The second perspective is communal including but not limited to what Vinson calls global and community-based disciplines, Chance referred to as fraternity, and Westheimer and Kahne called the participatory citizen. The final perspective is the personal including but not limited to what Vinson called cross-cultural discipline, Chance identified as freedom, and Westheimer and Kahne referred to as the personally responsible citizen.

All of these notions, while open to some interpretation, are described within the context of a democratic citizenship that leads individuals to consider the ways they make

sense of society by focusing efforts: (a) critically (Green, 2008) on the ways in which oppression occurs limiting equality and working against that oppression; (b) communally, or collaboratively (Green, 2008), on the needs of others and developing the skills and dispositions necessary to meaningfully engage; and (c) personally, or reflectively (Green, 2008), on understanding democratic freedom and the influence of culture by considering their own culture and the culture of others. The interplay of these three perspectives is illustrated in Figure 1. The sections that follow discuss each of the three perspectives in order to delineate them from the literature and build a framework for understanding teachers' beliefs about democracy in social studies education.

**Critical.** The dominant discourses of civic republicanism and liberal citizenship overshadow the critical discourses of reconstructionism and social justice (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). Not be surprising then schools do more toward cultural and economic reproduction and to deskill teachers through over routinization and commercial curriculum materials than to encourage or facilitate democratic education (Beyer, 1996a). As a teacher, I have experienced this with a corporately sponsored economic curriculum that touted capitalist values as the only 'good' values and denounced alternatives or hybrid solutions, while ignoring the problems in an economic system that was proven to be oppressive and limiting to large groups of people. Such an approach to curricula highlights the need for a critical perspective in social studies (see Kincheloe, 2001; Wade, 2001). A critical lens works against the hegemony of society, against economic oppression, and toward deepening of democracy through social change and transformative and emancipatory learning (Apple, 2000; Banks, 1990; Orlowski, 2009).



*Figure 1.* Three perspectives of democratic practice for social change: A model of the framework for understanding social studies teachers' beliefs and personal theories about democracy in social studies education.

Moreover, a critical stance encourages students, and teachers alike, to question the system and recognize and explore what is necessary to create a more democratic society (Jenlink & Jenlink, 2008).

Critical perspectives on teaching (Giroux, 2001; Giroux & McLaren, 1994; Kincheloe, 2008; Segall, 2002) and students' learning are meant to address social problems through critical conversations (Howard, 2001) leading ultimately to social

change. The approaches found within a critical framework work against the views and norms of the dominant culture as what Giroux (2001) called theories of resistance. Some of these approaches included critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1988; Kincheloe, 2008) and a pedagogy of representation (Giroux & McLaren, 1994) where the end is emancipation or liberation through learning (Ayers, 1998; Friere, 1970/2009; Greene, 1995; West, 1989).

But emancipation from what? In terms of the influence of the dominant culture, emancipation from limited or controlled thought, from economic, or capitalist imperatives that are the greatest threat to democracy and education (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Brosio, 1994; Saltman, 2000; Saul, 1995). These authors advocated for radical change (Brosio, 1994; Counts, 1932) through teaching democracy in the schools (Counts, 1939). The approach takes a social justice orientation to citizenship education (Britzman, 2003; Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Wade, 2001; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). For teachers this means they should take a critically questioning and reflexive stance when approaching practice (Segall, 2002). Social studies is viewed as a way to better society through critically questioning and examining the social, political, and economic structures and institutions that limit equality and lead to the oppression of individuals and groups. Social studies pedagogy should work to uncover power hierarchies and deconstruct false dichotomies (Kincheloe, 2001) while advocating for action and social change. In sum, a critical perspective important is vital to critical thinking and social change as purposes of social studies for citizenship education.

**Communal.** The second perspective on democracy in social studies education is a focus on community (see Bickmore, 2004; Dinkleman, 2001; Middaugh & Perlstein,



2005). Face-to-face communities and communities of difference are necessary in a society with access to information and social networking technology. These technologies overcome the obstacles of proximity and allow citizens to be more selective of the people they interact with on a daily basis. Without face-to-face communities of difference, people generally associate with like-minded individuals (Dewey, 1916/2009; Ligon, 2005) resulting in no real deliberation but instead political division and partisanship based on unifying similarities between people who easily agree with each other and marked by a lack of progress in solving social problems.

In some ways democratic citizenship education begins with getting students to be concerned with community issues and focus on learning to communicate across multiple perspectives (Darling-Hammond, 1998) through discussion and action (Smith, 2009). Community is important because division is essential to maintaining the status quo; in other words, change happens through organizing communities (Freire, 1970/2009). This is a necessary focus in citizenship education given the tension between valuing plurality and creating unity for change, or deepening democracy through solving problems (Dewey, 1927; Green, 1999). Communities are necessary to solving social problems (Greene, 1988). Notions of democratic community and community building include communities of difference, with a focus on discussion, deliberation, and social change.

Communities are also a necessary consideration in a democratic society that places value on, or at least has, difference. Listening (Parker, 2003, 2010b) and talking (Allen, 2004) across differences are essential to deliberative activity, and deliberation is essential to democratic living (Parker, 2003). One way this can be learned in social

studies is through discussion (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005; Wade, 1999) of controversial social and political issues (Gutmann, 1999; Hahn, 2001; Hess, 2009; Hunt & Metcalf, 1968). Students should, in the interest of improving society, engage in discussions and deliberation as a means of working against repression. In this process it is important to explicitly develop skills like listening to others' points of view and being open to others' ideas, while looking past self-interest to consider the needs of the community (Green, 1999; Ochoa-Becker, 2007). This also means that a heterogeneous classroom demographic is better for democratic purposes than a classroom with a homogeneous student population (Green, 1999; Hyland, 2006; Rubin, 2007). In a heterogeneous environment students could more authentically learn to consider the needs of others through deliberation and discussion across difference focused on shared decision-making, shared responsibility (Gay, 1997; Howard, 2001; Pearl & Pryor, 2005), and action for social change (Boyle-Baise, 2003; Oliner, 1983; Newmann, 1975).

**Personal.** Dogmatic views are a problem for democracy (Hunt & Metcalf, 1968; James, 2010). Dogmatism indicates an unwillingness to consider alternatives, unwillingness to accept opposing views, and a willingness to perpetuate, through action or inaction, the status quo. If democracy is in progress (Stanley, 2010), there is a need to work on it. Failure to act for the betterment of society is a detriment to democracy. Hence, there is a vital importance for the personal perspective. Through reflection and self-critique teachers may learn to justify their beliefs and theories through a process of rationalization as a part of theorizing about practice (Segall, 2002; Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

Through fostering students' sense of justice, civic empowerment, and a self-image of agency as an actor in history (Ligon, 2005; Zinn & Macedo, 2005), teachers may help students learn to make-decisions and consider the consequences of those decisions for themselves, and others (Hursh & Seneway, 1998). This suggests decision-making is essential to democratic living (Ochoa-Becker, 1999; 2007) and requires introspection and critical reflection if it is to be justifiable and lead to democratic transformation through social action (Dilworth, 2003). With this in mind, the personal perspective on democracy in social studies includes fostering a sense of agency (Zinn & Macedo, 2005) and voice (Claubaugh, 2008; Wade, 1999), critical reflection (Greene, 1988; Ross, 1994; Segall, 2002; Zeichner & Liston, 1996), and decision-making (Ochoa-Becker, 1999, 2007) as important aspects of democratic living. Without an interaction among all these aspects, individuals are likely to become immersed in the every day, the taken-for-grantedness, that leads to mindless consumerism and anti-democratic living (Greene, 1988).

### **The Problem of Democracy in Social Studies Education**

The problem of democracy in social studies education is two fold. Firstly, there are a lot of different notions of democracy and what it means to be democratic, and defining these notions is a problem because doing so makes the definition undemocratic. Secondly, what teachers believe to be democratic might really reflect other imperatives or values, possibly of individualism or capitalism. To dictate a clear and specific definition is inherently undemocratic and doing so would invite critique and skepticism. Likewise, failing to argue for a particular notion of democracy is equally problematic, presenting a difficult paradox to negotiate. In my experiences, interactions, and pilot study interviews

with social studies teachers, those who do attempt to define democracy often do so in ways that suggest a heavy influence by, or even substitution of, capitalist values and imperatives for democratic values.

To address these two problems, I have provided a conceptual framework for understanding social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy in education, which includes three perspectives on being democratic including: the critical perspective, the communal perspective, and the personal perspective. Green (2008) recognized the role of the reflective (personal), the critical (critical), and the collaborative (communal) in deepening democracy. Citizens must create publics (Parker, 2003) and communities (Dewey, 1927) to fight the anti-democratic "powers that be". There is no *truth* of our history to guide us, only choice of hopes for the future (Green, 2008) making social studies education for citizenship through developing the skills and dispositions for acting in the present and in the future far more important than encouraging students to learn the facts of history.

### **Beginning Teachers and Teacher Beliefs**

#### **Social and Political Context of Research on Teacher's Beliefs in Social Studies Education**

Research on teachers' beliefs overlaps with and includes work on teacher thinking. Work in the field of teacher beliefs and thinking is characterized by teacher reflection (Dewey, 1933/1998; Schön, 1983) and a bringing together, or at least an effort to bring together, belief, purpose, and practice in ways that provide students with opportunities for educational experiences that are meaningful and congruent with a

purposeful practice of teaching. When purpose is disrupted by policy or social, political, or economic culture and the expectations embedded in that culture, the result is a purpose for teaching that is imposed on teachers and in some ways may contradict or reshape their beliefs. Kagan (1992) suggested that one of the first tasks beginning teachers will undergo is to seek to confirm or validate their beliefs in their teaching practice. Britzman (2003) identified this tension between beliefs teachers' hold and the actions that teachers are sometimes required to take (see also Cornett, 1990; Hawley, 2010; Ross, 1994).

What should also be recognized is the experience of many teachers as they enter schools. Beginning teachers are fresh out of teacher education programs and dealing with the pressures of being new to schools and staffs while trying to continue learning to teach. The beliefs of teachers acquired through teacher education are filtered (Chin & Barber, 2010; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992) by prior experiences and beliefs (Lortie, 1975/2002), and possibly mitigated, or somehow made illegitimate, by experiences in school culture. Those experiences are often shaped by national, state, and/or district policy that dictates aims, and in some cases teaching practice, leading to changes in teaching as a result of attempts by the teacher to reconcile inconsistencies between beliefs and policy requirements or cultural pressures in the school (Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1984).

Regardless of tensions, scholarly work suggests that teachers do have beliefs about various aspects of teaching and those beliefs do influence practice (Adler & Confer, 1998; Carr, 2008; Chin & Barber, 2010; Chiodo & Brown, 2007; Clark, 1988; Counts, 1932; Elbaz, 1981; Griffin, 1940; Heilman, 2001; Nespor, 1985; Zeichner &

Liston, 1996). Although the influence of beliefs on practice is evident in some cases, it may be to varying degrees (Johnston, 1990). With a scholarly claim that beliefs influence practice, working to understand the ways in which those beliefs are related to teaching in the context of practice becomes necessary. In addition, understanding the ways in which beliefs can influence teachers' practice and, in turn, students' learning experiences would provide teacher educators with a basis for making decisions about their own practice and teacher education programs. Understanding this relationship between beliefs and practice holds the potential to lead to better teacher education decisions. In particular, decisions that facilitate the development of teachers who critically reflect on their beliefs in ways that lead to logical and well reasoned notions of what it means, and how, to teach social studies.

Chin and Barber (2010) suggested national policies and politics influence educational beliefs. In the United States policy becomes part of the social discourse, if not by the communities in which we live at least by the policy makers through the filter of the media. Chin and Barber worked to understand the relationship of national policy and social studies purposes in teaching and learning in the context of three democracies, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Under these established and stable governments, the researchers found that teachers who believed they were confident in teaching political issues also found themselves confident in teaching social issues. Increased confidence in teaching social issues may lead to more attempts to teach about political and value-laden subjects. Subjects and issues members of a democratic society may have strong beliefs about, making them relevant in learning environments.

If beliefs about teaching and learning influence practice and more specific beliefs about content exist, such as beliefs about social issues as they are a part of teaching and learning, then it stands to reason that, as with other beliefs, they may have an influence on social studies teachers' practice. Social studies teachers do hold beliefs about their content and those beliefs may become a part of their theories about teaching (Cornett, 1987; 1990) making them a particularly unique and relevant, but a rather specific subject of research. To contextualize this work on the beliefs social studies teachers hold about concepts in content, like the concept of democracy, and the ways those beliefs are related to practice, what follows is an explanation of the history of teacher beliefs research. Scholarship on teacher beliefs is situated in the field of teacher thinking with a focus on the aims, purposes, and beliefs about social studies education established by society through policy or social movement. Also presented in the following sections, are ideas about the ways specific social and political contexts may have influenced research on social studies teachers' purposes and beliefs from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to civil and political unrest, and finally into the contemporary standards movement.

**Turn of the century (1890s–1920s).** Ross (1996) identified the historical tension that exists between centralized government control and grassroots curriculum development. Tension between national and local control manifests in political and social discourses on education and in educational policy, which in turn influence or dictate the aims of education. Who then should be involved in the creation of purpose for social studies education? Should it be the local community, state, or national policy makers, the bureaucracy, the educators and researchers of education, or all of the above?

This section is devoted to the emergence of social studies as a content area and its connections to educational purposes of teaching and schools as influenced by social and political contexts.

According to Evans (2004), the 1916 report of the Social Studies Committee of the National Education Association (NEA) meeting on the Reorganization of Secondary Education is credited with creating social studies as courses of study that remained largely unchanged for the rest of the century. The report recommended moving past the traditional teaching of history and focus on patriotism (Hunt & Metcalf, 1968) in secondary education to a focus on social problem, current issues, and recent history with attention paid to the interests and needs of students. In a U.S. Government Bulletin (Creel, 1919) some of the major points of discussion at the NEA meeting were outlined including democracy and the high school, the great social objectives, and compulsory high school attendance. With regard to democracy and education, the committee reported that in a democracy individuals must develop an appreciation for social values that allows them to consider the needs of others when acting and making-decisions. This kind of decision-making is necessary for democratic community (Ochoa-Becker, 2007), and if taught through schools, can make education a means to help students develop this necessary capacity for democratic community.

Almost immediately following the American Revolution the American Philosophical Society outlined what they believed the aims of education should be in terms of democratic purposes (Counts, 1939). There is evidence, then, of an early discourse on what constitutes democratic purposes for education. The evidence



suggested the purpose of social studies was either: (a) a critical focus on current issues and social problems in social studies, or (b) instilling a sense of patriotism (see Hunt & Metcalf, 1968) that might sustain and unify the people of a nation through history education. Despite overwhelming evidence of the democratic purposes of education favoring the former<sup>2</sup>, many schools continue, even today, to practice a traditional history education in social studies. The traditional approach often boils down to a banking model (Freire, 1970/2009) of teaching where the “facts” of history are poured into students to be internalized and recited. Dewey (1933/1998) recognized the place of recitation but advocated strongly for a social inquiry and reflective thinking as a part of a democratic education. The issue of a difference between discourse on educational purposes and what is commonly observed in schools even beginning with the Free School Movement in the time of Horace Mann (Counts, 1939) is that espoused aims of democracy in education, and social studies, have not been realized as fully as possible. Failure to realize the perfect democracy is not an argument for the need to fully realize democracy but rather to realize a focused effort to teach for deepening democracy

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<sup>2</sup> See Ayers, Hunt, & Quinn, 1998; Banks, 1990; Beyer, 1996a, 1996b; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Brookfield & Preskill, 2005; Brosio, 1994; Carr, 2008; Counts, 1939; Dewey, 1916/2009; Engle & Ochoa, 1988; Gay, 1997; Giroux, 2001; Green, 1999; Greene, 1998; Griffin, 1940; Hess, 2009; Hunt & Metcalf, 1968; Kincheloe, 2001; Lund & Carr, 2008; Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Newmann, 1970; Parker, 2003, 2006, 2010a, 2010b; Saltman, 2000; Segall, Heilmann, & Cherryholmes, 2006; Wegwert, 2008.

(Green, 1999) as a common, yet likely problematic aim of American social studies education.

**Depression and fear (1930s–1950s).** The liberal notion of tolerance was pervasive through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Liberal tolerance was grounded in a policy of assimilation and resulted in discrimination in the workplace and in education. Discrimination occurred in ways that undermined the United State’s fight against fascism in Europe and highlighted the notion that racism was not just a “southern problem”, but also a plague throughout the country as it invaded and influenced American political, social, and economic life (Middaugh & Perlstein, 2005). One example of how issues of racism came to light in the north was through *The Detroit Citizenship Education Study* (1945-1953) prompted by a wartime race riot in Detroit. This study sought to address this issue of inequity by trying to understand and practice democracy with a problem solving focus, and an effort to improve human relations and school-community relations (Evans, 2004). Despite what might be viewed as conscious and admirable efforts to build these relationships and understand them and their effects on schooling and educational experiences of children, little change resulted directly from such efforts. Schools were the subject of enormous inequity and all of the benefits and weaknesses of a highly decentralized pyramidal system of education (Ravitch, 1983). Change is an underlying purpose of democratic theory, but difficult to realize in the current political and economic systems.

Issues and problems, like racism, highlighted a need for change, for improvements that encouraged such forward thinkers as George S. Counts, one of the

most prominent social reconstructionists of the century (Hunt & Metcalf, 1968). Counts (1932) challenged the progressive movement to work passed the school as a means to attain individual, or economic, success and work to accomplish the kind of change progressives often talked about in education. In a later essay, Counts (1939) also reiterated the role of schools in terms of democratic purposes from a social reconstructionist perspective. His efforts were marginalized by economic pressure and building tension in Europe, and in the U.S., over the possibility of war. In addition, Rugg, in the 1930s and 1940s, was censored by businesses for proposing social studies students should question American society and in particular capitalism (Evans, 2008). The social, economic, and political problems of the day worked against those who pushed the hardest for change and critical reform. The implications of the problems of the 1930s and 1940s suggests there is a limiting effect in terms of the influence of marginalized voices in times of economic, political, or social crises (e.g. economic depression, world war). Incidents such as these in turn limited the discourse on democratic education and placed boundaries around voicing democratic beliefs by only allowing notions that were pro-capitalist and pro-America.

The ways that economic, political, and social pressures can lead to discrimination and marginalization are many. Examples might be through the social programs and postwar initiatives of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. The Great Depression of the 1930s led to social programs and World War II led to postwar initiatives that, in many ways, centralized educational policy decisions and limited the effectiveness of schools, while detracting from problems of discrimination and inequity in the system. For example,

with a soaring population and collapsing job market during the Great Depression a policy for compulsory high school was implemented largely to remove teenagers from the pool of workers. In addition, the postwar GI Bill was criticized heavily by some universities who claimed it devalued higher education and would lead to college as vocational training (Ravitch, 1983). The argument here is not one for or against these policies rather that a focus on these issues made it easy for policy makers to ignore problems of inequity and voices for change like those of George S. Counts and Harold Rugg.

Not only did policy makers and communities ignore the voices of Counts, Rugg, and the like, but, as Evans (2004) suggested, many believed the progressive education movement to promote socialist or communist education. Despite the progressive education movement never being clearly defined, and perhaps that made them an easy target as a group that espoused education for all, they were one of many groups of interest during the Red Scare and era of McCarthyism. Loyalty investigations were also conducted regarding Counts and his push to use schools to build a new social order. The circumstances were wrought with issues of academic freedom and attacks on the notion of teaching for communal democracy.

The progressive movement in reaction to these types of incidents almost immediately began to include vocational education and anti-communist ideology as a part of democratic purposes in social education (Ravitch, 1983). Aims of education and policy were shaped largely by social and political contexts and in turn influenced through policy and social discourse the purposes held by teachers. I do not claim to know whether, or not, those purposes were internalized by teachers as beliefs about the

educational aims of social studies. But in these tumultuous times it was inevitable that teachers were influenced in some ways by the discourse and policy implemented as a result of the surrounding social, political, and economic contexts.

**Civil and political unrest (1960s–1970s).** With the Cold War escalating and events like the Cuban Missile Crisis, Vietnam, the Civil Rights Movement, and Sputnik looming on the horizon, educational policy was becoming geared more and more toward competition with other countries. The competitive attitude was complicated by tension, communist accusations, and dissent among teachers because of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which led to a policy of school desegregation (Ravitch, 1983). Fractioning among the ranks of educators, researchers, and policy makers, may have made it difficult to build consensus for a coherent and cohesive purpose for social studies education. During this time of fractioning, the door was left open for the economic imperatives to take hold of educational aims and policies (Hunt & Metcalf, 1968). Fear of losing to the Soviet Union, losing to communism, led to a push toward what would become standardization and a leaving behind of the progressive education movement (Ravitch, 1983). Civil Rights Movement tactics, the arms race, and competition were all economically situated in some way and placed a high value on consumerism and economic values that ran contrary to communism. All of these factors reinforced notions that positioned communism as ‘evil’ and capitalism, its opposite, as unquestionably ‘good’ (Hepburn, 1990).

As Ravitch (1983) noted rhetoric seems more common than actual reform. Despite some policy efforts, like President Lyndon B. Johnson’s signing of the Civil

Rights Act, laws imposed difficult requirements on impoverished schools to feed and care medically for children who did not receive it at home (Ravitch, 1983). Such political incidents could have been evidence of how little policy makers knew about how to improve education and inequity in school systems. Rather than listening to and working to meet the needs of schools that serve children and families, policy makers placed requirements and restrictions on schools backed by little funding. It took *Brown v. The Board of Education* in 1954 to recognize the need for a desegregation policy in schools, but without much force behind the policy it was in danger of failing. Many schools continued to undergo forced desegregation into the 1980s.

From Berkeley to Kent State University, war protests and activism seemed common but often resulted in dividing (Ravitch, 1983) social movements that were pushing for similar ends (e.g. the end of Vietnam) in un-unified and different ways. This division made it more difficult to realize social change and may have impeded meaningful reform efforts while allowing increased centralization of educational control leading to the more modern standards movement in education (Ravitch, 1983).

**Standards movement (1980s–2000s).** In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Ronald Reagan ran on a platform of downsizing the national government. Proposed cuts to the educational bureaucracy were undermined by *A Nation at Risk* (1983), which claimed to affirm the low achievement of students in the United States compared to other countries and reinforced values of competition, domination, and mastery in schools and the discourse on education. One effect of this discourse was the reinforcement of *success* in the minds of teachers as being control in the classroom, and achievement verified by test

scores (Britzman, 2003). Every administration since President Reagan, including President Obama, has either supported or enabled the standards movement as it has evolved into the testing movement (Ravitch, 2010). The testing movement, according to Ross (1996), could be characterized as an over simplified answer to a complex problem in education. The simple answer is attractive from a political standpoint because it is clear and politically advantageous as Presidents and members of Congress show constituents how they have held teachers and schools accountable for student learning.

The Holmes Group (1986) put forth a report advocating for reform of education. This report focused on developing professional standards and improving schools by bettering teacher education, professional development, and content knowledge. In addition, the report hoped to encourage teacher education to counter overly simplistic views of teaching by calling for the differentiation of the profession, and recognizing a need for special professional knowledge of teaching. Efforts such as these in the 1980s characterized by the teacher as knower, or professional (Elbaz, 1981), have been all but ignored by many policy makers in favor of the simpler solution. However, testing, accountability, and standards movements, like other policies before them, have inevitably had an influence on teachers' aims and practices in the classroom as well as the culture of schools across the country.

Since the 1980s, increased attention has been paid to the *experiential knowledge* embedded in the teacher as a person (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Positioning the teacher as one with knowledge, as a professional, is no easy task in the current social and political context. Recent policies have worked to undermine teachers' professional

rationales for teaching (Evans, 2008). For example, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has focused education aims on measurement and punishment when school districts or states fail to meet its expectations (Ravitch, 2010). As an educational policy, NCLB has influenced educational purposes of schools by requiring standardized testing of students on specific content and skills dictated by the state. As a result, teachers have often been forced to act in ways that could create significant tension between beliefs and actions (Britzman, 2003) or may cause teachers to comply and teach as directed by policy mandates rather than suffer punishment for students' failing to meet testing benchmarks (Hawley, 2010).

Ravitch (2010) recognized the central problem with testing focused accountability in education is that it continues to rely on subjectivity and human judgment in many ways. People set the benchmarks, indicators, and standards for social studies. People make decisions about what to test and how tests are written. The entire endeavor is holding schools and teachers accountable through testing and is through prospect of human judgment fallible as it is subject to the decisions made by the individuals and groups that create and influence the system. One example might be the possibility that questions are written with underlying but often unrecognized assumptions. These assumptions may include the idea that all students are learning the same thing, in the same way. However, the ways students in the Southwest come to understand concepts in subject matter, like the concept of democracy, and the ways that students in the Midwest, Northeast, or the Southeast come to understand the concept might differ due to contextual and cultural differences. These differences in understanding are influenced by the



differences in location, socioeconomic status, family, gender, community, religious beliefs, and other aspects of life that may be more or less different because of region and community. Even within the State of Ohio there are differences in culture among regions (i.e. Appalachia, Northeast Ohio, Central Ohio, etc.) and yet these students across the state are required to take the same test to assess their learning.

Another example lies in efforts for reform. Recently, reform initiatives in education have been facilitated by groups like the Gates Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and others who have become involved in reshaping educational aims through financial contributions or through the creation of charter schools (Ravitch, 2010). Such efforts are problematic because competition and inequity are reinforced through these donations, under the mask of doing ‘good’. President Obama even sided with economists and corporate style reforms supported by groups like the Gates Foundation and the Ford Foundation, rather than with Linda Darling-Hammond his chief campaign advisor on education (Ravitch, 2010). President Obama continues to support charter schools and reforms, like vouchers, that take resources away from public schools and work to perpetuate the separation of class and race thus amplifying the inequity in schools and society. Actions like these reinforce the argument that there is no quick fix to improve education. Improvements will take a concerted and sustained reform effort bringing together teachers, communities, policy makers, and schools for democratic purposes that include addressing issues of equity and the aims of education toward a deeper democracy and changing society.

To consider the variety of aims in social studies education as influenced by various policies and research efforts is beyond the purview of this literature review. However, the professional organization of social studies professionals, National Council for the Social Studies, has adopted a position for the purpose of social studies as, in a broad sense, education for citizenship in our democratic society (NCSS, 2002). With this purpose in mind, I continue on with a discussion of relevant theoretical and empirical scholarship on the beliefs of social studies teachers.

### **Studying the Beliefs of Beginning Teachers**

The field of study that includes research on teachers' beliefs, and subsequently social studies teachers' beliefs, is referred to as teacher thinking or teacher cognition studies. Studying beliefs is problematic for many reasons (Pajares, 1992). Changing and varying contexts and circumstances of schooling, the myriad of experiences a teacher and his or her students may have that influence the context and decisions made, changing expectations and policies of the local and national community, and the variety of synonyms used in place of the word *belief* in the research are all examples of what makes researching teacher beliefs or finding research on teacher beliefs a challenge.

The following sections discuss two major themes found in a review of relevant literature in the field of social studies teacher beliefs and teacher thinking. Those themes are: (a) the proliferation of research on teacher thinking and teacher beliefs, and (b) personal practical theories and practical knowledge. The purpose of presenting these themes from research that informs social studies teacher thinking is to contextualize an argument for a new direction in researching social studies teacher thinking. By

highlighting where the field has been and currently rests regarding social studies teacher beliefs, I argue for researching social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy and the ways in which those beliefs are related to teaching practice.

### **The Proliferation of Research on Teacher Thinking and Teacher Beliefs**

Clark (1988) identified three headings to summarize the state of research on teacher thinking: (a) preconceptions and implicit theories, (b) planning and reflection, and (c) dilemmas and uncertainty. From Clark's perspective, teacher educators need to be thoughtful and question themselves and their practice. More recently, in another effort to characterize teacher thinking, Danielson (2008) identified four modes of thinking including: (a) technical (using knowledge from an external source), (b) situational (knowledge rests in context), (c) deliberate (seeking additional information beyond what the teacher already knows), and (d) dialectical (when deliberate thinking not only informs practice but transforms it). The last mode of thought, Danielson argued, leads to changes in beliefs and behaviors as new understanding initiates new action. These scholars are indicative of the field, in that they represent an effort to understand teacher thinking through characterizing or categorizing the type or process of thought. Where the scholarship in the field has stopped short is in rich descriptions of the specific ways in which teacher thinking and beliefs influence practice in the natural setting of the classroom.

In a review of research completed within Division K (Teacher Education) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Zeichner (1999) found that most scholarship focused on case studies of teacher education programs, learning to teach

studies, and self-study of teacher education practices as a methodology. The focus in this dissertation study was on what Zeichner referred to as, and the field of teacher cognition recognizes as, learning to teach studies, with an emphasis on teachers' beliefs. This view brings together work in teacher thinking (e.g. reflection, beliefs, rationales) with work in teacher education (e.g. pre-service preparation, in-service professional development, teacher induction, teacher socialization), especially as both areas inform or are related to social studies education and social studies teacher beliefs.

Dewey's (1933/1998) *How We Think* is often cited as a starting point for researching teacher beliefs. In this work, Dewey focused on reflective thinking as it leads to social inquiry through a sequenced, but unfixed, process. He argued that dispositions of open-mindedness, whole heartedness, and responsibility were necessary for this kind of reflective thinking and that it could, through social inquiry lead to understanding, which he placed a higher value on than memorization.

As the study of teacher thinking and beliefs began to evolve in social studies education, Griffin (1942/1992) helped bring Dewey's democratic connection into the picture of research on reflective thinking. This effort resulted in a continued positioning of the teacher as a democratic knowledge worker, one whose beliefs should be critically examined through reflection to be made defensible (Segall, 2002). Hunt and Metcalf (1968) supported these efforts in social studies education and pushed to encourage teachers to be curriculum decision makers while they advocated for discussion of areas of society that are socially taboo, what some call controversial issues (Hess, 2009). Initial work on teacher thinking in social studies was focused largely on reflective thinking and

positioning the teacher as a knower. The trend has continued but not without complicating the field by considering the beliefs teachers bring with them to teaching that influence what they learn and how they think.

### **The Influence of Beliefs on Practice**

Lortie's (1975/2002) seminal work provided insight into what teachers bring with them to a teacher education program. Through what he termed the "apprenticeship of observation" where as pre-service teachers enter teacher education, many already possess deep-rooted perspectives on, and beliefs about, what it means to teach, although sometimes those perspectives are over simplified (Loughran, Brown, & Doeke, 2001). These beliefs, Lortie claimed, are largely a result of the enormous amounts of time spent in school as a student, observing what teachers do in the classroom. Although his work seems to set up an argument that teacher education has little to no influence on what teachers will do when they get into the field, the issue is not quite that simple.

Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984) suggested that what pre-service teachers bring with them to student teaching points them in a direction but does not completely determine the outcome or shape the experience. Conversely, James (2010) recognized in her research that some types of beliefs, such as religious certainty, may completely block efforts by teacher educators to work toward democratic community, and the notion that beliefs may be more or less fixed (Hullfish & Smith, 1961; Hunt & Metcalf, 1968), might suggest the matter of belief formation, alteration, and influence on practice is complex and situational. Theological certainty (James, 2010), for example, may be so fixed in the minds of pre-service teachers that it closes the door on certain points of view and

alternative voices in ways that prevent pre-service and beginning teachers from wading into the muddy waters of the “closed areas” that are so important for discussion and democratic purposes in social studies with citizenship education aims (Hunt & Metcalf, 1968; Hess, 2009).

### **Purpose Matters**

According to scholars in social studies education, purpose matters (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Hawley, 2010; Hullfish & Smith, 1961; Thornton, 2006). Purpose is influenced by beliefs, theory, politics, community expectations, culture, teacher backgrounds, teaching context, and students’ expectations. Purpose can be enacted more closely to what teachers intend, or believe, through conscious efforts to develop and employ rationales for teaching practice, but this practice is not without tension, pressure, and limitation from the beliefs of the teacher, politics of the standards movement, and the demands of administration and school culture (Hawley, 2010). It is inherently democratic for teachers to develop a personal rationale through a process of reflection and retheorizing about practice as beliefs and experience emerge and change, often becoming justifiable through such a process (Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

Furthermore, the social studies purpose, although it continues to be debated is citizenship education in a democracy, regularly and rightly contested in terms of its definition, is generally accepted as at least one of the purposes of social studies education (NCSS, 2002). So, prospective teachers should be asked to consider what democracy and citizenship mean to them and begin to articulate the ways in which those meanings are relevant to their teaching social studies (Pryor, 2006). Processes of examining beliefs,

like rationale development (Hawley, 2010) or autobiographical inquiry (James, 2008), are necessary (Angell, 1998) lest social studies degenerate into memorization of irrelevant facts (Thornton, 1994).

### **Teacher Beliefs and Social Studies**

Teachers do have beliefs about content area and subject matter and the ways in which they should be taught (Angell, 1998; Chin & Barber, 2010; Cornett, 1990; Heilman, 2001; Price, 2008). For example, Chin and Barber's (2010) international comparison study found that most teachers believed civic activity was important in learning democratic citizenship. Price (2008) in studying teachers' beliefs through a collection of teachers' cultural stories found that teachers included democratic beliefs that are often narrow (e.g. voting, political parties, jury duty, free-market values), and participants' stories included themes of participation, protection, and provision when discussing the ways in which democratic beliefs influence their practice.

Price's (2008) work was one of the only pieces of scholarship found specifically on the influence of teachers' democratic beliefs on practice. However, work in this area excluded rich descriptions of the ways in which these beliefs influence specific decisions and behaviors of teachers, possibly because the research did not take place in the natural setting of the phenomenon. Despite this, Price's research was from the teachers' perspectives. Price's research served as a building block from which to begin my work that through case study situates the research in the natural context of practice to work with the teacher-participants to co-construct the ways in which practice is related to their beliefs about democracy in a social studies teaching and learning setting.

### **Beliefs, Theory, and Theorizing**

Beliefs arise out of experience and are concerned with future experience. In those experiences with others we make meaning (Hullfish & Smith, 1961). In addition, beliefs are a part of—or being covered by—the act of thinking, making beliefs, and thought synonymous (Dewey, 1933/1998; Hullfish & Smith, 1961). Dewey's most prominent work consistently focused on reflective thinking, experience, and deepening democracy through education. His life's effort to improve society through education led him to consider and reconsider notions of learning and teaching in ways that bring together how people make meaning from experience (Dewey, 1938/1998), while reflectively considering their beliefs as part of social inquiry (1933/1998), and an effort to work toward a communal democratic society (Dewey, 1916/2009; 1927) through education for social change (Dewey, 1937).

Hunt and Metcalf (1968), building on Dewey's (1933/1998) *How We Think*, proposed a sequence of thinking, arguing that beliefs are based on some evidence, and if beliefs are not based on evidence of some sort, they are an article of faith, not a belief. This is important because through a method of social inquiry like Dewey's, evidence-based, or warranted, beliefs may be produced with regard to teaching and learning. It is the possibility that teaching and learning may produce beliefs that research on teacher beliefs seemed primarily concerned. The research recognized the belief-learning relationship as the implicit nature of such beliefs, emerging through experience (Clark, 1988; Cornett, 1987; 1990).



Similarly, Britzman (2003) suggested “behind every understanding of experience is an implicit theory of knowing, as well as values and beliefs about the nature of learning” (p. 34). Implicit theories have influence even though they may not be articulated (Clandinin, 1985). Moreover, implicit, or unarticulated theories of knowing work with values and beliefs in ways that inform teachers’ understanding of experiences (Britzman, 2003; Clandinin, 1985). Teachers’ understanding, then, of what can or should be done in social studies education, the aims, purposes, processes, and plans teachers engage in through classroom teaching practice are influenced by these implicit theories, and supporting beliefs about teaching and learning. To clarify, personal theorizing is the systematic reflection process undertaken by teachers to try to recognize and use personal understandings as a part of professional development (Chant, Heafner, Bennett, 2004; Ross, Cornett, McCutcheon, 1992). This process of thinking may provide a powerful framework for teachers’ decision-making (Hochstrosser-Fickel, 2000). Personal theories, sometimes called principles of practice when they become more refined, help to guide practice and focus teachers’ intentions as they engage in classroom practice (Kennedy, 2004).

**Praxis.** A central goal of research on teacher beliefs is to understand beliefs as they guide practice (See Chin & Barber, 2010; Pajares, 1992). The focus of research has consistently been on conceptualizing, theorizing, and researching how, or whether or not, teacher beliefs influence practice with an emphasis on connecting (Zeichner & Liston, 1996) or deconstructing the binary (Britzman, 2003) of theory and practice. Praxis is the intersection of the complex relationship of theory and practice (Kincheloe, 2008). Put

another way, praxis is the product of thought (i.e. theory, theorizing, reflection) and action (i.e. practice) (Freire, 1970/2009).

The idea of praxis is important because whether or not anyone can make a sound scholarly argument for why theory and practice are not separate is irrelevant if practitioners continue to view them as separate and consider theory, public or private, empirical or personal, useless. Teacher education courses often fail to link practice and theory and fail to allow students the opportunity to experience what they should be learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Until teachers learn ways of theorizing about their practice through forms of social inquiry that produces principles of practice or personal practical theories that become a part of a larger cohesive rationale for teaching social studies education theory and practice will continue to be viewed as separate, fragmented, and in turn separate knowledge from practice (Britzman, 2003).

One of Britzman's (2003) main points was that theory would be more relevant if it was situated in practice, or the act of teaching, rather than teaching theory situated in other theory. If practice is the action and behavior of teaching, what then is theory? Giroux (1988) suggested theory is contextually located and emerges from experience and discourse. This conception of theory is what I am referring to throughout this paper, one that can be created through practice, not at odds with it. Whether practitioners refer to it as such or not, theory is in a complex relationship with their practice as it both informs and is a product of the personal and professional experiences on which teachers reflect or use as a basis for future decisions. The result can be the formation of personal practical theories that guide teachers' decision-making and instruction as part of a broader

theoretically informed rationale for teaching and learning in social studies education. But this way of thinking about practice begins in teacher education programs.

### **Studying Teacher Thinking in Teacher Education**

I believe teacher education matters. Darling-Hammond (2000) argued that teacher education matters because substantial evidence indicates teachers with preparation are more confident and successful than those with little or no preparation. Furthermore, teacher education tends to develop teachers' abilities to examine teaching from the perspective of learners who bring diverse experiences and frames of reference to the classroom. While the potential for learning is great in this context, there is certainly no guarantee, or desire for every student to learn the same thing in the same way.

I agree with Cochran-Smith (2001) who argued that beginning teachers should have the primary task of "teaching against the grain" through collaboration with the university and school mentors to critique and challenge common practices. Cochran-Smith suggested that teacher education should be preparing teachers to teach for social justice, social change, and social responsibility by teaching against the grain. In other words, by teaching in ways that work against typical pressures teachers face to teach to the test, or cover content. Doing so makes teaching and teacher education fundamentally political and value-laden activities (Cochran-Smith, 2001). With such political and value-laden implications, the nature of teaching requires a teacher education that encourages reflection and social inquiry (Dewey, 1933/1998) for the purposes of examining one's beliefs and theories in the context of practice (Britzman, 2003).

Cochran-Smith (2003), in a report of her analysis of teacher education communities across career lifespan and in different contexts, argued that the education of teacher educators is substantially enhanced when inquiry is a stance on the overall enterprise of teaching, schooling, and teacher education. This approach is more likely to result in pre-service teachers learning to enter the schools and teach in ways that critically view, and accept or reject, the mounting pressures of a restrictive system based on policies of standardized instruction and testing. Teaching for a critical perspective of one's practice, questioning, and inquiring, may prevent or mitigate the typical concerns and challenges of beginning teachers including a preoccupation with classroom discipline (Wolfgang & Kelsay, 1995) and instructional missteps, like teaching for multiculturalism in ways that just list characteristics and reinforces stereotypes (Shinew, 2001).

Other common concerns of beginning teachers might be negotiated using similar modes of practical inquiry as those discussed prior. Some of novice teachers' concerns that could be addressed include motivating students, dealing with individual difference, assessing students' work, relationships with parents, organization of class work, insufficient or inadequate materials and supplies, and dealing with problems of individual students (Veenman, 1984). These circumstances and concerns, some of which are unique to or enhanced for beginning teachers, are why I have chosen research with social studies teachers in their first three years of practice.

Brouwer and Korthagen (2005) conducted a longitudinal study of 357 students, 128 cooperating teachers and 31 university supervisors for 24 graduate teacher education programs over four and a half years. These scholars followed teachers in the first three

years of their teaching and collected quantitative and qualitative data to understand the influence of teacher education programs. Findings included occupational socialization as in-service teachers has considerable influence on teacher development, but also that some evidence of the impact of specific characteristics from their teacher education programs was there as well, involving the integration of practical experience and theoretical study. Basically, these scholars concluded, it is too simple to say teacher education does or does not influence teacher beliefs. Furthermore, it is also too simple to say teachers have beliefs or they do not, or teachers beliefs change or they do not.

My critique of these common concerns in research on teacher beliefs is that the questions do not go far enough to address specific influences on practice. Questions of whether or not teachers have beliefs or whether or not those beliefs change become more relevant when they are connected to learning to teach, or teaching practice, because the answers to such questions are dependent on the situation, location, teacher, context, and a variety of other variables and influences resting within these factors. These may be reasons why the findings in research are split on issues of whether or not beliefs change because ultimately the answer is yes they do change, some times. However, change in belief depends on a variety of contextual, internal and external, factors and influences, not as explanations of changing beliefs; but when these factors are connected to those changing beliefs, researchers and educators might better understand the process of change and the relationship of beliefs about teaching has with the practice of teaching.

Many teachers can find ways to insulate themselves from at least some of the directives and sanctions of evaluators; therefore, they do not always passively conform to

the pressures of school culture, but teachers do take them into account in some way as they go about their work (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). School culture promotes individualism and acceptance of the existing social order through isolating teachers, which leads to individualistic rationales for teaching (Hursh, 1994).

Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) questioned whether or not the experience, learning, and formation of ideas about teaching and learning in teacher education were mitigated or erased by socialization into school culture. I agree that this phenomenon is possible, but I side with Brouwer and Korthagen (2005) in their critique that Zeichner's and Tabachnick's question oversimplifies the issue because it elicits only a "yes" or "no" answer. To suggest that teacher education does or does not have an influence on shaping teachers beliefs is an unanswerable question, or more accurately a question with the answer of both "yes" and "no". For every pre-service teacher that is influenced by teacher education (see Hoffman-Kipp, 2008; Johnston, 1990), research has found one that is not (see James, 2010). In addition, influences are to varying degrees depending on the personal and professional experiences, backgrounds, and teaching context during induction.

Pajares (1992) echoed Lortie (1975/2002) with an argument that personal beliefs and predispositions are the core of becoming a teacher. Some confusion about what might be the best or right answer to a problem is necessary for learning and the emergence of new ideas (Middough & Perlstein, 2005). To reshape or refine beliefs through learning some confusion by challenging one's assumptions and taken-for-granted ideas is necessary (Kincheloe, 2001). Individuals, though, must be willing to change for

this reshaping or refining of beliefs to be internalized (Angell, 1998; James, 2010). The potential to reshape or refine beliefs is supported by research (Adler & Confer, 1998) and is encouraging for teacher educators who may seek to push students' thinking about beliefs and definitions regarding good teaching.

To work toward the refinement of beliefs scholars have suggested rationale development (Hawley, 2010), autobiographical inquiry (James, 2008), personal practical theory analysis (Chant, 2002; Chant, Heafner, & Bennett, 2004), and methods of practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) like self-study (Crowe, 2010) as possible means of inquiry or frameworks for critical reflection to improve practice that may lead to the refinement of beliefs about teaching and learning. In addition, Ross (1996) argued that teacher education can help with educational problems by cultivating an understanding of curriculum as *all classroom experience* and working to improve the effectiveness and personal practical theories of teachers with a view of the teacher as the curriculum decision maker, mediator, and creator of curriculum.

I argue for a social studies teacher education that encourages teacher candidates to consider and reconsider their beliefs about teaching, learning, and broad or problematic areas of content. In social studies this necessarily includes the concept of democracy as both a part of the content and an approach to teaching. Social studies teachers should work to understand and articulate their own beliefs about democracy and consider the ways in which it might influence and guide their practice as both a central theme through the content of the courses they will teach and a part of their pedagogy. Learning to approach practice from an inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) and continuing

to be open-minded, whole-hearted, and responsible (Dewey, 1933/1998) professionals in social studies education can help to teach for democratic citizenship in ways that encourage critical, communal, and personal development of citizens and society. One way this can be achieved is through a teacher education that encourages teacher candidates to articulate and refine their beliefs through developing personal practical theories of teaching as a way to consider their beliefs and the ways in which those beliefs may inform practice (see Chant, 2002).

### **Personal Practical Theories and Practical Knowledge**

#### **The Nature of Personal Practical Theories**

Much of the work on teacher beliefs and personal philosophies of teaching (e.g. rationale development, personal theories, teacher theorizing, practical theories, reflective practice) abide by the assumption that teachers, through experience and interaction with others, or socialization, develop personal theories about teaching that guide or influence practice whether they are encouraged to do so explicitly, or not. In other words, teachers come to teacher education programs, and approach teaching practice, with beliefs about what ‘good’ teaching is and ideas about how they think ‘good’ teaching would look (Lortie, 1975/2002). As a result, teachers possess appreciative systems, or perceptions of the world that influence their practice (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Therefore, it is necessary, as teacher educators and researchers, to work to understand those systems and perceptions and the ways in which they influence teachers and their practice. Doing so can help teacher educators organize teacher education programs, practices, and courses in ways that work with and against these appreciative systems and perspectives to help



pre-service teachers develop a better understanding of what “good” social studies teaching is and how to go about it. Before these broader changes can be made, working through an understanding of personal philosophies, like personal practical theories, is prudent to better conceptualize the nature and definition of the concept.

Personal philosophies of teaching are theoretical expressions of practical meaning, and as with theoretical statements, which express theoretical meaning, personal theoretical statements are removed from the reality to which they refer and only partially and selectively account for it (Connelly & Clandinin, 1982). The act of teaching and knowledge about teaching is highly contextual; therefore, statements and expressions of meaning are subject to a variety of influences (Britzman, 2003). From day-to-day these expressions may be altered or adjusted to meet the demands of situations and circumstances.

When researching these expressions of knowledge, it is appropriate then to view these expressions in conjunction with teachers’ personal accounts and descriptions (i.e., interviews), and other sources (i.e., observations, documents, and artifacts) that might help to paint a picture of the ways in which teachers’ described beliefs may influence their practice. Personal philosophies may take a variety of forms, such as longer rationales to be developed and revised through experience (Hawley, 2010), autobiographical inquiry (James, 2008), or shorter statements of beliefs like personal practical theories (Chant, 2002; Cornett, 1990). I do not intend to position these different ways to articulate or explore personal theories against each other, and I do not think one to be better or worse, or more or less necessary. I argue that the nature of personal

practical theories is such that it allows for teachers to begin to articulate what Clark (1988) suggested was so often unarticulated, teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. Therefore, all these ways of articulating beliefs may serve as a logical aspect of, or starting point for developing a purposeful, or rationale-based, practice (see Hawley, 2010, 2012).

Personal practical knowledge is knowledge imbued with experiences that make up a person's being. Its meaning is derived from and understood in terms of a person's experiential history, both professional and personal (Clandinin, 1985). Personal practical knowledge is formed through a variety of experiences and constitutes the foundation for personal theories of teaching. However, Clark (1988) suggested that beliefs and personal theories of practice are often unarticulated or codified by the owner, referring to them as implicit theories. Implicit theories, according to Clark (1988), are a varied collection of cause-effect propositions from many sources, such as personal experience, beliefs, values, biases, and prejudices. Beliefs and ideas about teaching, and consequently the act of teaching itself, are amiable to change as pre-service teachers, sometimes deliberately and consciously and sometimes more passively, mediate new experiences and construct more sophisticated personal theories of teaching (Clandinin, 1985; Dinkelman, 1999).

By taking the time to write down, or put into words, brief statements that include a belief about teaching followed by a short explanation of how that belief plays out in practice, teachers may begin to reflectively consider what they think should be included in "good" teaching. Teachers who articulate their beliefs have the opportunity to consider where those beliefs come from and the ways in which they inform their teaching

practice. In addition to considering the influence of their beliefs, this articulation of belief could help pre-service and in-service teachers to assure their practice is more reflective of their beliefs. Personal practical theories, once initially articulated, could be helpful in focusing the writing of a more detailed rationale for teaching social studies. My point is that teacher candidates, beginning teachers, and more experienced teachers may benefit from, and teacher educators may find it helpful to, develop an articulated version of their beliefs about teaching as a way to understand their practice and the ways in which their beliefs are or could influence that practice.

### **Defining Personal Practical Theories**

How and the extent to which beliefs are changeable is debated in some scholarship (Chant, 2002; Clandinin, 1985; Dinkleman, 1999; Hunt & Metcalf, 1968; Hullfish & Smith, 1961; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). However, some have accepted that beliefs and ideas about teaching, and consequently the act of teaching itself, are amiable to change as pre-service teachers, sometimes deliberately and consciously and sometimes more passively, mediate new experiences and construct more sophisticated personal theories of teaching (Clandinin, 1985; Dinkelman, 1999). This begs the question, what are personal practical theories?

“In case studies of experienced teachers [scholars] have used the term ‘personal practical theories’ to refer to the working knowledge that teachers have that is imbued with teacher’s own lived experience” (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997, p. 15). Lived experience includes both the personal and professional experiences (Clandinin, 1985; Hochstrasser-Fickel, 2000) that influence a teacher’s ideas about teaching and learning.

The practical, or professional, part of those theories are individual notions of what is effective teaching (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986). The personal experiences include experiences outside of the classroom (Clandinin, 1985) that work to shape the values and beliefs of teachers. These experiences and subsequent formation of personal theories are important because one's personal theories can provide a framework for understanding the world that results in practical, or working, knowledge and inference structures required for performing necessary tasks, like teaching (Hochstrasser-Fickel, 2000).

In summary, teachers' working knowledge of teaching practice, while influenced in a variety of ways, is often formed through the personal and professional experiences they have throughout their lives. This working knowledge is how teachers cope with the uncertain, conflicted, problematic world of the classroom and the school by developing practical theories (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986), partially based on personal experiences (Clandinin, 1985) that might be called personal practical theories. Personal practical theories then are the knowledge of context of practice and ideas about what should be done in those circumstances (Ross, Cornett, & McCutcheon, 1992) including a systematic set of beliefs (theories), which guide the teacher and are based on prior life experiences. These beliefs are derived from non-teaching activities (personal) and from experiences designing and implementing curriculum through instruction (practical) (Cornett, 1990; Cornett, Yeotis, & Terwilliger, 1990; Sweeney, Bula, & Cornett, 2001).

### **Positioning Knowledge for Personal Practical Theories**

Knowledge is important in a democracy because people need access to knowledge, as well as the skills and understanding to construct the kind of knowledge

that empowers the citizenry and works to sustain and deepen democracy (Counts, 1939). But, what knowledge is of most worth? Britzman (2003), in her ethnographic study of student teachers learning to teach, argued that enacted in every pedagogy are tensions between knowing and being, thought and action, theory and practice, knowledge and experience that are not neat binaries because teaching is complex and subject to many influences.

The complex nature of teaching is such that thought, or knowledge, is not separate from action, or practice, but a part of it, in a reciprocal relationship. This relationship and as a result the study of teachers' beliefs or thinking in and about practice requires that teachers be viewed as creators and implementers of professional knowledge about teaching. The mere act of teaching itself is an expression of knowledge and understanding. Although this act may not be viewed as sound or "good" teaching practice, it is teaching practice and reflective of some form of professional knowledge, understanding, and theory that has been developed through learning experiences. The following sections are not intended to create separation between professional, experiential, and practical knowledge but to convey the similarities of these complex notions of knowledge as used in literature and research related to teacher beliefs and thinking.

**Professional knowledge.** Decades of calls for developing and valuing professional knowledge (Holmes Group, 1986) have resulted in a discourse on professional knowledge and in turn the position of knowledge about teaching and who can create it. Shulman (1987) offered a more structured outline of what constitutes

professional knowledge for teachers. I do not find this discourse or structure frivolous although I argue that regardless of any debate over who could, or should, create professional knowledge about teaching (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986) for teacher education and professional development; teachers are already creating it through their personal and professional experiences. Therefore, the professional knowledge of teachers can be viewed as theoretical knowledge (Ross, 1994) in that knowledge resides in context and is situational (Danielson, 2008). Therefore, knowledge about teaching is created by the teacher through a process of theorizing about teaching and learning. The theorizing process is mediated by teachers' beliefs, prior knowledge, experiences, and perspectives that work to shape their understanding of the world around them. The relationship of knowledge and beliefs is such that beliefs may be based on knowledge and knowledge can be created out of experiences. To be clearer, beliefs may often be an outgrowth of knowledge and understanding acquired through experience, sometimes called experiential knowledge.

**Experiential knowledge.** Since the 1980s, increased attention has been given to the *experiential knowledge* embedded in teachers as a person (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Britzman (2003) echoed Dewey when she stated “behind every understanding of experience is an implicit theory of knowing, as well as values and beliefs about the nature of learning” (p. 34). The connectedness of beliefs to knowing as well as both beliefs and knowing to experience is complex and dependent on internal and external factors within each individual, shaped and mediated by the prior experiences and appreciative systems and perspectives (Zeichner & Liston, 1996) held by each individual.

Beliefs arise out of experience and are concerned with future experience. In addition, meaning arises with experience through interaction with others (Hullfish & Smith, 1961). This suggests that not only are beliefs and knowledge in a reciprocal relationship with experience, but they also work to affect future experiences in the ways they influence decisions, judgments, and actions. Such an understanding is important to teaching because as knowledge is created it is necessary to recognize that teachers' understandings are shaped by what they already know and believe, and what they already know and believe is being shaped by that experience. Furthermore, future experiences will be affected by this complex relationship between belief, knowledge, and experience. Zeichner and Liston (1996) sought to understand practical theories by considering what informs them. These authors applied a framework (citing Handal & Lavas, 1987) that suggested practical theories are a result of personal experience, transmitted knowledge, and core values. This corroborates the assertion that a natural outgrowth of the complex relationship between experience, knowledge, and beliefs, or values, is a practical theory.

**Practical theories as knowledge.** Practical theories of teaching are knowledge (Ross, 1994) in that they are an outgrowth of the relationship between experience, knowledge, and belief. Elbaz (1981) suggested that practical knowledge is a broad encompassing knowledge of practice as well as knowledge mediated by practice. This process of mediation is a product of a variety of structural and institutional influences and pressures as well as teachers' appreciative systems and perspectives (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Practical theories are shaped by teachers' beliefs about 'good' teaching but also by what is possible in the system and the demands and goals placed on them by

administration and policy makers. Kennedy (2004) found that uncovering layers of teachers' thought revealed questions and principles of practice, or rules of thumb that guide practice toward specific ends, and that teachers had multiple intentions for each action. Teachers might work to accomplish multiple goals, both personal and imposed by others, through each decision and each action in practice. Practical theories, then, are shaped by these goals, personal and imposed, and become an organized means of negotiating the complex and demanding act of teaching.

In addition, practical theories are often expressed through metaphors or images and vary from one teacher to another (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). These theories vary because teachers practical theories are embedded in social practices like teaching (Britzman, 2003; Zeichner & Liston, 1996) that vary depending on context, location, culture, and situation. Hursh (1994) suggested that school culture as a context for teaching encourages individualism and maintenance of the existing social order by making it easy for teachers to isolate themselves. Teacher individualism and isolation is a detriment to professional knowledge creation. To create new knowledge about practice, teachers need to engage in critical reflection (Ross, 1994) and interact with other practitioners in ways that lead to a sharing of practical theories, or knowledge about practice, allowing for questioning and thinking together as a means of creating new ideas. The reflective process described here highlights the complex nature of knowledge about teaching and leads to considering personal theorizing as a means for teachers to create knowledge and understanding about their teaching practice.



**Personal theorizing.** Whitehead (1993) argued that through reflexivity and inquiry one can develop living educational theories for practice, and suggested that theory resides within, or can reside within, the individual rather than outside of him or her. Teachers then are knowledge workers and should be positioned as theorizers of practice and curriculum (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Giroux, 1988; Kincheloe, 2001; Ross, 1994, 1996; Segall & Gaudelli, 2007; van Manen, 1977; Zeichner & Liston, 1990). What teachers know can be formulated into knowledge; therefore, teachers should be viewed and view themselves as creators of knowledge about practice, but they are rarely encouraged to do so (Elbaz, 1981). I agree with Cochran-Smith (2003) who suggested teachers could generate local knowledge of practice through inquiry as a means of theorizing. Teachers, who understand inquiry as an approach to teaching and view themselves as theorizers of practice and curriculum, can generate knowledge and theory about practice more efficiently and soundly, because their theories would be grounded in broader theory and knowledge but theorized in ways that provide useful constructs for understanding and acting in their unique contexts.

To theorize about one's own practice is necessarily to consider, again, what is meant by the term personal theorizing. Personal theorizing is the systematic reflection process undertaken by teachers in an attempt to recognize and utilize personal understandings as a part of instructional improvement (Chant, Heafner, & Bennett, 2004). Through this process teachers would be theoreticians of practice, using their imagination to create theory and techniques in combination (Giroux, 1988; Greene, 1995). The implications of this are that teacher candidates should experience social studies as an

apprenticeship in the context of social action; they should be taught to think about practice instead of trained to teach (Giroux, 1988).

Teachers need to find ways to lead the young from acting out of habit to search for ways to interrogate the world, pay attention to it, and think about it using imagination and creativity. Imagination if used, is evidence of a desire to be creative, and may lead teachers to seek ways to improve (Greene, 1995). In Greene's (1995) call to be imaginative she did not tell teachers specifically what to do but rather encouraged them to figure it out using their imagination and creativity, or through personal theorizing, about teaching in their unique contexts. Despite a focus on considering the variety of circumstances and contexts in which teachers practice locally, there is inevitable influence by the national culture and field of social studies education. In particular, an influence of democratic values and beliefs for citizenship education, which is embedded in the national and content area discourse on teaching.

### **Beliefs About Democracy and Personal Practical Theories**

Beliefs are a part of the act of thinking. Dewey (1933/1998) suggested belief is synonymous with thinking. A belief is a condition of willingness to act; that is, a manifestation of meaning that becomes more or less fixed and arises out of experience to lead to meaning created through interaction with others (Hullfish & Smith, 1961). So, beliefs then are the values and ideas individuals hold fast to with varying degree, some more changing, some less.

In a democratic society is there a need for, or is it logical to assume that, individuals have beliefs about democracy? According to Dahl (1998), it is possible that

democratic beliefs contribute to the survival of democratic institutions in society.

Democracy exists on a scale with necessary conditions, including: the failure of an alternative; citizen control of military and police; democratic beliefs and political culture; no strong foreign control that is hostile to democratic; market economy with government regulation; and weak sub-cultural pluralism. The condition of democratic beliefs and political cultures is what I have become most interested in during my graduate studies. In addition to the need for democratic beliefs to sustain democracy, Counts (1939) argued that public schools could, and in many ways should, be the vehicle through which those values and beliefs about democracy are formed in individuals. Counts (1932) also suggested that schools' aims and social goals should align. If a social goal, as Dahl (1998) suggested, is the survival of democracy, or as Green (1999) suggested the deepening of democracy, then public schools could and should work toward those ends.

Cornett (1987; 1990) reported on a single case study of a social studies teacher's personal practical theories of teaching where the teacher identified two theories that were subject matter specific. A number of scholars also recognized that teachers hold beliefs about democracy or citizenship in a democracy and that those beliefs, in many cases do influence teaching practice (see Angell, 1998; Carr, 2008; Chin & Barber, 1990; Heilman, 2001; Hursh & Seneway, 1998; Pryor, 2006). Furthermore, Hursh and Seneway (1998) found that not only did teachers have principles of practice (Kennedy, 2004), or rules of thumb for dealing with the complex tasks of teaching, but that many of those beliefs had democratic underpinnings. This suggests that teachers in a democracy

develop beliefs about teaching that are either overtly democratic, or could be influenced in some ways by democratic values (Hursh & Seneway, 1998; Pryor, 2006).

The above studies' implications for teacher education are that pre-service teachers need opportunities to reflect on their beliefs about democracy and teaching in ways that they define and understand their own vision for democratic education in social studies and the consequences for practice when enacting that vision (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Pryor, 2006). The implications for my own research are that evidence suggests teachers' beliefs about democracy exist and do influence their teaching practice. What is unclear, and absent from the research and literature, are efforts to address questions about what social studies teachers' beliefs are about democracy? And what are the specific ways in which practice is related to social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy?

### **Connecting the Literature to a Research Question**

Research on teacher beliefs consistently stops short of describing the ways in which beliefs are related to teaching practice or teachers' knowledge about practice. By focusing solely on the question of whether or not beliefs can change and a mass agreement that beliefs have influence, research has failed to work toward an understanding of the ways beliefs influence and possibly inform teachers practice and their knowledge of what it means to teach. Pajares (1992) in a review of research on teacher beliefs in educational inquiry argued for a need for research that "...provides insights into the relationship between beliefs on the one hand, and teacher practices, teacher knowledge, and student outcomes on the other" (p. 327). The research needed as a result of this review, is the study of teacher beliefs and the relationship of those beliefs

with teacher practice and teacher knowledge about practice through working to understand the ways in which beginning social studies teachers' beliefs, in the form of personal practical theories, of democracy are related to their teaching practice.

Some view beliefs as perspectives that can be understood, as ideas rooted in context, animated in practice, and held by teachers concerning particular acts of teaching (Dinkelman, 2001). This view of beliefs requires a grounding of research in the practice of the teacher, where beliefs are acted out. Therefore, much of the research is case study, as this approach often takes place in the natural setting (Stake, 1995). Grounding research in the natural setting of practice is in line with the understanding that practice is informed by theory even if it is not recognized as such (Britzman, 2003; McCutcheon, 1992).

Theory exists because it is always present as represented in teacher's practice, but it may not be *known* or explicit or articulated by that teacher (Clark, 1988; Cornett, 1990; Segall, 2002). To continue to reconcile the notion of whether or not implicit theory exists, much of the literature advocated for a concept of praxis. Praxis is the intersection of the complex relationship of theory, in this case personal theory and practice (Kincheloe, 2008). Praxis is thought (theory and reflection) connected to action (Freire, 1970/2009) and is particularly useful in deconstructing the theory and practice binary (Britzman, 2003).

The research questions for this study emerged from the view of teachers as theorizers who produce professional knowledge about practice through examining the beliefs that serve as filters and using those beliefs to construct meaningful and well-reasoned theories of practice as an outgrowth of personal and practical experiences.

The research questions were meant to provide a focus for inquiry through which a deeper understanding of teachers' beliefs about specific aspects of a political and value-laden concept in content, the concept of democracy in this case, influence social studies teachers' practice. In the following chapters a description of the research design, including the research questions, theoretical framework, and methodology, the findings, and a discussion of those findings in the context of the relevant scholarship are presented.

### **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

In Chapter I, I offered a rationale for this research that sought to understand the relationship of three beginning social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy and the relationship of those to practice. Guided by this purpose, in Chapter II, I presented a review of literature exploring the empirical, conceptual, and theoretical literature related to democracy in social studies education, teachers' beliefs and their relation to practice, and personal practical theories of teaching. In this chapter, I describe the research design informed by the rationale and literature review previously discussed. To address the research questions, and better understand the ways these beginning social studies teachers' personal practical theories of democracy in teaching related to their teaching practice, interpretivist research with qualitative data was selected.

With a social constructionist worldview in mind, a philosophy of democratic pragmatism toward deepening democracy framed this collective case study. The research included three beginning social studies teachers and relied on interviews, post-observation debriefing sessions, observations with field notes, and artifacts as methods of collecting data. What follows are explanations of the research questions, theoretical framework and assumptions, context, methods of data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, and the role of the researcher as they all were a part of this research design. These aspects of the study's design were connected by the purpose of understanding the ways in which these beginning social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy were related to their teaching practice.

### **Research Questions**

Patton (1990) suggested that pragmatic questions are ones that are in the concrete and practical, about working to make the world a better place, and wondering if it is working. I developed research questions with this view in mind, and. I began with an etic issue, or the researcher's interests and concerns (Stake, 1978, 1995), that was social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy. My initial overarching question was: In what ways are these beginning social studies teachers' personal practical theories of democracy in teaching related to their practice in the secondary classroom?

#### *Sub questions:*

1. What do these social studies teachers' identify as beliefs about democracy?
2. Where do the participants believe their beliefs in democracy come from?
3. Which beliefs in, or characteristics of, democracy do these participants think are or should be a part of teaching social studies?
4. How do these social studies teachers enact beliefs about democracy as Personal Practical Theories of teaching?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Democracy and pragmatism fit as a theoretical framework because pragmatism, like democratic living, seeks to work within the structures of society, while expecting them to be worked against at the same time. Embedded in democratic theory is the belief that, through such work, change is possible and that democracy is simultaneously being maintained and reconstructed as a result (Stanley, 2005, 2010). This makes a pragmatic framework appropriate in that it considers the consequences of actions for change in



society. Green (2008) recognized the challenge of working toward a deeper democracy through a pragmatic, anti-essentialist philosophy. Working as a diverse community with pluralistic views and perspectives requires a delicate balance between finding common goals and appreciating the difference alongside the variety of perspectives and beliefs that may exist in a community (Parker, 2003).

Green (1999) recognized the tension that results when in a society that emphasizes valuing the individual and at the same time valuing the community. Green positioned her work on democratic deepening pragmatic philosophy in the context of this tension. With this tension in mind, Green (1999, 2008) argued that through a pragmatic philosophy, which recognized difference and at the same time common points of interest, communities of difference can work toward a deeper democracy. She suggested that a pragmatic philosophy for deepening democracy consists of “critically attentive, empirically attuned, democratically motivated processes of theoretical interaction among Deweyan pragmatism, Habermasian critical theory, and compatible streams of feminism and cultural pluralism” (Green, 1999, p. 49). She added that this theoretical interaction manifests “with a cooperative transformative agenda that does not exhaust or dominate their differing separate agendas” (Green, 1999, p. 49). This philosophy is informed by Dewey’s (1916/2009) notion that living in democratic communities requires interaction in ways that acknowledges, and finds, varied points of shared interest as well as some common points of interest. If democracy is to be deepened through pragmatic philosophy, then citizens must take up the arduous task of working toward some common, and some uncommon, goals as well as consequences.

In addition, social constructionism informed this research design and enactment. Social constructionism is where knowledge and understanding have been constructed through a social process (Burr, 2003). For this research, Amber's, Katharine's, and Mitch's beliefs about democracy, and the ways in which those beliefs were related to teaching social studies, were framed by a democratic pragmatism and a social constructionist view of the world. This framework informed design and supported the research questions and findings. Support from both lenses was also evident in the development of participants' personal practical theories and the ways those theories were connected to their practical experiences led to knowledge about practice. As the personal practical theories were constructed through a series of interviews, observations, member checks, and peer reviews, all three participants were given the opportunity to consider, question, and change their previously stated theories about democracy. What follows is the development of a theoretical framework of democratic pragmatism with a social constructionist worldview. This framework is presented here as my own perspective as a researcher and teacher as well as a theoretical frame for this research in that it connects the perspective, topic, questions, and research design.

### **A Democratic Pragmatism**

"Pragma", in the word "pragmatism", means result of action. The philosophy was originally a method of clarifying meaning (Cherryholmes, 1994). Pragmatism is a non-programmatic collection of modern and post-modern, structural and post-structural, methods of analysis that are anti-essentialist, anti-presentationist, and anti-foundationalist (Cherryholmes, 1994; Rorty, 1999). Green (2008) took issue with some notions of

pragmatism, Rorty's in particular, in that he failed to address the past or issues relevant but commonly positioned in the broader context of the problem. Pragmatism as a philosophy toward deepening democracy must acknowledge and address these matters by incorporating critical and communal perspectives. Doing so is necessary in order to work in communities of difference toward a goal of a deeper democracy, one where all people enjoy the freedoms and rights associated with such a society.

Pragmatism calls us to act on structures but fully expects them to be deconstructed, reconstructed, and deconstructed again. There is little value placed on chaos but the pragmatic view expects chaos to be found around the corner. These attributes make the framework of pragmatism a fit with democratic contexts, as it requires us to consider consequences in ways that require the tolerance of others' ideas and promote investigation into matters of social justice and emancipation (Cherryholmes, 1994). The fit of democracy with pragmatic philosophy is evident because of the ways in which pragmatism seeks to work within the structures of society while expecting them to be worked against at the same time. Embedded in democratic theory is the belief that change is possible and necessary, and that democracy is simultaneously being maintained and reconstructed all the time (Stanley, 2005, 2010). This makes a pragmatic framework appropriate in that it considers the consequences of actions for change in society.

Pragmatic philosophy is flexible in its application as evidenced by the range of pragmatic views espoused by scholars including critical pragmatism (Cherryholmes, 1999), genealogical pragmatism (Stuhr, 1997), prophetic pragmatism (West, 1989), a democratic deepening pragmatism (Green, 2008), and a more theoretical pragmatism by

Rorty (1999) who argued that knowing should be replaced by hope. In addition to considering consequences, Rorty (1999) identified classical pragmatism as being anti-foundationalist, anti-dualist, anti-essentialist, it recognizes that theory supports practice, and could serve as a means to work toward fixing, or improving, social injustice. Pragmatism then may be concerned with such perspectives as questioning and critiquing (critical perspective), life in pluralistic society (communal perspective), and self-actualization (personal perspective) (Stuhr, 1997). Furthermore, Stuhr suggested one of the attributes that should be included in pragmatic philosophy is the unity of theory and practice, or praxis. These concepts, discussed at greater length in previous chapters are a theoretically sound fit with a pragmatic view that includes democratic values and works to deepen democracy (Green, 1999, 2008).

Ross (2006) argued that social justice and democracy are the purpose of social studies and, as such, teachers should focus on outcomes and consequences that reflect these purposes. In fact, pragmatism is possible within democracy: (a) because free-flowing discourse is necessary and efficient open communication between individuals and groups enhances possible outcomes; and (b) because pragmatism encourages experimentation, democracy itself is experimental. Experiments are problematic and require problem solving plus deliberation to develop courses of action that produce desired consequences (Cherryholmes, 1999); therefore, democracy and pragmatism are naturally connected (Powell, 2010). This reflects my own views of teaching, teacher education, and the world in that a democratic pragmatism is a philosophy characterized by the need for communities of difference to find points of

common interest and work together toward a better society (Green, 2008). This view of democratic pragmatism also supports the choice of the research topic and subsequent research questions. Support is also evident in that this research effort sought to understand the ways other teachers' view the society in which they live and teach, and asked them to share their own beliefs about democracy and purposes in teaching social studies as they were related to practical experiences.

Democratic pragmatism also served as a theoretical framework for this research. The act of teaching and concern with beliefs as they are related to purposes and practice in social studies are pragmatic in that embedded in the practice of teaching and concern with purpose is the need to consider desired consequences and the way or ways one might reach those consequences through actions (McCutcheon, 1992). As a result, teachers participating in this research were asked to reflect on their purposes for teaching, planning processes, decision-making, actions in the classroom, and the consequences associated with these aspects of their teaching practice (see Interview Protocol, Appendix D).

Pragmatists believe people should think in a way that throws the way they think they think overboard. What people believe to be true is really what they think is good to believe to be true (Menand, 1997). According to Menand (1997), a belief is *true* when it leads us into more useful relations with the world. This sense of truth in pragmatic thinking supports actions and concern for consequences that lead to developing a community and deepening democracy to make life in democratic society better. This is

relevant in that this research sought to study teachers' beliefs about democracy and, from their perspective the ways in which those beliefs were related to their teaching practice.

With this philosophy in mind data was collected through interviews and post-observation debriefing sessions with the utmost respect for the teachers' perspectives and understanding. In this study teachers' beliefs were considered true, because they believed them to lead to more useful relations with the world. In these cases, Amber, Katharine, and Mitch expressed beliefs that, in their views, led to more useful relations in the world in which their teaching practice resided, the classroom, school, and community in which they taught. These beliefs about democracy in relation to practice have, in previous chapters, been identified and structured as personal practical theories of democracy (Chant, 2008; Cornett, 1987, 1990; Cornett, Yeotis, & Terwilliger, 1990). These theories were practical in that they were to be enacted through a process of teaching, and that the teachers' theories, through practice, could have been changed or adjusted to meet the needs of varying contexts and situations.

In addition, pragmatism is a fit with studying teaching because teaching itself is a pragmatic act in that teachers have consequences in mind, then act in ways to work toward those desired ends (McCutcheon, 1992). If the desired consequences are not achieved, theories may change or be abandoned. Pragmatism supports changes in theories based on consequences of enacting those theories in our experience and helps to interpret notions by tracing practical consequences (Menand, 1997). For this reason, participants were given opportunities to adjust or change their personal practical theories at the beginning of each interview. Although none of the teachers changed the wording

of any of their personal practical theories, there were nuanced changes in the ways they talked about them, and changes in the connections the teachers made to practical experiences as they reflected and included a wider range of experiences. These changes will be discussed at length in Chapter IV. Allowing the opportunity to make changes to personal practical theories, and positioning knowledge of practice locally, with the teacher, is in line with pragmatism and assumes a social constructionist view of knowledge.

### **Social Constructionism**

As a part of my own worldview, in the democratic pragmatism philosophy that framed this study, the perspective of the nature of knowledge (epistemology) and reality (ontology) is one of social constructionism in that it assumes reality and knowing are socially constructed (Stake, 1995). How each mind reflects reality is different and only through sharing these different perspectives on what is happening, on experience, can knowledge about it be created. Furthermore, the pragmatist philosophy generally assumes it is false to think beliefs are true only if they correspond with the way *it* really is (Menand, 2001).

Social constructionism is “the belief that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (Crotty, 2003, p. 42). To maintain this view, I recognized that beliefs arise out of experience and are concerned with future experience, so that meaning arises with experience through interaction with others (Hullfish & Smith, 1961)

and leads to decisions and actions in future experiences. Such a view required that I acknowledge the potential of interactions between the teachers, as participants, and myself, as the researcher, to lead to new understandings of the ideas and concepts we discussed. Therefore, subtle changes in the ways participants connected and talked about their beliefs about democracy as they were related to practical experiences was understandable and expected. As a result of this expectation, all participants were asked to describe how they thought participating in the research study influenced them, in particular as a teacher (see Interview Protocol, Appendix D).

According to Burr (2003), the social constructionist perspective includes one or more of the following: (a) a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge; (b) a historical and cultural specificity; (c) the view that knowledge is sustained by social process; or (d) that knowledge and social action go together. In this research I approached the design and enactment of the research process from the view that knowledge is sustained and constructed through a social process. In addition, knowledge is contextual and dependent on the location of the social process. In this instance knowledge about practice was created through the social process of teaching, from the perspectives of the individual participants learning and practicing in their unique classroom, school, and community contexts. Additionally, the data and final report of this research were products of the interaction of the participant and researcher through interviews, observations, and analysis of documents, with member checks and peer review playing roles in shaping the research outcomes.



Social constructionism fits with pragmatic goals in that it is anti-essentialist and supports inquiry into the ways these teachers' beliefs influenced their practice and, in turn, the consequences of practice for their thinking and decision-making about future practice. Also, a social constructionist stance in research demands that design and implementation of research reflect a concern for: (a) issues of objectivity because objectivity is impossible, (b) that research is not value-free, and (c) the position of participants in the research, in that social constructionism favors the democratization of the relationship between the researcher and participants (Burr, 2003). I recognized that it is impossible to escape the influence of power positioned with the researcher in the researcher-participant relationship. I, therefore, worked to keep these concerns at the forefront of this research while being explicit about the interactions and experiences as the researcher-participant relationship evolved. Over the course of six months of interactions and communication, a relationship was developed with each of the three participants that reflected trust and mutual respect through the sharing of personal and professional stories and thinking.

### **Researcher Background and Role**

The role of a researcher may be such that they serve as a teacher to inform, socialize, or liberate; advocate or argue for the participants or a cause; evaluator of a program, person, or agency; biographer to describe a person in depth; and interpreter to substantiate or recognize new meaning (Stake, 1995). As the researcher and author of this dissertation reporting the findings, I have described these three teachers in depth including the context in which they teach. Throughout the research process it was

necessary to discuss the ways each participant was characterizing the relationship between their beliefs about democracy and their teaching practice. One of my roles, then, was to recognize meaning and interpretation and attempt to solicit clear explanations of what the participants meant by their use of words and concepts that may be interpreted differently. For example, concepts like freedom, rights, equality, liberty, choice, and decision-making and the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for each were typically discussed as a part of our conversations.

In this collective case study, I have considered these roles of the researcher as possible ways I, through a position of power, may have influenced the participant, context, and report during the collection of data, analysis of data, and writing of the final report. Maxwell (2005) warned of the importance of being aware of your own goals as they will influence and drive the research in some way. My own beliefs about democracy include a communal, personal, and critical blend of democratic living with a strong belief that democratic citizenship is the central purpose of social studies education. I could not prevent the influence of this mindset, the resulting assumptions about researching teaching and learning in social studies, or the power held by a researcher. However, I attempted to be explicit about it and consider the ways in which it may influence my own decisions and the research process as the study unfolded and final report was written.

### **Theoretical Assumptions**

For this research I recognized that I made a series of theoretical assumptions based on literature and my understanding of prior work in this field. First, all practical activities are guided by some theory (Apple, 2000; Ross, Cornett, & McCutcheon, 1992),

but that theory and beliefs about teaching and learning may be largely unarticulated (Elbaz, 1981). My second assumption was that beliefs do influence practice in some ways and to varying degrees based on a number of factors and variables (see Britzman, 2003; Dinkleman, 2001; Griffin, 1940; Price, 2008; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). I did not claim that beliefs or theory exist in the sense that they are known. I did, however, assume that teachers, whether they have written or spoken about their beliefs regarding democracy in education, might still have them. This is relevant in that a teacher's actions are representative of a decision made by that teacher. It was the basis for the decision, thought, or belief that interested me in this research, followed by the thoughts of that teacher regarding what happened, during and after the experience.

My third assumption was that "interaction is inherently dynamic and interpretive and addresses how people create, enact, and change meanings and actions" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 7). Therefore, knowledge is never a matter of direct disclosure (Hullfish & Smith, 1961) and meaning is historically contingent, contextually bound, socially constructed, and always problematic (Britzman, 2003). For these reasons I selected case study as a methodology for an interpretive study, allowing the co-construction of data through a series of interviews, observations, and the collection of documents created or used by the participants. This approach allowed me to work with the participants in the natural setting of practice to understand what they believed and the ways in which they thought those beliefs were related to, or influenced their practice.

The need to co-construct the data and subsequent understanding was also based on my fourth assumption that multiple realities and perspectives exist (Lincoln & Guba,

1985; Merriam, 1998). Location matters, because we are all in different places we will all be different (Greene, 1995); and the daily decisions made by educators are culturally, economically, environmentally, and politically contextualized (Price, 2008). Therefore, it became necessary to approach researching teachers' beliefs about democratic practice by being in the context in which it occurs and working with the participant to create both the data and understanding of the experience. Furthermore, if people cannot understand a subject when it is specific, they cannot understand something more general later (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This means to develop a broad understanding of a subject or problem, one must also work to understand it, or aspects of it, on a more focused, specific level. Case study was selected to allow for a deeper understanding of specific phenomena in the natural setting. This research process highlighted the complexity of the context and situations in which these teachers' beliefs about democracy were related to their teaching practice.

Finally, I assumed that teaching is a political, value-laden (Apple, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2001), and moral activity (Liston & Zeichner, 1987). This means that theorizing occurs and is evidenced by practice that is the result of considering, or failing to consider, the consequences of practical choices in and about a teaching and learning situation. It was a concern for the consequences of choices and action on teachers' thinking and decision-making that led to relying on a pragmatic theory as a theoretical frame for the problem of the ways in which teachers' beliefs influence their practice. Either these teachers have considered their beliefs' influence to some extent or they have not. Regardless, there were consequences for, teacher thinking, practice, and student learning.

Even though this research effort did not seek to highlight specific consequences for students in the participants' classes, it was important to consider them in terms of how thinking about them, or relationships with them, may have influenced these teachers' planning, purpose, decision-making, and goals. Teachers have multiple purposes for their choices and actions in the classroom (Kennedy, 2004); that is, they have an intended consequence in mind when preparing to teach and while acting out those preparations in the classroom. Their thinking about whether or not that consequence resulted from their actions and what to do was a pragmatic question.

### **Rationale for Design**

An interpretive approach that relied on qualitative methods of data collection and analysis was employed to better understand the influence of teachers' personal practical theories of democracy on their thinking, planning, and other aspects of teaching in their classroom. Merriam (1998) suggests that case study is well suited to qualitative, interpretive, and naturalistic paradigms. Interpretive research treats personal meaning as a focal point of inquiry, uncovering beliefs and customs that are the foundations of human behavior (Ross, Cornett, & McCutcheon, 1992). This approach to research becomes most useful when the desire is to understand, in detail, a complex issue or problem and value the participant's perspective (Creswell, 2007). Through this approach I hoped to better understand what these beginning social studies teachers believe about democracy, in terms of personal practical theories, and gain insight into the roles of those beliefs in social studies teaching and learning. I also hoped to understand where the teachers thought their beliefs originated as they might inform their process and decision-making.

Finally, I hoped this research would result in implications for social studies teacher education in terms of introducing democratic purposes into teacher education programs.

The method and theory linkage is important because it impacts how you study the world and determines what you learn about the world (Patton, 1990). For example, grounded theory analysis depends on methods that take you into the real world. This is because findings should be closely linked to data in that real world, and in this case data constructed in the context of the research (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore, an interpretive study relying on collective case study with a constructivist grounded theory approach to analysis was employed to investigate the question of how, or in what ways, are these beginning social studies teachers' personal practical theories of democracy related their teaching practice?

### **Methods**

This research study was designed as a collective case study with a constructivist grounded theory approach to analysis for the following reasons. First, using other similar work on teacher cognition and purpose in practice as a model (see Cornett, 1987, 1990; Hawley, 2010) it was clear that case study offers a way to understand the unique complexities of a bound case. In this instance, three participants served as cases to be studies in depth (Stake, 1995). While factors outside of the bound cases were considered, such as the district tax levy, they were not a primary focus in this research. Instead the intention was to focus on understanding the ways in which these three participants were thinking about and enacting their personal practical theories of democracy in their teaching. Second, case study offered the flexibility necessary for choices regarding data

collection and analysis to allow for a constructivist grounded theory approach to analyzing data. According to Charmaz (2006), constructivist grounded theory is a good fit for research that seeks to understand a process, and in the case of this research, it was a process of thinking about and enacting teaching practice as it related to beliefs about democracy.

### **Case Study**

Teaching is practical work carried out in a socially constructed and institutionalized world of schooling. In addition, practical theories are theories in use. These theories are developed, not acquired, through inquiry and warranted by experience in one site making them highly contextual and subject to the influence a variety of factors within the teaching and learning setting (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986). Case study was useful, in part, because of its compatibility with experiential understanding (Stake, 1978), like that of practical theories of teaching. Because schools are socially constructed contexts for practice that both influence and are influenced by the participants' actions, case study was an appropriate methodology through which to engage in the study of this interaction as it was bound and focused.

Case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its natural context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomena and context are not so clearly evident (Yin, 2009). This creates a need to consciously keep the boundaries of a case in focus (Stake, 1978). The boundaries for this case were established by the question, which also established the selection criteria for participants. The study was bound in that it looked only at these three beginning

teachers' personal practical theories of democracy and the ways in which they were related to their teaching practice and thinking within public secondary (7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) social studies education. From within these boundaries, the teachers' actions, decisions, pedagogy, planning, and assessments were viewed and discussed.

This collective case study (Stake, 1995) included three participants, each serving as a case guided by the same questions. More than one participant was chosen to compare experiences and data for common themes and unique nuances. This comparison was intended to be a means to better understand the complexity of the contexts in which these participants taught and the processes each teacher went through when considering the ways in which their personal practical theories of democracy formed and were related to their practice.

### **District and School Context**

**District.** The school district where this research took place was a large public school in the Midwest. The district earned an “excellent with distinction” rating by the state for the two years prior to this study<sup>3</sup>. There were more than 14,000 students attending 23 school buildings, including three high schools. The district had 1,700 students with special needs, 3,000 gifted students, and 1,300 students who were English as a Second Language (ESL) students. There were 70 different countries represented by the student population, this included a large number of students born in Somalia. About

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<sup>3</sup> All district data and statistics were obtained via the district website and 2011 district report card, retrieved in February 2012.



80% of the students who graduate pursue post-secondary education at a university or college.

With per pupil expenditures over \$10,000, the proposed tax levy became a contentious issue in the community. The district levy failed in November 2011 just before I began data collection at South and Central High Schools. The political tension put pressure on students who faced losing programs and activities, and on Amber, Katharine, and Mitch who all faced losing their jobs at the end of the school year. In addition, members of the community actively mobilized against the levy and regularly called the school buildings, and questioned students, to catch school personnel discussing the levy in ways that were prohibited by district policy. All three teachers in this study noted in their initial interviews that they were instructed not to discuss the levy issue with students in class. Avoiding these conversations was particularly difficult for these three social studies teachers who had students that were very interested in the tax levy as a relevant local political issue. All three teachers would have loved to be able to use this interest as a way for students to learn about politics and have meaningful discussion of a controversial political issue.

**Schools.** Central High School where Katharine and Mitch taught was a comprehensive, four-year public high school, with an enrollment of over 1,600 students. Since opening its doors in the fall of 2003 through the year prior to this study, Central High School had been rated “Excellent”, the highest designation by the State of Ohio. South High School is where Amber taught. South High School had over 1,400 students and is a four-year public high school. Like Central, the school day consists of seven

49-minute periods during the semester-oriented schedule where students may schedule up to six classes. In addition, South offered the International Baccalaureate curriculum.<sup>4</sup>

### **Participant Selection**

Because I was investigating a specific question that dealt with social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy and the ways in which those beliefs related to their practice, purposefully selection participants based on a criteria was necessary (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). In addition, the focus on beginning teachers and recent trends in the job market in Ohio secondary public schools made it challenging for graduates of teacher education programs to obtain full-time positions in the field of social studies. With this in mind, participants were selected based on convenience and location, but with the necessary criteria for participation including: (a) being a beginning teacher, in their first three years; (b) teaching at least one social studies course; (c) teaching responsibilities were at any public school close enough to conduct regular weekly or bi-weekly observations over a six-month period; (c) participants had to be considered effective teachers by their administrators or colleagues; and (d) participants had to claim to have and be willing to discuss their beliefs about democracy and the relationship of those beliefs to their practical experiences and reflections.

First, the participant had to be a beginning teacher. For the purposes of this research a beginning teacher was a teacher in her or his first three years of employment.

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<sup>4</sup> All information and data about the district and schools were obtained from the district website and the school report card for 2011, retrieved in February of 2012.

This did not require the teacher to be in their first three-years out of a teacher education program. It was preferred that the teachers were within five years of completing a licensure program. Second, the participant had to be teaching at least one secondary level (7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades) social studies course for its duration. Participants were employed part-time or full-time as employees of a public school district and taught at least one social studies course.

Third, participants had to be considered effective teachers by their administrator or colleagues. Cornett (1990) identified the ethical dilemma of working with ineffective teachers and failing to intervene in deliberate ways focused on improving their teaching. With this in mind, I was directed by the curriculum coordinator to begin with teachers at my request but to teachers who were deemed effective by colleagues and administrators. In addition, this research was not about effective teaching practices broadly rather focused on more specific aspects of teachers' beliefs about the potentially problematic concept of democracy in content and practice. The nature of democracy allowed for a plurality of views and perspectives that would be viewed as acceptable or 'good', mitigating the need for intervention of ineffective democratic practice.

Finally, each participant had to claim to have beliefs about democracy and democratic purposes for teaching social studies (see Interview Protocol, Appendix D). These beliefs about democracy and democratic purposes did not have to be the teachers' priority as they planned, taught, or reflected. If when asked about beliefs in democracy or democratic purposes for teaching social studies the teacher claimed to have none, there would have been no way to understand the teacher's beliefs because there would have

been no way for the participant to articulate their belief. Teachers' had to, in some way, be able to articulate their beliefs about democracy in relation to practice to be included in this study. Much of this research took place in the natural setting of teaching, the classroom. Therefore, the case was bound by the same criteria used to select participants. Case boundaries were established to include beginning teachers, in secondary social studies classroom, who had claimed to have beliefs about democracy in relation to teaching and democratic purposes for teaching social studies.

### **Data Collection**

Yin (2009) suggested that case study relies on multiple sources of data to cope with the many variables that may influence the phenomena. This also helps to build trustworthiness in the research. Glesne (1999) and Creswell (2007) suggested interviews, field notes from observations, and documents as sources of data for interpretive research and case study (Yin, 2009) that seeks to understand participants' perspectives and the case in depth. Interviews were the primary source of data collected because in this study the focus was on what the three beginning teachers believe about democracy and democratic life and how they think those beliefs were related to their teaching practice in social studies.

Two semi-structured interviews, one prior to observations and one at the conclusion of observations provided an opportunity to collect in depth data on how and what participants were thinking, and it helped to establish a relationship with the participants that led to trust and honesty with regard to what the participant was thinking and expressing about the content, process, and experience. In addition, 11 observations

for Amber, 10 observations for Katharine, and nine observations for Mitch with field notes for all observations, were collected to triangulate data. This offered an opportunity to discuss aspects of the researcher and participant's perspectives on what occurred in the classroom. Observations also put the researcher in the natural setting of the case serving to keep the research connected to the data being collected and the real world of the participants' practice and provided valuable context for this research. Lesson plans, unit plans, course outlines, materials used during presentations and lectures, project outlines and descriptions, and emails were used as artifacts that were collected for this research.

These documents and artifacts served to triangulate data collection, as well as, work toward a better understanding of teachers' beliefs about democracy as they influence practice by providing additional context. Collecting data using these methods and studying teachers' thinking about democracy and practice through bounded cases offered an understanding of the complex nature of how three beginning social studies teachers' beliefs and thinking about democracy was related to their practice. The following sections elaborate on the data collection methods with support from relevant scholarship on qualitative and interpretive research.

**Interviews.** Two semi-structured in depth interviews were conducted to develop a rapport with the participants and serve as a primary source of data to be analyzed for findings. These interviews were intended to be a conversational semi-structured interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) that through the interaction of the researcher and participant constructed a set of data to understand participants' beliefs about democracy, teaching and learning, and how the participant thought about, reflected on, and worked to

enact their beliefs in practice. By allowing these interviews to be conversational and flexible, but paced and focused, a deeper understanding and richer sense of participants' perspectives was gained (Charmaz, 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). As suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005) it was necessary in this process to be open and recognize that the views and perspectives of the participant were as legitimate to them as my own were to myself.

Interviews were topical because they were about defining a subject, democracy in teaching, and process, thinking about and ways in which beliefs about democracy influenced their teaching (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The interviews were semi-structured with the intent of seeking depth and detail of the process, a vividness of descriptions of images or iconic moments, the nuance of "truth" within complex circumstances, and a richness of idea and different themes, anticipated or not. To elicit vividness and depth, the final interview (see Interview Protocol, Appendix D) focused on participants' conceptions of democracy, democratic living, the meanings they had of specific aspects of democracy and the connections they identified in the relationship between their personal practical theories of democracy and their practical experiences.

In addition, interviews consisted of main questions for scaffolding, follow-up questions that were specific to anticipated comments, and probes that kept the discussion going while providing more detail and depth (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). These interview approaches allowed data to be co-constructed by the researcher and participant through conversation and was used to build and maintain a rapport with participants (deMarrais, 2004). The process consisted of two in depth semi-structured interviews (see Interview

Protocol, Appendix D), one at the beginning prior to any observations but after recruitment and one at the conclusion of the observations. Participants were offered the opportunity to meet for additional interviews as needed, but none of the participants made this request. Interviews were conducted in person, at the convenience of the participant, but within a day, or even minutes, of observing the participant's teaching.

**Observations and field notes.** In case study, observations are a common source of data as the researcher works to build each case and interpret data. This research relied on observations to place the researcher in the natural setting of the classroom, develop a rapport with the teacher-participants, and provide additional context for the study that is valuable to developing the cases and a greater depth of understanding through rich description. These observations served as one of two secondary sources of data and were meant to provide valuable context for these cases, keep the researcher connected to the natural setting of the data and context in which it occurred, and help to build a rapport between the researcher and participants.

Initial observations were conducted with attention paid specifically to addressing the research questions but field notes also documented contextual factors of the participant and setting beyond the confines of the questions including the school and community from the participants' perspectives. I also allowed initial and emerging questions to shape observational focus for subsequent observations (Adler & Adler, 1994). For example, my initial focus during observations was guided by getting a sense of the practice and context in which each teacher taught with a focus on the relationship between the teacher's beliefs about democracy in practice. As observations continued

post-observation debriefing and previous observation field-notes helped to focus on specific aspects of each teacher's classroom practice. For example, all three teachers expressed the importance of collaboration or working well with others as an important aspect of teaching for democratic living, so later observations sought to note the specific, and nuanced, ways collaborative activities were experienced by the teacher and students in the classroom.

In addition, observations entailed systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). For example, during the first observation of Katharine's class the focus was on recording as much as possible about the setting, behavior, and general happenings of the classroom. Figure 2 is an excerpt from field-notes.

Field notes, like this, were taken during the class observation and revisited within a day after to add detail, questions, and thoughts I had regarding the experiences observed in the classroom. These field notes were sent to the participant after her or his class was observed (see Sample Field Notes, Appendix E). This allowed participants to review a record before and during interviews or post-observation debriefs as a form of member checking and promoted a focus on specific experiences the participant or researcher wished to discuss.

*Honors US and Global Studies I and II*

**Lesson:** French Revolution – the Cahiers

- discussed a primary source to get a sense of what their complaints were by the French

**Classroom:** Desks were arranged in rows 4 in a row and 7 rows. There are pictures and posters all over the walls. Electoral map, 9-11 poster, Quote from



K explained the handouts, vocab on the front will be in glossary, on the back is guided reading for chapter 11 section 1. Then asked them to put it away because it is homework.

K then told students we were going to talk about the reading they had done, primary source reading. She helped them pronounce the word Cahiers and used a computer to demonstrate pronunciation. (Field-Notes, Katharine, 11/29/11)

*Figure 2.* Excerpt from field notes.

As a researcher approaching this collective case study from a social constructionist perspective, I was involved in interpreting and constructing the understanding of how these participants' personal practical theories of democracy were related to their teaching practice. As such, field notes (Glesne, 1999) taken during observation of teaching practice offered the researcher another source of data through which to develop an understanding of how these three teachers were working to enact their personal practical theories of democracy. Glesne (1999) also explained how field notes could be a valuable place to begin analyzing data and discussing the researcher's subjectivities and hunches. The field notes included what I, as the researcher-observer, noticed occurring from the beginning to the end of the class period observed. Moreover, field notes captured the on-goings of research and record the detailed moments of inquiry in the field, in the form of written observations, questions to discuss in post-observation debriefing sessions, and memos (see Sample Field Notes, Appendix E). Recording these field notes, including details about the process and moments of inquiry, was essential for considering what was observed in the moment of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). What the teacher did and said instructionally was recorded for the entire class period and small group or individual interactions. These field notes, written immediately during or shortly after observations, were reviewed and memos on them were written weekly. Collecting field notes as data included my observations and thoughts or interpretations as events and interactions were observed. Participants were given an opportunity to review and comment on field notes of their teaching practice after every observation with additional discussion of specific aspects of field notes occurring during

post-observation debriefing. These discussions, which were audio-recorded and transcribed, allowed for on-going collaboration in the construction of meaning as the research progresses.

Weekly observations were scheduled from November 2011 through February 2012 at the convenience of the participant and school calendar. Observations were finished when the researcher and teacher had built a sufficient rapport and the emergence of additional context or experiences related to the relationship between the teacher's beliefs about democracy to their teacher practice were not anticipated in future observations. A sufficient rapport with the participants was evidenced by open communication and the sharing of personal thoughts and ideas that were not common when we first met. In addition, observations continued until the teacher and researcher both believed no additional context or unique experiences related to the research focus would emerge. With this in mind Amber's classes were observed a total of 11 times, Katharine's class was observed ten times, and Mitch's class was observed nine times.

Observations were scheduled for class sessions where the teacher and researcher believed the possibility of personal practical theories of democracy coming into play exists. For example, if the teacher was giving a traditional test where students were working independently on the assessment the entire class period or the class had an adjusted schedule for school functions and assembly, that day was not scheduled for observation. An effort was made to observe teaching practice regardless of the type of instruction planned as long as the scheduled observation allowed the researcher to see a full class period and the teacher had planned a lesson designed for student learning

through instructional methods or activities organized by the teacher. This was done without concern for whether or not the teacher thought it would be particularly democratic because I hoped to observe a picture of that teacher's instruction over time, regardless of whether or not the teacher thought their beliefs about democracy or related democratic purpose were a priority for that day.

***Post-observation debrief sessions.*** At least three post-observation debriefs lasting 20 to 35 minutes took place after every other observation to give all the participants an opportunity to reflect on their practice and specific experiences that occurred during observations. Amber had four post-observation debriefing sessions and Katharine and Mitch each had three. These post-observation debriefs were audio recorded and transcribed as interview data. These sessions primarily focused on discussing practical experiences, decision-making, and purposes as they were related to individual personal practical theories and beliefs about democracy in social studies education. Field notes, memos, and artifacts helped provide topics and questions for discussion during these conversations. In addition, at each debriefing participants were offered the opportunity to review and revise their personal practical theories of democracy in teaching and freely discuss potential connections to their thinking and experiences in their teaching practice. As such, these sessions were also used to give the participants an opportunity to reflect on how their beliefs and theories may or may not have changed and how they thought their personal practical theories of democracy were being enacted over the course of months of teaching.

**Artifacts.** Artifacts were collected as another form of data. The artifacts included: lesson plans, assignment descriptions, instructions, course syllabi, pacing guides, project guidelines and products, lecture notes and PowerPoint presentations, and grading rubrics created or used by the participants. The collection of documents for review was less obtrusive than interviews and observations but offered richness in portraying the values and beliefs of participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The artifacts also provided additional context for these cases as well as valuable points of discussion for interview conversations. Adding a layer of richness in the portrayal of participants' beliefs was a primary focus in collecting these documents.

Collecting class related documents offered additional aspects of the participants' experiences for discussion during post-observation sessions. Documents were collected as data because they were a part of teaching practice and offered insight into and an understanding of democratic aspects of practice and teacher thinking, goals, and purposes with regard to instruction and potential student learning in social studies. In addition, documents and artifacts helped to triangulate data and build trustworthiness. Teacher-participants were asked to provide these documents at observations, interviews, or via email at their convenience. Participants were informed of this during recruitment so they were not surprised or overwhelmed by a request to collect these instructional documents. Table 1 shows the ways each source of data collected addressed the research questions.

Table 1

*How Data Sources Addressed the Research Questions*

Question #	Interviews	Observations	Artifacts/Documents
Overarching Question	X	X	X
Q1	X		X
Q2	X		
Q3	X		X
Q4	X	X	X

**Organization of Data**

The two in-depth interviews, three to four post-observation debrief sessions, observation field-notes, and artifact documents that made up the data for this research were collected between October 2011 and March 2012. The intention was that these data would help in writing thick and rich descriptions of the cases and research findings (Merriam, 1998). To work toward these thick, rich descriptions data needed to be organized, transcribed, and systematically analyzed. Prior to and throughout the analysis and writing phases of this research, data were collected and kept in a locked private folder on the researcher's computer. Folders were created for data collection, data analysis, and writing. In the data collection folder, each participant had an additional folder that contained field notes, memos, audio recordings, transcribed interview data, and artifacts. Transcribed interview and post-observation data was analyzed using TAMs qualitative data analysis software creating files that were also specific to the data type and

participant; then, later a file specific to the entire project that included all transcribed data analyzed. In addition, informal notes, and formal memos, were kept in these secure folders. The purpose of these notes and memos were to keep track of researcher's thoughts and decision-making regarding process, coding, initial themes and categories, and preliminary findings.

### **Data Analysis**

The interpretivist approach is more about understanding rather than explaining and allows for indeterminacy rather than seeking causality. The analytic process selected for this research was constructivist grounded theory. Constructivist grounded theory, as a method, is in line with the interpretivist perspective in that it relies on data that is constructed between participants and the researcher to produce a substantive theory that is grounded in the data and provides an understanding of the specific process rather than an explanation of a broad problem or causal relationship (Charmaz, 2006).

Interpretivism, then, calls for imaginative understanding of a studied phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006) in this research that included the ways in which these three social studies teachers' personal practical theories were related to their teaching practice.

Grounded theory is rooted in symbolic interactionism, which is a theory about human behavior and an approach to inquiry about it (Annells, 1996). Symbolic interactionism examines the interaction between individuals and small groups and objects making an interactive process. Patton (1990) recognized that symbolic interactionism is based on three major premises: (a) human beings act toward things on the basis of meanings they have for them, (b) meanings of things arise out of social interaction with

other people, and (c) meanings of things are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with things they encounter. The process is an interpretive and meaning-making endeavor where shared symbols are used to communicate meaning (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). This inductive process includes unitizing (or coding) data and categorizing from codes through a constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Classical grounded theory is philosophically realist and modified objectivist in perspective, resulting in theory that leans toward post-positivism. However, when it is relativist, subjectivist, and dialectical the grounded theory method has an evolving fit to the constructivist paradigm (Annells, 1996).

Constructivist grounded theory produces a substantive theory out of an inductive process of analysis of qualitative data (i.e., interviews) and accepts a pragmatic view. Charmaz (2006) suggested that constructivist grounded theory is symbolic interactionism informed by pragmatic philosophy. This assumes that society, reality, and self are constructed through interaction and thus rely on language and communication (Charmaz, 2006). Pragmatism connects with this approach in that, as Cherryholmes (1994) argued, language is important because meaning and how words are used to describe the world are a part of pragmatic thinking. This is why pragmatism relates so well to the problem of democracy, which is, at its core a problem of meaning. The democratic pragmatism that serves as a framework for this research necessarily connects the problem of democracy, a problem of meaning and weighing consequences, with the process selected for analyzing this qualitative data.



Constructivist grounded theory is a process of analysis best suited to researching problems that involve a process (Charmaz, 2006). I employed this approach as a means to better understand a process of enacting beliefs, especially the ways that participants' beliefs about democracy were related to practice. The data were co-constructed by the researcher and participant making it constructivist then analyzed through various steps of coding making it inductive. This approach fits with case study in that case study has no standard format (Creswell, 2007) allowing for flexibility in design to meet the needs of the study, researcher, and participants.

With the constructivist paradigm in mind, the constant comparative method was applied to work toward a substantive theory, one connected only to the focus of a particular context or case(s) studied (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is a substantive theory because no A priori theory could encompass the multiple realities that are likely to be encountered (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this reason, the theory developed through this constructivist approach was specific to the cases of this study and not intended for application beyond the boundaries of this research. This served as a process to gain insight and understanding into these teachers' processes and thinking with regard to their beliefs about democracy and the influence of those beliefs on their teaching practice.

**Coding procedures.** To build a substantive theory an inductive process is necessary and relies on coding. Coding is attaching labels to segments of data that depict what that data is about to help sort, separate, and synthesize data (Charmaz, 2006). This

process of systematic analysis included initial (or open) coding, in vivo coding, focused coding, axial coding, and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006).

Initial coding involved sticking close to the data, being open with it, and followed a line-by-line approach to attaching descriptive words to chunks of data. The coding process relied on TAMs Analyzer software throughout the process and formatted the coding as bookends for each line of data analyzed through initial coding. For example,

{DemocraticSkills} {StudentCollaboration} Yeah, well like for example we did a group activity the other day, um I call them stations I kind of like set up tables around the room and I think I mentioned that before and I set it up the other day, and I didn't let them pick their groups, they had to work with who they were with and some were complaining and not happy about it but I mean they got through it. {/StudentCollaboration} {/DemocraticSkills} (Amber, Interview, 11/22/11)

In vivo coding allowed participants' meanings of relevant words or concepts to be considered. During interviews, participants were asked about their understanding and meanings for specific aspects of their beliefs about democracy including decision-making, choice, freedom, capitalism, democracy, and difference. For example,

Q: Okay, can you define freedom?

A: (laughs) I hate you right now, okay freedom, freedom is the ability to think whatever it is you would like to think and act upon your thoughts however you choose as long as you are not putting others in harm or breaking the law, that's freedom. (Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12)

In vivo coding allowed for a way to try to understand and clarify what participants meant by potentially vague or ambiguous words and phrases.

Focused coding was the next step with a more directed and selective approach to coding. This was more conceptual with the goal of synthesizing and explaining larger segments of data using earlier codes or categories. For example,

{Image} {ControversyInTheClassroom} {TeacherEfficacy} {PoliticalBiasNeutrality} {TeacherDecisionMaking} {DemocraticValues} {DemocracyAndTeaching} {TensionValuesPractice} M: I think that's something I won't compromise on, like I just think it's a silly practice that I'm not going to encourage any type of war in front of kids, you know what I'm saying we're not going to stop it but maybe I can at least let them know that, you know, it's not a good idea to agree with these ideas in any circumstance I guess, I don't know, I don't know I sort of look at the way we have handled the past ten years I mean, I don't know I just don't know whatever good that any war has ever on us besides maybe World War II, but that is probably presented with some rose colored glasses too, but you know as far as genocide and everything that's something we have to intervene in but if that was the case we'd intervene in every genocide and we don't do that you know what I mean the ones that are convenient for us, right,

so{/TensionValuesPractice} {/DemocracyAndTeaching} {/DemocraticValues} {/TeacherDecisionMaking} {/PoliticalBiasNeutrality} {/TeacherEfficacy} {/ControversyInTheClassroom} {/Image}. (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12)

Here a larger segment of data from an interview with Mitch was explained by relating it

to earlier codes established when initial line-by-line coding occurred.

Axial coding followed and allowed for specifying properties and dimensions of categories by relating categories to subcategories and reassembling data. Looking at larger segments of data, like that of Mitch's post-observation interview above, and putting it back into the context of the rest of the data helped to identify the relationships between categories and subcategories. Axial coding was followed by theoretical coding as it was used to conceptualize how substantive codes related to each other and began to construct a substantive theory of how these social studies teachers' personal practical theories of democracy influenced their practice (Charmaz, 2006). Theoretical coding occurred through a process of identifying the relationships between categories, then subcategories, and then filling in where other themes, instances, and codes were related to these categories and sub-categories. The result was a substantive theory of the way these three beginning social studies teachers enacted personal practical theories of democracy (see Figure 3). This inductive process also produced themes as findings that represented an understanding of ways in which these social studies teachers' personal practical theories of democracy related to their teaching practice.

**Memo writing.** Memo writing was used throughout data collection and analysis to define, detail the research process, compare data and codes, identify gaps, and interrogate codes (Charmaz, 2006). For example, "Mitch focuses on a rationale for why they were doing what they were doing as a way to get their homework done in class, if they pay attention and work hard. Is this common for motivating students to work?" (Research Memo Excerpt, 11/29/11). This excerpt and other memos like it helped to

identify gaps, interrogate, and begin to define codes like “work ethic”. A second example of this was:

I observed Amber, Katharine, and Mitch today and conducted a final interview with Amber. Final interviews with Katharine and Mitch will happen Tuesday and Thursday respectively next week. And At the end of data collection I will have six interviews for Amber and five interviews for Mitch and Katharine. In addition a number of artifacts for each teacher and 11 observations for Amber, 10 observations for Katharine, and 9 observations for Mitch. These observations were meant to provide context and build a rapport with the teachers. The numbers of observations differ because each teacher reached this point at different times. As indications of enough context nothing new in terms of instructional choices, interactions with students, rationales for content choices, or new ideas or concepts to discuss during POIs seemed to be emerging. In addition these teachers had each reached a point where they felt comfortable sharing personal information and being frank about their professional lives as teachers and the school and district in which they worked. (Research Memo Excerpt, 01/26/12)

In this excerpt the process was defined and detailed including the purpose or rationale for conducting observations and reason for deciding to stop observations. The process of memo writing also served as an intermediate step between data collection and drafts of papers. Writing like these samples allowed the analysis of thoughts and ideas about the decisions, process, and codes in any and every way that occurred to me in the moment. As a result, memoing prompted analyze of data early in the process (Charmaz, 2006).

### **Ethics**

Questions I considered regarding the ethics of this research included: How are participants vulnerable? What is the influence of the researcher on the setting and participants? How are the findings interpreted and represented in the report (Hull, 1997)?

To address questions regarding the vulnerability of participants, teachers were recruited through a process of informed consent approved by the Kent State University Internal Review Board for use of Human Subjects. The application, school district consent to recruit participants, teachers' consent to participate, and consent for audio recording interviews were obtained through an open process where each participant individually had the opportunity to review the documents and choose to sign.

Participation was voluntary throughout the research, and participants were made aware of their option to withdraw from the study at any time during the informed consent process at the beginning of the first interview. During this first interview, participants were told:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I would like to remind you that you have the right to withdraw at any time during the research process. Also, please know that you have the right to not answer any questions that make you uncomfortable or that you simply do not wish to answer. Please let me know if you would like to skip to the next question at any time during this interview. (see Interview Protocol, Appendix D)

To address the question of the influence of the researcher, I recognized that even though no deception or harmful effects were anticipated, as a factor in this research I was in teachers' classrooms and inevitably influenced the context and participants in various

ways, some of which may be unintended and unknown to me as the researcher. For example, professional development through identifying personal practical theories and discussing them while reflecting on what was happening and has happened could have had an unintended effect on participants' practice and development as a teacher (see Chant, 2009). Although teachers were reflecting during our conversations in post-observation debriefing sessions, there is no way to know if these reflections had a positive or negative influence on their practice or student learning other than the loss of time that resulted from these periodic meetings.

To address the question of how findings are represented, monthly member checks were used to assure adequate representation of ideas and in interpretation that results from analysis. In addition, peer review was used to question and assure ethical responsibilities as a researcher were met and carried out. Peer review occurred through conversations with fellow doctoral candidates in the fourth week of data collection, after completing the first and second rounds of analysis, and after the first draft of the report was written. These reviews included discussions about the analysis process, research design, interpretation of the data, and potential findings with peers and colleagues.

In addition, member checks and a positive rapport with participants were also a part of an effort to mitigate the effects of the position of power held by the researcher. The power embedded in a researcher-participant relationship is inevitable and likely to influence the process in ways that are known and unknown. A prolonged engagement with participants that included regular email exchanges, sharing of field-notes and memos, and multiple observations and interviews was in part meant to minimize some of

this power relationship, but it remains an aspect of this research process that must be recognized.

### **Trustworthiness**

Various methodologists have identified contextual alertness of researcher bias as a necessary consideration for trustworthiness. An individual researcher is limited in the perspective and lenses through which experiences and data are viewed and analyzed. It becomes necessary, then, to build trustworthiness in the research process and subsequent findings to assure a rigorous process so that the participants throughout the research process and readers of the research findings trust the researcher. Establishing trustworthiness also demonstrates the study was conducted with the rigor that should characterize scholarship of the highest quality. As a result of building trustworthiness, the participants and readers trust the findings to adequately represent the experiences and perspectives of the participants through the report and discussion of the findings. For this study, trustworthiness was accomplished in part through triangulation of data sources, keeping of a detailed research journal and memoing, persistent observation and prolonged engagement in the field, and a process of member checking (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Triangulation reduced the risk of chance associations in findings (Maxwell, 2005), and in this study multiple data sources including interviews, observations, and artifacts were used to provide triangulation of sources. Triangulation is a way to build trustworthiness through collection of multiple data sources. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that, “as the study unfolds and particular pieces of information come to light,



steps should be taken to validate each against at least one other source” (p. 283). This is not to say that one source validates or corroborates the findings from another but that multiple sources of data offer different formats, expressions of perspectives, and representations of ideas that add to the context and depth to the information obtained. The use of multiple methods of data collection also offered more variety in the ways research questions were addressed leading to richer and more nuanced findings.

In addition, analysis included multiple approaches and processes for coding to triangulate analysis. Data sources consisted of interviews of the participants, observations, and artifacts. Gathering data from multiple sources helped to triangulate the data and allowed for building of trustworthiness through varied analysis of these sources. Doing so not only helped to build trustworthiness in the methods of data collection but also helped to improve the quality of themes and findings. Collecting data through interviews and observations required a prolonged engagement with the participants. Interviews and observations occurred over the course of months from the November 2011 through February 2012, and artifacts were collected between October 2011 and March 2012, with continuous member checking through April 2012. This prolonged engagement was part of an effort to ensure trustworthiness by allowing adequate time to develop a relationship with the participants. A relationship based on trust and increased comfort level hopefully allowed the participants to be more open and forthright during interviews, conversations, supplying artifacts, and less self-conscious during observations.

The research journal (see Sample Research Journal, Appendix F) included ideas and thoughts regarding the process, decisions, and interpretation of data throughout data collection and analysis. I wrote two to three times a week paying particular attention to the changes and adjustments that needed to be made as the study progressed. I also took note of reasons for these changes and what I anticipated the implications of such decisions would be in terms of the outcomes and procedures that might come afterward. The journal served as a record of changes made and of my thoughts and ideas regarding analysis and potential findings. To ensure clear and appropriate rationales for changes a peer, a fellow doctoral student, reviewed this journal. These decisions were also discussed with mentors and colleagues throughout the research process including during the three weeks prior to beginning data collection, in January 2012 when the semester changed, at the conclusion of data collection, the beginning of data analysis, prior to writing the first draft of the report, and upon the completion of the report of the findings. Peer review was helpful in clarifying and addressing potential ethical concerns regarding the research.

A prolonged engagement with the participants ensured the building of relationships that included trust and openness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest “the technique of *persistent observation* adds to the dimension of *salience* to what might otherwise appear to be little more than a mindless immersion” (p. 304). According to these authors, the purpose of a prolonged engagement is to encourage persistent observation by rendering the inquirer open to the variety of influences that exist in the context of the research. With this in mind, the recruitment process for this study began in

mid-October 2011, and after first contacting Amber, Katharine, and Mitch, initial interviews were scheduled for late October through the middle of November 2011. I was in contact with each participant, conducting interviews, observing classes, and emailing to discuss research findings and outcomes through April 2012. During this time interviews, observations, and post-observation debriefing sessions helped to build a rapport with participants that was based on trust and encouraged openness. The teachers shared personal stories, and at times discussed their professional goals, my professional goals, and their deepest thoughts and concerns regarding their district, schools, and students, some of which were off the record at their request. As participants in a research study, their openness about their purposes, beliefs, and community reflected the level of trust necessary to establish trust in interpretive research.

Member checks were conducted monthly during observation visits or interview sessions and gave the participants the opportunity to question or discuss the ways in which their perspectives and points of view were being represented in the data and results. Field-notes from observations and notes from interviews were shared after each observation and after each observation debriefing session. Participants had the opportunity during these member checks to ask questions about and offer alternative perspectives regarding their experiences and my observations as the researcher. In addition, a detailed field journal and memoing (see Sample Research Journal, Appendix F) were used to record my thoughts and rationale regarding the research process, decisions, and changes made to the research design as data were collected and analyzed. For example, the decision to switch from Amber's second period class to observe

Amber's third period class when her schedule changed at the semester break was recorded along with a rationale for why the choice was made then it was reviewed by Amber, who agreed it was the best way to ensure consistency and focus with the post-observation debriefing sessions. Situations like these and the rationales for the choices made as a research provided opportunities to build a trusting relationship with participants by offering them opportunities to be involved in making decisions regarding the process.

In summary, this chapter described the research design, outlining the research questions, democratic pragmatism framework with social constructionism worldview, collective case study methodology with a constructivist grounded theory approach to analysis, addressed trustworthiness, and the role of the researcher. All of these aspects of the research effort were presented as they related to understanding the ways beginning social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy were related to their teaching practice and connected by a theory democratic pragmatism. In the following chapters, the results of this effort are represented through presentation of the context and personal practical theories, findings, and discussion and implications of the research.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSONAL PRACTICAL THEORIES**

In the previous chapters, I presented a rationale for the study, provided a review of relevant literature, and detailed the methodology and design of the research effort. To maintain a focus on the boundaries of this collective case study the research was bound by the following overarching research question and four sub-questions. The primary, overarching question was: In what ways are these beginning social studies teachers' personal practical theories of democracy in teaching related to their practice in the secondary classroom? The four sub-questions included:

1. What do these social studies teachers' identify as beliefs about democracy?
2. Where do the participants believe their beliefs in democracy come from?
3. Which beliefs in, or characteristics of, democracy do these participants think are or should be a part of teaching social studies?
4. How do these social studies teachers enact beliefs about democracy as Personal Practical Theories of teaching?

With the purpose of understanding the relationship between these beginning teachers' beliefs about democracy and the ways those beliefs were related to practice in mind, I began this research by working with Amber, Katharine, and Mitch to articulate their personal practical theories of democracy in teaching. Their theories offered a common structure for a process of articulating beliefs across all three participants. This process was valuable in that it made their beliefs more accessible and easier to work with during

post-observation debriefing and when participants were asked to think about their beliefs and the potential connections of those beliefs to their practical experiences. What follows is a description of the context in which the study took place and the process of articulating participants' personal practical theories of democracy. These two aspects of the research set the stage for the findings and implications by painting a clearer picture of the cases and each teacher's experience. The context of this research includes the district and schools where the participants taught as well as the participants themselves. In addition, I present the participants' personal practical theories of democracy including the purpose of the theories, the process of articulating the theories, each participant's theories, and the theories across the study.

### **Context of the Cases**

The three participants who were cases for this research were recruited by first contacting the Curriculum Coordinator for Secondary Social Studies at a large school district in a large Midwestern city. The curriculum coordinator then provided email information for four potential participants. I contacted the first three teachers listed as potential participants individually. The first two, Amber and Katharine, responded that they were willing to participate and the third indicated that she was willing but she had been teaching social studies for longer than three years. I then contacted the fourth name on the list, Mitch, and he was willing to participate and met the criteria. Initial interviews were intended to further determine if the participants met the criteria. Determining this was done by asking participants about their beliefs about democracy and working with them to develop their personal practical theories of democracy. As a result of this

recruitment effort, all three participants were teachers in the same district at two different high schools.

### **Participants**

The participants for this study were recruited through first emailing and meeting with the curriculum coordinator for the district. At this meeting we discussed the research questions and design including the need for three teachers in their first three years of teaching social studies. In addition, potential participants had to be willing and able to share their beliefs about democracy, allow observations, and make time for post-observation interviews. Cornett (1990) identified the ethical dilemma of working with ineffective teachers and failing to intervene in deliberate ways focused on improving their teaching. With this in mind, I was directed to beginning teachers at my request but teachers who were deemed effective by colleagues or administrators. In addition, this research was not about effective teaching practices broadly rather focused on more specific aspects of teachers' beliefs about the potentially problematic concept of democracy in content and practice. The nature of democracy allows for a plurality of views and perspectives that would be viewed as acceptable or 'good', mitigating the need for intervention of ineffective democratic practice. Amber, Katharine, and Mitch generously allowed me to observe their classroom and engage with them in deep discussions about their beliefs and practice in social studies education. Descriptions of these beliefs and practice were then developed from interview data.

**Amber.** Amber was a 27 year-old white female who was born and raised in the community where she now teaches. Amber was in her second year as a social studies

teacher in a public school district. She was in her fifth year out of a teacher education licensure program from a small college in the Midwest. Amber taught 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade social studies courses that span a semester and are titled U.S. and Global History I, II, III, and IV. Each of these four courses was a semester long with I and II occurring in the fall, lasting from August 2011 to December 2011 and III and IV beginning January 2012 and lasting through May 2012. Amber decided to become a teacher because she cares about students and believed it was important for them to have positive relationships with adults (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11). She chose social studies because she enjoyed learning about history, although she did not consider herself as knowledgeable about the subject nor did she think herself a so-called “history buff” (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11).

Amber described her teacher education program at a small East-Central Ohio University as focused on “basically about like nuts and bolts of teaching, like the facts, the legal issues about teaching” (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11). Her program required a number of classroom observations as fieldwork and included a nine-week student teaching experience at a rural school. There she taught one honors level and two college prep level World History courses. She described major themes of her teacher education program as encouraging fairness toward all students in providing the least restrictive environment for learning and later in the program, and focused on classroom management. After her teacher education program and prior to her current position, Amber was a substitute teacher for three years. In her years prior to this research, Amber said she learned “a lot as far as like me being calm and not sweating the small stuff and



disciplining, pick your battles...and definitely collaborating with other teachers” (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11).

Amber was in her second year as a full-time social studies teacher at South High School. Amber coached Volleyball and Basketball at South and tried to support students regularly by attending events for their activities and athletics. As a second year teacher coaching two sports her time was limited and she often planned her lessons the day before or morning of teaching them. Throughout this study she taught ninth and tenth grade U.S. and Global Studies as a series of four semester courses. As I observed her classes I noted that she relied mostly on lecture, large group discussion, making time for one-on-one conversations with students, and small group work on assignments and projects. Amber was one of eight social studies teachers in her building. Over the course of this research two different class periods for the same tenth grade U.S. and Global Studies course were observed. I observed the first class period four times from November through December 2011. This class had a total of 29 students with 10 students who were minority students and 19 students who were white. There were 13 female and 16 male students in this first class.<sup>5</sup>

Amber’s class schedule changed after the first semester. Due to scheduling conflicts with post-observation interviews I observed another class period, but the same course, seven times from January through February 2012. This decision was made

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<sup>5</sup> Descriptions of demographic characteristics of classes for Amber, Katharine, and Mitch reflect the ethnicity, race, and gender students appeared to be during observations. This information was not self-reported and therefore may not be accurate.

understanding that new students would change the context and influence her decision-making. This was a topic of discussion during interviews and it was decided that since the focus of this research was on the teacher and what the teacher was thinking and doing it was more important to maintain consistency with post-observation interviews than to disrupt them in favor of remaining in the same class period. The second class period I observed had a total of 21 students, with 7 students who were minority students, and 14 who were white. There were 11 female and 10 male students with at least 6 students on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) according to Amber (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11).

**Katharine.** Katharine was a 27 year-old white female, who, like Amber also graduated from the school district in which she taught. She was in her third year as a social studies teacher at Central High School. Katharine attended a large public Midwestern University and was in her fourth year out of the program, but third as a full-time social studies teacher. Her experience at university was structured as a five year program with four years of content and limited field work opportunities followed by a fifth year graduate program to earn a Master's of Art's degree in education. As a part of her effort to get accepted to this graduate program she spent time volunteering with two of her own high school social studies teachers who mentored her as she helped with organizing, planning, grading, and other aspects of teaching in their secondary classrooms.

Katharine claimed major themes of her teacher education program were teaching diverse groups of students and reflective inquiry in practice. She had to learn about, and complete an, action research project. In her initial interview, Katharine discussed her

teacher education program. She noted that it emphasized reflective practice toward improving was a consistent theme of her learning throughout her one-year Master's level program that led her to licensure. As a result of her experiences, she maintained a view of teacher education as impractical theory and characterized teacher education at the university as the Ivory Tower. She stated, "I had a lot of qualms with the beginning of my master's program because I felt like it was a lot of Ivory Tower theory" (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11).

Once Katharine was admitted to the Master's program for licensure, she was assigned to North High School, a high school in the district where no participants taught during the study. She observed 20-25 hours a week throughout the fall semester then student taught for ten weeks and characterized it as "a good experience" (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11). During student teaching, she taught two Honors U.S. and Global Studies for tenth grade and three U.S. and Global Studies courses for ninth grade. Katharine described these classes as courses meant to include content from American History and World History, but she recognized that they were mostly World History courses.

In addition to being a third year teacher, Katharine also had the added pressure of being the chair for her social studies department at Central High School. Despite these pressures and the resulting constraints on her time she was, in my opinion, efficient in her efforts to plan lessons and shared with me a pacing guide she created for each unit throughout the year. As a central focus in her planning, Katharine relied largely on using primary sources and large group discussion as ways for students to learn about history

and other ideas and concepts she brought into the classroom. A primary source packet was created for each unit she planned, and discussed thoroughly as a class throughout the unit.

Between the beginning of November 2011 and the end of February 2012, I observed Katharine's class 10 times. This class was a ninth grade honors level U.S. and Global Studies I and II course. The class had 27 students in the room with 5 students that were minority and 22 students that were white. There were 11 female and 16 male students.

**Mitch.** Mitch was a white 33-year-old male and grew up in a small midwestern town. After graduating with a business degree, Mitch spent six years working for two major banking corporations prior to earning his teaching license. When the mortgage crisis hit, he relocated and decided to go back to school to get his Master's of Arts in Teaching with dual licensure in business and social studies. Mitch spent his first two years at Central High School teaching business classes but accepted a position as a dean of students part-time and social studies teacher part-time in part because he thought it might provide greater job security than his previous position (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11). In his first interview Mitch shared that he had family members who were teachers and a mother who was a nurse; he saw them coming home and feeling good about their jobs and what they were contributing to society. Observing this for years led Mitch to want to pursue teaching. He chose social studies out of convenience because of having fulfilled many of the content licensure requirements and because the content was interesting to him (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11).

Mitch enjoyed learning about “the way the past reflects the present and you know obviously it will go into the future” (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11). He taught two U.S. Government courses which he enjoyed because “Government, it’s fun because you can come with a bunch of different angles and uh, let kids choose for themselves or 90% of the time what their parents tell them to choose” (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11). Mitch felt more confident with business course content because of his professional experiences but since becoming a teacher had grown to love working with students and placed a high priority on his trust-based relationships with each student in his class. He hoped that through his teaching students would learn to make up their own minds, what he called independent thinking and view his class as thought provoking, interesting, and informative (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11).

Mitch decided to teach high school because he believed his directness and bluntness were better suited for the this age group (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11). In his first interview Mitch discussed his teacher education program. He suggested the theme his program focused on most was differentiation, as a way to meet students’ diverse learning needs. His program consisted of course work for secondary education that reinforced the idea that students are individuals with individual learning needs and explored ways to address those needs in teaching. He also had fieldwork observations and a student teaching experience in the spring semester. Mitch planned lessons the day before, or day of, his teaching, and in most cases put his own twist on what his colleague, the other Government teacher, was doing that day. In addition to teaching, Mitch coached football and track and worked part-time as dean of students. With Mitch’s

administrative duties and coaching obligations he had little time to plan and create materials for class without help from another teacher. He taught two Government courses in a shared classroom with his colleague who provided instructional support and materials. This coping strategy was the only way Mitch could find enough time in the day to meet all of the expectations and demands placed on him as a coach, administrator, and teacher (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11).

Mitch described the class I observed as a group of students who needed to see the dean of students regularly. According to Mitch, there were a wide range of student abilities and academic performance varied greatly (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11). In addition, Mitch noted that a large number of his students benefited behaviorally from regular contact with a dean of students so they were intentionally placed in his class (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11). Throughout my observations of Mitch's teaching, he relied on large group discussion, small group work, interactive lectures, web-based resources, and projects when teaching students. In this class, I noted that there were 25 students in the class. Eight students were minority students and 17 were white. There were 8 female students and 17 males.

### **Personal Practical Theories of Democracy**

In the first in-depth interview Amber, Katharine, and Mitch had the opportunity to share the experiences and background that brought them to teaching social studies. During these conversations, they were also asked and shared their beliefs about democracy. Near the end of these conversations we discussed what personal practical theories were and each teacher provided three to five theories that included a belief about

their conception of democracy and the way(s) they thought it connected to their teaching practice. What follows is a description of the purpose of these theories, the process of articulating the theories, each teacher's personal practical theories of democracy in teaching, and the theories across the study.

### **Purpose of the Theories**

Understanding that teachers come from a variety of teacher education programs and personal backgrounds, it was necessary to find a way to help the teachers in this study express the connection between beliefs about democracy and their connection to practice. These three teachers had not previously been asked to think about democratic living or the concept of democracy as it is related to teaching and learning in social studies. Personal practical theories as employed in work by Chant (2009), Cornett (1987, 1990), Cornett, Yeotis, and Terwilliger (1990) and McCutcheon (1992) provided a clear and concise way for these teachers to present and discuss their specific beliefs about democracy as they are uniquely connected to their individual teaching practices.

Personal practical theories also provided a uniform structure for expressing beliefs about democracy and their relationship to practice across all participants. This allowed for a consistent research process throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting. In addition, the use of personal practical theories served as a reminder of the focus on thinking about beliefs related to democracy in practice. This focus assisted in maintaining a concern for the relationship between participants' beliefs about democracy and the ways in which those beliefs were related to their decision-making, intentions, and actions.

### **Process of Articulating the Theories**

In the first interviews with each participant, it became evident that Amber, Katharine, and Mitch had not been asked to describe the ways they conceptualized the notion of democracy prior to this study. What also became quite clear in their initial interviews was that none of them had been asked to articulate the connections of any aspects of those conceptions to their teaching practice. Likewise, none of the participants had previously encountered personal practical theories as a way to articulate such a connection. To address the need to articulate the unarticulated using unfamiliar means, the first interview included in-depth discussions about the teachers' beliefs about democracy, the sources of those beliefs, their planning process, and teacher education and prior teaching experiences (see Interview Protocol, Appendix D). These conversations were followed by an explanation of personal practical theories and a request for them to compose a few. The instructions were as follows (see Interview Protocol, Appendix D):

The purpose of a personal practical theory in this study is to give you (Participants) a way to articulate your beliefs and their influence on your practice and thinking that is somewhat uniform. It consists of as many statements of personal practical theories as you would like and each statement should include a statement of a beliefs about democracy followed by a brief explanation of how you think that beliefs influences your practice.

Please write down however many democratic personal practical theories you can think of (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, ...etc.). (Interview Protocol, 11/07/09)



After discussing the purpose and structure the teachers, with a fair amount of ease, providing verbal personal practical theories consisting of a belief about democracy and then the way or ways they thought that belief was connected to their practice. These verbal accounts were then recorded on paper by the researcher and shared with the participant who was the source. At the beginning of each subsequent meeting, the participants were provided with an opportunity to review and edit their personal practical theories. Tables 2, 3, and 4 were the product of these discussions, followed by an overview of these theories across the participants and throughout the study.

### **Participants' Theories**

During the first of a series of interviews, Amber, Katharine, and Mitch were asked to reflect on and share their teacher education experiences, what they learned in their first year or two of teaching, what they believed about democracy, and what they thought was the source of those beliefs. In all three cases a main sources of those beliefs remained focused on family and experiences growing up living in American democracy. Following each of these discussions the teachers were asked to construct personal practical theories of democracy. In other words, to articulate what they believed to be specific aspects or attributes of democracy and the ways in which they thought those attributes of democracy were connected to their teaching practice, including but not limited to their planning, decision-making, behavior, interaction with students and colleagues, content selection, and pedagogical choices. After discussing personal beliefs about democracy each participant was asked to connect those beliefs to aspects of their

teaching practice, if they could. The following are each participant's personal practical theories of democracy in teaching and three themes that emerged across the study.

In her first interview, Amber identified four personal practical theories of democracy in teaching. Amber's beliefs included working with people who were different, treating students as individuals with different needs, getting to know students and being there for them, and freedom and choice as essential values. She connected each belief to some aspect of her teaching practice, in the case of theory 1, the way she assigns groups for student work time in class. In Table 2 are each of Amber's personal practical theories of democracy in teaching social studies.

Table 2

*Personal Practical Theories of Democracy in Teaching as Defined by the Participant  
Amber's Personal Practical Theories of Democracy in Teaching*

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**THEORY 1: Learning to Work within Difference**

I think they need to learn to work with people different from themselves, and in practice I have them work in groups I assign and I change them often, I don't let them pick their seats (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11)

**THEORY 2: Students are Individuals with Different Needs**

Every student is different and has different needs so in practice I adjust due dates, assignments, and activities for students based on their learning and behavioral needs (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11)

**THEORY 3: Relationships with Students are Essential**

It is important to get to know students and let them know you are there for them so in practice I take time when possible to ask students questions and listen to them when they want to talk about things at home or what they are doing outside of class/school (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11)

**THEORY 4: Freedom and Choice are Essential**

Freedom and Choice are essential in a democracy and in practice I give them opportunities to make choices with consequences, students may choose to work or not but it affects their grade and students are encouraged to learn about the freedom and rights they have and how and when to fight for those rights and freedoms and to learn about how and why people make decisions and choices as citizens (e.g. civil rights unit, comparative government unit, civil disobedience unit) (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11)

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In her first interview, Katharine identified three basic beliefs about democracy that she thought would be potentially related to her teaching. She believed that participation is important in a democracy, and that in a democratic society education is a way to a better life and a better society. She then made explicit connections between these beliefs and her teaching practice including, from theory 1, that she asked students to interact with each other regularly and encouraged student voice in the classroom by listening to what her students had to say. In Table 3 displays each of Katharine's personal practical theories of democracy in teaching social studies.

Table 3

*Personal Practical Theories of Democracy in Teaching as Defined by the Participant  
Katharine's Personal Practical Theories of Democracy in Teaching*

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**THEORY 1: Participation is Essential**

Participation is important in a democracy so I have students interact with each other, give me feedback and I listen to them/give them a voice (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11)

**THEORY 2: Education is a way to a Better Life**

In a democracy individuals can better their life through education (learning, rights, responsibilities of citizenship, and skills to be productive member of society) – So I really stress taking education seriously, help with scheduling decisions, and push college track. Students explore content and ideas in ways that apply to their lives and future especially for socioeconomic mobility and future career (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11)

**THEORY 3: Education is a way to a Better Society**

Education can make society better in a democracy – so I show them how content ideas and themes (e.g. enlightenment, revolution, etc. knowing rights and responsibilities) can make change and include real world examples national and global (e.g. Middle East) (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11)

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In his first interview, Mitch identified three basic beliefs about democracy that he thought would be potentially related to his teaching. He believed that freedom to choose, a concern for the rights of others, and group collaboration and accountability were

essential aspects of democracy that were related to his teaching practice. He then made explicit connections between these beliefs and his teaching practice including, from his theory 1, that he presented all sides of issues in class to students so they had the opportunity to think more independently and feel freer to choose their own perspective on the issue. In Table 4, is each of Mitch's personal practical theories of democracy in teaching social studies.

Table 4

*Personal Practical Theories of Democracy in Teaching as Defined by the Participant  
Mitch's Personal Practical Theories of Democracy in Teaching*

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**THEORY 1: Freedom of Choice is Essential**

In a democracy you have the freedom of choice to take whatever path you want in life and Not like they get to choose their assignments and stuff, it's more along the lines like I will present something to you (students) all sides, arguments, supporting details, and examples of the subject and then the student you know has the right to feel their side on which ever part of that argument that they fall on (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11)

**THEORY 2: Concern for the Rights of Others**

In a democracy you should be concerned for whether or not you're infringing on the rights of others and not just by saying this exactly but just through the way that I control the classroom you know regardless of your socioeconomic or economic background, your color, your country of origin, that everybody in my class has an equal say and you have the right to believe what you want to believe without others trying to step all over you or you know put them through the meat grinder because of your peers, that's just not going to happen. And I don't think it really has happened, like you'll have kids that will disagree with each other like "Oh, come on, that's not true" you know what I'm saying and you know that's fine, but I mean if you go, what do you know you're from Somalia and you shouldn't even be in this school, you know, no one's ever went there, but if that were the case I think I'd lose it, I think I've set the tone where that's not going to happen (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11)

**THEORY 3: Group Collaboration and Accountability**

In a democracy collaborative work and responsibility (to self and group) are necessary to be successful and I try to enforce collaboration and also responsibility because even though when you do go and have to collaborate with people there's always those coat-tailors and you try to teach at a young age that coat-tailing is a very negative thing because they are everywhere. They're here, they are everywhere I've ever been, so you know, we work on stuff together a lot (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11)

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### **The Theories Across the Study**

After each teacher created their personal practical theories during initial interviews, they were all given weekly opportunities to revise or change their personal practical theories during a post-observation interview. Throughout this process, Amber, Katharine, and Mitch were asked to think about the ways their beliefs were related to their teaching practice. What follows are three themes from the data related directly to the participants' thinking about and discussing their personal practical theories of democracy in teaching. These themes include limited change in childhood beliefs, resistance to changing words, and changes in scope.

**Limited change in childhood beliefs.** From the beginning, Amber recognized that her beliefs about democracy formed early in life and have changed little. For example, in her first interview Amber said, "I don't know if my belief has changed I think I've just become more aware of it as I've gotten older, I actually understand more of what it is" (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11). When asked about specific sources of her beliefs about democracy Amber replied, "I think for sure my parents and just the way, the way life is here in the United States" (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11). Similarly, Mitch and Katharine pointed to their childhood and family members as primary influences shaping their beliefs about democracy and what makes a good society. Katharine offered specific family members and added her social studies teachers as central to her beliefs about democracy when she stated, "definitely grandfather, and my mother, and my social studies teachers" (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11).

Mitch agreed that his family and childhood were important influences but also recognized that he intended to shape or change the ways his students think by encouraging them to think independently from the influence of others and make choices for themselves. He explained laughing sarcastically, “my parents, yeah, I’m worried about making sure everyone else think for themselves...my parents, my friends, my friends’ families, we grew up in very blue collar middle to lower income area” (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11). All three teachers pointed to family and childhood or adolescent experiences in American education or American society as central to the development of their beliefs about democracy and what makes a good society.

**Resistance to changing words.** In addition to limited change in beliefs from childhood, none of the teachers changed their personal practical theories during the four to five months they participated in this research study. As these theories were revisited throughout our conversations and reflections on field-notes and teaching experiences, no changes to the wording were made despite regular opportunities to revise. Each of these theories contained two parts, a belief about democracy and its connection to their teaching practice. None of the participants changed a word in either part of any of their theories throughout the research study. During three of her post-observation interviews, Amber in response to a question about her making changes to her personal practical theories replied, “No I think I’m good with that (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11), “No I think that’s good” (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 01/10/12), and “Yeah, no they are good” (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12).

These comments also characterized Katharine's and Mitch's response to the same question about changing their theories offered at the beginning of each post-observation interview. For example, Katharine in her second post-observation interview replied "I think it's basically the same, you're going to realize with me I don't change I, good or bad I kind of stick with my thoughts (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12), and again in her final interview "oh no I feel the same way" (Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12). Similarly, Mitch added in his final interview, "no still thinking along the same lines I've never changed on that I think that I've always been that way though I doubt I'll ever change in that way" (Mitch, Interview, 02/02/12). Although, change in belief was not a goal of this research the teachers were offered opportunities to reflect on and discuss their teaching in the context of their beliefs about democracy. The limited change over five months of thinking about and discussing their ideas and beliefs may offer implications for future research to be discussed in the following chapter.

**Changes in scope.** Despite the consistency in the wording of their personal practical theories of democracy the scope of activities, behavior, decisions, and experiences connected to their theories of democracy expanded to be included as more detailed and sometimes more varied examples of their personal practical theories. Amber's comment, "I'm sure I'll be teaching and I'll think oh that's one" (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11) was indicative of the teachers' approach to participating in this research study and their commitment to reflecting in thoughtful ways that led to expanding and including ideas as they emerged in their practice. Similarly, Mitch explained, "my views are becoming clear through my action" (Mitch, Post-Observation

Interview, 01/05/12). The participants were willing to broaden their thinking about ways experiences, decisions, and actions were connected to their personal practical theories of democracy. In each post-observation interview, Amber, Katharine, and Mitch were asked to reflect on their teaching and the relationship between their beliefs and practice in ways that left them open to thinking about their teaching in new ways. In their final post-observation debrief and interview all three participants noted that a benefit of the study for them was that we created a space to reflect on specific aspects of their teaching practice.

As the interviews progressed and field notes were shared with Amber, Katharine, and Mitch the scope of what, from their teaching, was included in their personal practical theories expanded. For these social studies teachers it was relatively easy to connect democracy to the content taught in U.S and Global Studies as well as in American Government disciplines. Amber reflects this as she talked about course content and suggested, “actually every unit I would think that there’s some piece of democracy in there whether it’s just touched on or it’s like my last unit which was comparative government and throughout the whole thing” (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11). In addition, Amber later recognized democratic connections between students learning to evaluate sources of information on the Internet during a project when she commented:

I mean I think it affects their life as far as especially when it comes time to deciding who they want in office or just do they want to be involved in political change do they want to be someone who just votes, do they not want to vote, do they want to be in a political party, I mean it helps them at least make an educated



decision in how involved they want to be and help them understand bias and what's true, what's just being put out there so. (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12)

These content connections were the first step toward connecting democracy to their teaching. Each participant thought and talked through the ways they conceptualized democracy, where their beliefs about democracy came from, and what they thought the relationship between their perspectives on democracy and their teaching were.

As participants discussed these connections during post-observation interviews, the content connections became the bridge between limited, or reluctance, in expressing views of what might be democratic. For example, all three participants included student voice or choice as a part of their vision of democratic in the classroom to the more expansive ways concepts of democracy were related to their teaching. In the first post-observation interview it was easy for Amber to connect her teaching to her personal practical theories of democracy as she stated, "I think it goes with making choices, they all got the same assignment but I'm hoping that I get different things handed in" (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11). Even in this statement, almost one month after our initial interview Amber expanded what is included in the practical side of her theory beyond the example she gave of choice with consequence and students choosing to do their work or not. This expansion focused more on the kind of work students get to do and how students might be encouraged by her to create products that express their learning and understanding in ways different from their classmates but still be good work.

Similarly, Mitch extended his theories on freedom of choice and concern for the rights of others beyond the original descriptions to include more specific and complex connections to practice. For example, Mitch assigned his students the task of completing an alternative ending to *The Butter Battle Book* by Dr. Seuss as a corollary for the Cold War with the intention of learning about foreign policy, diplomacy, and resolving conflict. In a conversation, after the assignment was completed by students, Mitch stated, “I think I’m pretty happy, you know 80% of my kids feel that you know diplomacy and peace is a better alternative to a war in their minds” (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12). In this example he gave students the freedom to create, or choose, their own ending as an expression of their understanding of diplomacy and foreign policy in the context of contentious relationships between two groups of people who both believe they are “right”. The assignment structure, outcomes, and Mitch’s comments suggest that he hoped for alternative endings that reflected a peaceful resolution that took into consideration the rights of others and adequately reflected the concepts of foreign policy and diplomacy discussed in class. But he was willing to allow and respected independent thinking and creative expression on the matter rather than punishing students academically for failing to share this belief. This expectation allowed students to put forth a variety of potential outcomes that were acceptable as long as that outcome in some way considered the rights of another group of people.

Katharine also expanded her theory to be more inclusive. For example, she did not change her practical connection of giving students a voice by allowing them to give her feedback and listening to them. In fact, I observed this throughout my time in

Katharine's classroom. However, she did at times include student voice in more variety and even in ways that conflicted with her own beliefs and intentions. Katharine, a self-proclaimed advocate for democracy, allowed students to point out its flaws and inefficiencies in favor of a more efficient authoritarian regime during a unit on the French Revolution. When asked about this she replied, "I would say I let them voice their opinions as much as they want" (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 12/07/11). Her theory of giving students voice in the classroom superseded her need to transmit her personal value placed on democracy as the best way to organize society. These expansions of what might be included as aspects of each individuals' personal practical theory of democracy is an indication of the ways time to reflect, discuss, and explore beliefs about democracy can help social studies teachers flesh out specific aspects of their purposes for teaching as they may be reflected by or connected to their teaching practice.

In this chapter the context for each participant was developed as a way to encourage a better understanding of each participant and the context in which they taught social studies. Across all cases the participants resisted making changes in the wording of any part of their personal practical theories of democracy in teaching. However, all three teachers expanded the scope of the connections between their beliefs and practical experiences. The scope of their theories then broadened to include or connect to more of their planning, decision-making, and practical experiences in the classroom. In the remaining chapters, findings will be presented that, together with these personal practical theories support an argument for the need for teacher candidates in social studies to explore their beliefs about democracy and teaching through a continuous process of

refinement. This may help beginning teachers articulate a defensible but developing purpose for teaching social studies, one that guides decision-making, practice, and reflection.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **FINDINGS**

Through an inductive analytical process of coding the primary data, two in-depth interviews and multiple post-observation interviews, findings emerged. These findings included: (a) conceptualizing democratic living in practice, (b) mediating the belief-practice dialectic, and (c) pedagogy and purpose. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between beliefs about democracy, articulated as personal practical theories, and practice. In addition, the analytical effort led to a substantive theory of the enactment of personal practical theories of democracy for these three teachers.

The intent of this chapter is to present these three findings and the substantive theory of enactment as findings in support of an argument for social studies teacher candidates to explore their beliefs about democracy as a part of developing a clear purpose for teaching social studies. The personal practical theories created by the participants, presented in Chapter IV, the three findings, and substantive theory of enactment in this chapter connect teacher beliefs, thinking, pedagogy, process, and purpose with implications for social studies teacher education and future research. This will be discussed at greater length in Chapter VI. To make this connection between personal practical theories, findings, and substantive theory of enactment more clear, below are the guiding research questions these findings address. The initial overarching question was: In what ways are these beginning social studies teachers' personal

practical theories of democracy in teaching related to their practice in the secondary classroom?

*Sub-questions:*

1. What do these social studies teachers' identify as beliefs about democracy?
2. Where do the participants believe their beliefs in democracy come from?
3. Which beliefs in, or characteristics of, democracy do these participants think are or should be a part of teaching social studies?
4. How do these social studies teachers enact beliefs about democracy as Personal Practical Theories of teaching?

Guided by the research questions the findings from this research study address the identification of beliefs about democracy, their source and consistence, as well as, characteristics of democracy that are connected to teaching social studies and how they work to enact their personal practical theories of teaching. Research sub-questions one and three were asked to better understand what these teachers might identify as beliefs about democracy and which of those beliefs, if any, should be included in social studies teaching practice. These questions are addressed in the first finding, conceptualizing democracy in practice. Research sub-questions three and four were posed to focus the research on working to understand the place of beliefs about democracy in social studies education and the ways teachers might enact those beliefs in practice. These questions are addressed in the second and third findings on mediating the belief-practice dialectic and pedagogy and practice. Amber's, Katharine's, and Mitch's personal practical theories, the three findings, and substantive theory of enacting personal practical theories

of democracy add to existing literature on teacher beliefs studies and democracy in education by working to understand specific ways in which teachers conceptualize democracy as a concept and work to connect and integrate those specific aspects of democracy they view as important into their teaching practice.

The analytical process produced three themes related to the ways these three beginning social studies teachers were thinking about and enacting their personal practical theories of democracy in the classroom. The first finding, titled conceptualizing democratic living in practice, involved the specific values and related actions and intended learning outcomes for students. All three teachers had a clear conception of democracy as a structural means of organizing society, but they also were able to identify specific values associated with life in a democratic society and specific aspects of practice that supported those values. The second finding, titled mediating the belief-practice dialectic, emerged in recognition of the complex relationship between beliefs about democracy and the participants' teaching practice. It is too simple to suggest that beliefs influence practice, they do, but beliefs are also influenced by practice and at times intentionally suppressed in practice, or completely excluded from the process for a variety of reasons. The second finding highlights the ways these teachers negotiated the dialectic between beliefs about democracy in practice as they made decisions for and with their students. Finally, the third finding, titled pedagogy and purpose in social studies, is a result of the ways the participants' reasons for teaching and in particular reasons for teaching social studies emerged within the context of thinking about the concept of democracy.

As these three teachers reflected and discussed their own purposes and pedagogy as social studies teachers, they related broad reasons for what they do to specific ways of acting as a teacher and their personal hopes for students' learning. The three findings are presented here as the result of an effort to gain a better understanding of the ways these beginning social studies teachers conceptualize democracy, flesh out their specific beliefs, make decisions in and for practice, and consider the implications for their teaching and their students' learning. Together the three findings support an argument for social studies teachers and teacher candidates to have the opportunity to refine their purpose. The process of refinement can occur by exploring beliefs about potentially problematic concepts in social studies education, like democracy, as they might be related to specific aspects of content and pedagogical decisions and either be reflected or contradicted through enacting those decisions. Doing so may provide teacher candidates with the perspective of and capacity for teaching as an intellectual activity that requires a deep understanding of the beliefs, rationales, students, pedagogy, epistemological perspectives and content necessary when teaching for democratic living.

### **Conceptualizing Democratic Living in Practice**

The ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch conceptualized democracy as it is related to teaching social studies included (a) democracy as a structural organization for human interaction as well as, (b) specific values, skills, and dispositions that are necessary for democratic living and the maintenance of the structures and institutions that allow for such living. This finding is focused on the three consistent values the participants identified and viewed as essential to democracy. Each value is then connected to specific



actions of the teachers or their students and then what the teachers hoped their students would learn from these actions. By talking about freedom, equality, and rights as essential aspects for a democratic society and necessary values for citizens to live democratically, these teachers reconciled the notion of democracy as a system so commonly presented in social studies content with the notion of democracy as a way of living requiring specific skills and dispositions.

Table 5 represents the relationship between the ways the participants employed the values of freedom, equality, and rights. Each participant included freedom, equality, and rights as three necessary values as they described their conception of democracy and the relationship of their beliefs about democracy as they were connected to their actions as teachers', what they asked students to do, and what they intended students to learn in the classroom. Table 5 illustrates the relationship between these three values as aspects of participants' conceptualizations of democratic practice.

In addition, Table 5 shows the specific ways they connected these values to actions in the classroom and intended learning outcomes. Also worth noting is that Table 5 is a synthesis of all three participants efforts to conceptualize and then connect democracy to their practice and does not represent their thinking and practice equally. In other words, Amber (identified as "A" in Table 5) focused on constructing knowledge, choice, content knowledge, and decision-making as important democratic actions and activities in the classroom. Then, she connected those activities to intended learning outcomes like personal responsibility, change agents, and "free" economic life. The first

letter of each participants' pseudonym appears in parenthesis next to the actions and outcomes found in their interview data, and evident in observations of their teaching.

Table 5

*Conceptualizing Democratic Living in Practice: The Aspects of Related Values, Actions and Intended Learning Outcomes*

Theme	Values	Teacher/Student Actions	Intended Learning Outcome
Conceptualizing Democratic Living in Practice	Freedom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Constructing Knowledge (A, K)</li> <li>- Choice (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Content Knowledge (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Decision-Making (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Source Evaluation (K)</li> <li>- Independent/Free Thinking (K)</li> <li>- Global Perspectives (K)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal Responsibility (A, M)</li> <li>- Social Responsibility (M)</li> <li>- Patriotism (K)</li> <li>- Change Agents (A)</li> <li>- Recognizing Privilege (K, M)</li> <li>- "Free" Economic Life (A, M)</li> </ul>
	Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fairness (A)</li> <li>- Discussion (K, M)</li> <li>- Choice (K)</li> <li>- Decision-Making (K)</li> <li>- Collaboration (A, M)</li> <li>- Listening (M)</li> <li>- Talk Across Difference (M)</li> <li>- Content Knowledge (K)</li> <li>- Relationships with Students (A)</li> <li>- Source Evaluation (K)</li> <li>- Teaching the Marginalized (K)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participation (K)</li> <li>- Social Responsibility (A, K)</li> <li>- Personal Responsibility (A, K)</li> <li>- Patriotism (K)</li> <li>- Open Mindedness (A, M)</li> <li>- Recognizing Privilege (K, M)</li> <li>- Voice (K)</li> </ul>
	Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaboration (K)</li> <li>- Discussion (K, M)</li> <li>- Content Knowledge (A, K)</li> <li>- Participation in Class (A)</li> <li>- Source Evaluation (M)</li> <li>- Make Justice Judgments (A)</li> <li>- Students' Rights (A, M)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peaceful Resolutions (M)</li> <li>- Patriotism (K, M)</li> <li>- Open Mindedness (K)</li> <li>- Personal Responsibility (K, M)</li> <li>- Social Responsibility (K, M)</li> <li>- Voice (K)</li> <li>- Participation (A, K)</li> <li>- Informed Decisions (K, M)</li> <li>- Change Agents (A, K)</li> <li>- Community Membership (A, M)</li> </ul>

*Note.* The first letter of the participants' pseudonyms was used to designate their individual and shared ideas. A was used for Amber, K for Katharine, and M for Mitch.

## **Freedom**

Freedom was the most prominent value expressed across all three cases. Amber, Katharine, and Mitch all included the value of freedom as a part of their personal practical theories as well as in their broader conceptualization of democracy. All three participants connected the value of freedom to their practice, in ways that were similar and different from one another. Scholars have suggested that individuals might understand freedom in different ways. One way these scholars mentioned is a view of freedom as unregulated living (Greene, 1988; Griffin, 1940; Parker, 2003). Some of the ways in which these teachers included the notion of freedom were freedom as unregulated living, being allowed to make choices, and living restricted by showing concern for infringing on the rights of others. In post-observation interviews, the ways each teacher conceptualized freedom were then connected to specific classroom activities and decisions made by the teacher. Participants were then asked to connect these activities and decisions with intended learning outcomes for students.

Some of the practical connections made across all three teachers included social construction of knowledge, collaboration with others, independent or free-thinking, decision-making activities, and content choices by the teacher related to freedom. These decisions, actions, and activities were then associated with particular intended learning outcomes including personal and social responsibility, work ethic, finding peaceful resolutions to conflict, voice, patriotism, efficacy, and making change. What follows are the ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch conceptualized the value of freedom in the

context of their beliefs about democracy and it's relationship to their practice in social studies education.

**Amber.** At first Amber suggested freedom was “being allowed to do what you want, I mean yeah I don’t know how else to put it” (Amber, Interview, 01/31/12). As she talked through this her idea about freedom expanded to include living free as having some restriction, namely “that there are times when there are consequences for choices you make” (Amber, Interview, 01/31/12). Throughout our conversations Amber maintained that freedom was important for democracy, and early on when asked about necessary components of democracy she stated, “I guess the freedom to make choices, within like it could just be like your daily life. Like the fact that I chose to be a teacher” (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11). She later explained:

So I guess freedom is being allowed to do what you want, I mean yeah I don’t know how else to put it and then choice, I mean I think they go together it’s just that there are times when there are consequences for choices you make...but I think that there has to be consequences with some choices because if there weren’t, I mean how would things look. (Amber, Interview, 01/31/12)

As another aspect of the freedom to make choices, Amber began to connect her ideas to her teaching practice and what students needed to know to live in a free democratic society. At first Amber was clear that students do not have much of a say in her classroom; she explained “I don’t know if democracy really plays a huge role in teaching because we don’t really give them a whole lot of freedom as far as what they can and cannot do in class, during their class time” (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11). However, she

recognized the need for students to be prepared to be involved in government and have the skills and knowledge necessary for “freedom and being able to be a part of the decision-making process” (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11).

In her vision of freedom she connected her teaching by pointing out that in her class “students are encouraged to learn about the freedom and rights they have and how and when to fight for those rights and freedoms” (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11).

Throughout classroom observations, it became evident that Amber made content choices that focused learning on understanding human rights. For example, during unit on World War II, I observed a class where Amber began with a class discussion about genocide and human rights and spent a significant amount of time on the consequences for the decision to make and drop the atomic bomb. Students were provided with secondary sources and engaged in small group discussion about Einstein’s role in the atomic bomb and the subsequent decision to use it to end the war in the Pacific. Amber’s choices in preparing her lessons and what I observed of her teaching reflected a focus on students coming to understand what rights are and who has them in the context of making choices that have consequences.

During observations, I noticed Amber frequently gave students time in class to work on assignments and allowed them to choose what they would work on during that time. In a post-observation interview we discussed an incident where, three days prior to a test, she gave students the freedom to choose how they spent their class-work time. She stated, “I gave them like three days to work on the study guide, not three whole days but time here and there so I guess I was frustrated with him because I had given them so

much time” (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11). Her frustration with a few students was evident as she pointed out that they had the time in class to do a review guide, but chose to spend it doing something else. According to Amber, the consequence for this will probably be they will do poorly on the test. For Amber, this incident characterized one of the ways she hoped students would learn to make responsible choices and understand that choices often have consequences to learn personal responsibility. In her initial interview, Amber identified freedom as a democratic value that was about what a system allowed people to do, but throughout the research she conceptualized this value more as making choices and understanding the consequences for those choices as an aspect of democratic living.

**Katharine.** Initially, Katharine characterized freedom in the context of the content she teaches as she explained, “well in the political sense, you know protecting your rights and liberties as individuals...I’ve been living and breathing the enlightenment for like the last month” (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11). Her political characterization of freedom as a necessary part of a democratic system was similar to Amber’s and Mitch’s as they initially offered conceptions of democracy as a system. Katharine said early on, “I do promote democracy in my classroom I don’t mess around, like, I do because I feel that’s the best situation for human beings, it’s the best governing type of system” (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11). In addition, Katharine emphasized the role of the government in protecting rights and freedoms over the role of the individual. Her sense of patriotism was evident in her description of a visit to New York, NY where she

“was so moved by lady liberty and everything she stood for but it was awesome”

(Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11).

Katharine connected her sense of patriotism and her understanding of American democratic systems to her teaching in ways that she hoped “to instill a sense of gratitude for what they have and make them aware of what they have so that they are not thinking that every place around the world is like the U.S.” (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11). This effort for students to develop an appreciation for their country and a sense of gratitude for the life they have was reflected by the content choices she made as a teacher. Below Katharine described one such choice as she explained:

When we did geography not only did we have to learn where places were but I picked out a country per region of the world and we compared um various different aspects of the society, literacy rates, HIV rates, the type of government systems that they had, any kind of human rights abuses, just all sorts of things just so they could get an idea of what the world was like and the appreciation that they should have for the things that they have here, because a lot, most people don’t so I always try to instill a sense of gratitude for what they have and make them aware of what they have so that they are not thinking that every place around the world is like the U.S. (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11)

Katharine’s sense of patriotism and her hope to instill an appreciation for American life was consistent throughout the research study. However, her notion of freedom was refined through our conversations to include intellectual freedom or “free-thinking”. As

she explained her thinking during a class discussion regarding democratic versus authoritarian systems she stated:

Even though I don't agree with some of the stuff that they say but it's their choice to make that decision and I give them the tools, because we already did the government systems unit where they learned about different types of government systems, um so they have the tools and they know the background of these things and now they need to put everything together and make opinions of their own.

(Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 12/07/11)

Despite her self-proclaimed patriotism and overt purpose in teaching students to value democracy Katharine allowed students to share ideas and freely discuss the ways in which an authoritarian regime would be better than a democratic society.

Another example of this effort to clarify freedom as “free-thinking” was found in Katharine’s description of a class activity I observed where students were asked to evaluate the Martin Luther King, Jr. speech titled, “I Have a Dream”. She had students select portions they thought were important. Katharine explained that in this instance her students “are given choice and freedom and their own free thinking and thought and they have to evaluate things on their own and be able to explain why it’s significant

(Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 01/19/12). This instance was characteristic of Katharine’s approach to teaching social studies. Through her use of primary source documents she regularly made efforts to allow students the opportunity to move beyond learning facts to using what they were learning to discuss and think critically.

Conceptualizing the value of freedom as intellectual freedom was closer to a view of



democracy as democratic living rather than a view of democracy as a system or way of organizing society. Katharine's efforts to reduce students' fear of being "right" or "wrong" during class discussion encouraged students to share ideas more freely.

**Mitch.** Like Amber, Mitch began by clearly pointing out that students "have the freedom of choice to take whatever path you want in life and not like they get to choose their assignments" (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11). Mitch initially conceptualized democracy as a system in which individuals have the opportunity to act somewhat free from regulation as long as those actions do not infringe on the rights of others. He stated, "democracy is the individual freedom to choose your path in life...you know as long as it doesn't impede on another's rights to do the same" (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11). This phrasing remained consistent for Mitch throughout the data. He pushed students in his classroom to consider the rights of others and recognize that in many ways they "live in an oppressed society" (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11).

Mitch hoped students would learn a sense of personal and social responsibility that coincides with the freedom to choose. In classroom observations Mitch emphasized this with students as he encouraged them to recognize that their choices may affect others. As a part of this encouragement, Mitch believed students were entitled to reliable information to make informed decisions as free from the influence of his personal values and perspectives as possible. For example, he described his role as a teacher in a school and community wrought with political turmoil over a levy failure and looming cuts as "I give them the freedom of choice, I do not slant anything. Even the school levy, I gave them my view of it, and even though my job might be on the line I didn't tell them"

(Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11). Mitch makes a conscious effort to remain as neutral as possible on social, political, and economic issues under the auspices of students getting information from himself and their classmates that will inform a personal, more free, choice on the matter.

### **Equality**

A second way that Amber, Katharine, and Mitch conceptualized democratic practice was through each participant's vision of equality as a democratic value. All three participants included equality as a democratic value during interviews and observations. The teachers expressed their thoughts on equality by showing and encouraging fairness, encouraging discussion, choice and decision-making opportunities for students, collaboration, and listening and talking across difference. Table 5 shows the ways these actions were associated with intended learning outcomes that included participation, social responsibility, patriotism, open-mindedness or acceptance of others, and recognizing privilege. Inherent in some of these expressions of equality were ideas about social justice, although the participants never used those words. What follows are the ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch considered the value of equality as it was connected to practice within their conceptions of teaching for democratic living.

**Amber.** In her first interview, Amber explained her view of students as individuals with individual needs. She characterized students' learning and behavioral needs as unique to individuals but noted that all students have these differences. Amber stated when developing her personal practical theories that "every student is different and has different needs so in practice I adjust due dates, assignments, and activities for

students based on their learning and behavioral needs” (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11). Equality in this sense is an outgrowth of recognizing difference and making sure all have an opportunity to be successful in her classroom. Amber entered her classroom believing each student was different and therefore had different needs that must be met if they were to be successful. This approach resulted in a sense of fairness in the classroom and the understanding that she listened to students. Throughout the observation field-notes it was evident that Amber used these strategies to build relationships with students and encourage them to be responsible to themselves and the class. For example, Amber organized a class review activity where she offered all students in the class some extra credit for a test if they answered review questions in ways that expressed a desirable understanding of ideas, concepts, and information. The students were expected to work together as a class in their effort to help themselves and their classmates earn points.

Amber consistently mentioned the importance of building rapport with students as a part of her thinking about the relationship between concepts of democracy and her teaching practice. She explained that a student in question was “off task for one or two minutes and then get right back on task, why not it just makes it more fun and lets them gives them a way to build rapport” (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12). This conversation occurred as we discussed an incident where a male student joked with a female student when she mentioned needing to sew a button back on her jacket. In my observation I noted that Amber quickly interrupted and directly told the male student everyone should be able to sew. When asked about her intentions and this potential social justice moment, Amber mentioned, “I mean it’s just another way to build rapport

with them I mean I'm not going to sit and talk about sewing or other topics the entire period" (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12). This was an example of an instance where Amber's actions beyond rapport building could be interpreted as an expression of social justice informed by the value of equality. When I observed her challenge the male student's comment toward a female student, I noted that she intervened when a male student made a sexist remark about sewing being a female skill. She quickly and directly stepped in and challenged his perspective might be viewed as representative of her inclination toward equality as an important democratic value and something to be actively worked toward. However, when asked about whether she thought this was the case, Amber explained that she did not think it was what drove her actions, and she simply wanted "to have some fun" (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12) and get to know her students by having a conversation while they were working on an assignment. Amber's inclusion of the value of equality was more about student relationships. Each student in her classroom had an equal opportunity to learn and enjoy a productive and personal relationship with her as the teacher.

**Katharine.** When discussing the notion of equality Katharine noted important actions related to equality were "voting and having to go through information are both democratic a democratic process, voting to me that's the most obvious piece, everybody gets to vote" (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12). Her focus here was not on voting as a right but rather as exercising one's voice through political participation. To her students she emphasized equal opportunity for all to vote and the civic duty to participate as an informed citizen.

Katharine's connections to class were described as giving students choices or letting them take a vote occasionally on what activity or topic they cover that day. For example, during one observation Katharine offered students the opportunity to take a break from their unit content to spend a day or two talking about Martin Luther King, Jr, and on another day she gave students a choice of the format for their review activity. She considered this as the most obvious one but went on to add that "focus in on what they need to know and don't know and that kind of thing you can look at the election cycle we are in right now with all the stuff that's being thrown at you, you have to focus in on what's important and set aside the other stuff" (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12). In her view the act of voting was important as she often asked students "do you want to have a voice" (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11). She hoped that through her classroom activities and school wide mock election students would form participatory habits and view equal access to voting as a necessary part of democratic life. This sentiment was reflected as she explained that in her "classroom I like to involve my students, to me I feel like that's a practice in democracy, they have to learn responsibility, they have to learn their civic duty to be informed, they have to participate" (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11). Katharine extended this idea to emphasize making informed decisions by developing the skills to evaluate sources and consider the reliability of information available that might inform those decisions.

In addition to exercising voice and participation, Katharine's ideas about equality as a democratic value included a social justice thread where she brought issues of

oppression and voice of the marginalized into the classroom. When asked about why she made it a point to bring women and minorities voices into the classroom she explained:

It's a I'm trying to get them out of their little funk of only being taught about old white dudes, and they need to realize that women and minorities play a part and they also need to understand that the way that they are taught is usually taught by the victor's perspective I mean that's just life, whoever wins I mean that's the one who gets to tell the story and so I was just trying to make the fact that she was female and they need to know that. (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12)

Katharine used primary source documents and class discussion to develop this critical perspective as a central theme throughout her course. During observations, I noticed that her focus on questioning students' taken-for-grantedness regarding matters of social justice seemed to be given preference, at times, over her emphasis on encouraging students to think freely. In particular she developed a way of talking about equality as acceptable and unacceptable ways of treating one another. She frequently commented that:

There's no reason ever to be rude to someone, there's just no reason for that, if you're going to I mean I've said this to kids before but I would say if you're going to be part of America and be like all rah rah American, like 'woo we're number one' then you have to walk the walk of what we were supposed to be founded on, and I'm pretty sure we're supposed to be founded on equality.

(Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12)

Katharine attributed this focus on the way people treat one another as an aspect of equality, and in particular her efforts to curb rudeness from and amongst students to her understanding of students. She explained that her students are “very self absorbed not intentionally or like to be rude to others it’s just...they’re all just very focused on their own like little tiny circle of life” (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 01/19/12).

Katharine’s understanding of her students view of self, her understanding of democratic society, and her role as a teacher were central to her conceptualization of the value of equality as it related to her teaching practice. She expressed practical aspects of teaching related to equality as: emphasizing voting as an expression of voice, opportunity for participation in political communities, and ways of treating one another by giving students opportunities to exercise their voice in discussions and class votes, making efforts to curb rudeness, and by brining marginalized voices into the narrative of history.

**Mitch.** Mitch discussed equality as a value that included recognizing students’ racial, ethnic, and economic diversity as well as asking students to learn about the structures and systems of society from a critical perspective. This culturally relevant approach to teaching was Mitch’s way of bringing the value of equality into the classroom. In my observations I noted Mitch often made pedagogical and content choices that addressed issues of social justice. When discussing the demographics of governors, the presidents, and legislative leaders, Mitch explained, “I don’t want to say we live in an oppressed society but we do as far as that’s concerned” (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11). Mitch actively worked to bring this critical perspective into the classroom as an essential aspect of his conception of equality in

democracy. He did this in ways that encouraged students to discuss and think about the ways structures and institutions benefit certain people, in particular wealthy white men.

Large group discussion was the most common instructional approach Mitch employed to guide students toward a critical perspective of the institutions and structures that make up the American democratic system. He frequently commented that students:

Regardless of your socioeconomic or economic background, your color, your country of origin, that everybody in my class has an equal say and you have the right to believe what you want to believe without others trying to step all over you. (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11)

Mitch's comments regarding equal say in class and the right to have your beliefs emerged in his practice as he guided students through large group discussions on a daily basis. In my observations I noted that he did not seem to mind if students disagreed. In fact, he seemed like he was particularly interested in discussion where students disagreed with one another or him in respectful ways. He recognized that "you'll have kids that will disagree with each other" (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11). His understanding that allowing or encouraging students to discuss their thoughts and ideas, with disagreement as an acceptable aspect of class, could be potentially messy followed this recognition. For example, Mitch explained that if a student were to say:

'What do you know? You're from Somalia and you shouldn't even be in this school.' you know, no one's ever went there, but if that were the case I think I'd lose it, I think I've set the tone where that's not going to happen. (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11)



Mitch's perspective in the context of this conversation conveys two points. First, he intended to encourage students to talk across difference by listening to perspectives different from their own and then sharing their own ideas in ways that were respectful of their peers' racial, ethnic, and economic differences. Second, Mitch had a high threshold for students sharing their ideas or being able to believe what they want. Like Katharine and Amber, Mitch had an established, although unarticulated and circumstantial, hierarchy of beliefs and values, among other things, that mediated his decision-making as a teacher. In Mitch's hierarchy of beliefs about teaching and embedded within his personal practical theories of democracy he showed that it is possible for students to share ideas or beliefs that are not acceptable in the classroom and if they did so he would stop them. Mitch's desire for students to exhibit behaviors and engage in ways that show they are open-minded and accepting of others' differences superseded his belief that all students should have an equal say in the discussion.

### **Rights**

A third value the participants' all included in their conception of democratic practice often overlapped the values of freedom and equality. Each teacher included rights as something highly valued for democratic living. Throughout the data Amber, Katharine, and Mitch conceptualized rights as an essential component for democracy and a necessary aspect of democratic living. During interviews and observations, rights were characterized as ways of acting and interacting, choices, decisions, or opportunities that were protected by government, should be protected by government, granted by a higher power, or fought for by individuals and groups through democratic action. Each

participant made specific content and pedagogical decisions in the classroom, represented by teacher/student actions. In the post-observations interviews each teacher was asked to connect those actions to intended learning outcomes. These actions and outcomes are represented in Table 5 of this chapter. What follows are the ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch conceptualized “rights” as a democratic value in the context of their beliefs about democracy and their relationship with their practice in social studies educator.

**Amber.** In her first interview, Amber discussed how her understanding of democracy has evolved. She explained, “now I’m more aware of the rights we have and the freedoms that we have and the fact that I wouldn’t want to live in if this was not a democracy” (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11). Amber, like Mitch and Katharine, insisted that her views on democracy had not changed but that her experiences, including those as a social studies teacher, had given her a language and awareness of democratic ideas, ideals, systems, structures, and values that supported the way she already thought.

When discussing rights during an interview she also indicated that students had rights. She framed her initial conception of students’ rights in the context of education and her classroom with students as members of community in mind. She noted, “I think students totally have the right to learn, they are here to learn, you know they have a right to get all the help that they need to be successful” (Amber, Interview, 01/31/12). This comment was in line with her personal practical theories in that she views all students as individuals and different in terms of their academic and behavioral needs. This personal practical theory was uniquely democratic for Amber in that she viewed learning as a right and situated this right to learn as an individual who is different from other students, as

necessary for membership in a democratic community. This turn toward students as citizens and teaching for democratic living was further explained as she discussed her students. Amber mentioned, “they have the right to learn they have the right to be here and get an education to become a successful member of the community and all of those things” (Amber, Interview, 01/31/12). Her sense of community and citizenship as an outcome of educational experiences in her social studies classroom was marked by hopes that students would learn to participate, understand their rights and freedoms, and be personally and socially responsible through collaborative work and discussion in the classroom.

During interviews, the idea of “rights” as a democratic value was an idea Amber easily connected to her teaching through discussing her content and instructional choices in the classroom. She commented that, “we talk a lot about the civil rights...we do a civil disobedience unit about...going against something that...is wrong and fight for their rights” (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11). The ways that Amber framed these ideas for her students during observations supported her assertion, and her hope, that students would come to some understanding of how to make a judgment about justice and injustice. She suggested that in her class “students are encouraged to learn about the freedom and rights they have and how and when to fight for those rights and freedoms” and that this was primarily “to learn about how and why people make decisions and choices as citizens” (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11). Amber’s intentions in terms of knowing one’s rights and knowing when and how to act against injustices limiting those rights were that students would develop a sense of what might be important in a democratic society and what

students, as citizens, might do in terms of making choices as a part of taking action to make society, or their community, a better place.

**Katharine.** When asked to explain her understanding of what ‘rights’ were, Katharine replied, rights were:

Specific protected things that you are allowed to do that all people should have, like your right to life. Things that God has bestowed on all of us like life, liberty, and property or the pursuit of happiness, I’m going to get all Thomas Jefferson and John Locke on you but that’s what I think on rights, things that everybody should be afforded because they are the God Given, everyone should be able to have and exercise and should be protected by the government. (Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12)

In her view of rights, Katharine focused largely on the role of government as an outgrowth of the content she teaches and her personal religious beliefs as a source of rights that is greater in authority than government. For Katharine, the government’s role was necessary in a democratic society and was not to grant rights but should be focused on “protecting your rights and liberties as individuals” (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11). When asked if rights still existed if government did not recognize them, Katharine replied, “I do but I think if you’re an optimal government you’re protecting those rights” (Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12). She then added that rights “do exist whether or not a governmental regime was to act like they exist, I think that they are given by a higher power to all individuals and they should have the ability to have those rights” (Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12). Much of Katharine’s focus when talking about rights as a value for

democracy was around what government allows individuals to do as citizens and the ways citizens can participate through voting, joining political parties, contacting legislators, and generally finding legal ways to play a role as a decision-maker.

As Katharine discussed the potential connections from her ideas about rights as they were related to what she thought students needed to know and how they should act as citizens. She hoped students would learn to participate, have a voice, and work for change. Katharine explained essential roles of government related to citizens' roles in a democracy as:

Providing rights and liberties for your people, participation, allowing for the common person to be able to influence government. Allowing for the common person to be able to have a say in government, allowing them to change government, allowing them to see that they have a voice, um, you know running for office, writing legislature, all that type of stuff. (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11)

She maintained that she hoped students would come to “know what their rights and responsibilities are as a citizen” (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11). As a part of students needing to know and understand their rights and responsibility, Katharine connected her personal practical theories to participation and education for personal and societal change as she stated, “I tell them all the time how important education is and how you can change the world through education” (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11).

When asked if students had rights, Katharine first explained that they have some rights protected under civil liberties court cases but thought her responsibilities and legal

obligations as a teacher superseding some of those rights. She suggested that when students rights were different in the “general public because there are things that they can do out there that are protected that are not protected here because I am technically perceived as their parent to make appropriate decisions for them by law” (Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12). When discussing her view of students’ rights in her classroom, she offered more specifically that students do have some rights necessary to her purposes as a social studies teacher. These rights included that, students:

Have a right for like to think how they want they have a right to express themselves, they have a right for free speech but they have a limit on all those things, if they are rude, if they are being obscene if they are you know have hateful speech or they are talking in a derogatory manner about a specific person or a group of people they’re cut off. (Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12)

Despite Katharine’s focus on the role of government in maintaining or protecting rights she viewed rights as existing whether or not government agreed. She continued to place a premium on encouraging students to exercise their rights of free thinking and free expression within the class discussions, small group work, and projects she organized for student learning. During the interviews and observations throughout this study, Katharine maintained that students needed to know their rights and freedoms. In her teaching and during our conversations it was obvious that she hoped students would develop an appreciation for American democratic life as a part of patriotism as well as to encourage participation, voice, and communally respectful interactions that reflected open-mindedness, informed decision-making, and personal and social responsibility.

**Mitch.** Throughout the interviews, Mitch consistently related his beliefs about democracy, personal practical theories, and teaching experiences to reinforcing a concern for the rights of others. Mitch placed limits on freedom and behavior in ways that reflected his expectation that students, as citizens in a democracy, can and should live how they want “as long as it doesn’t impede on another’s rights to do the same” (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11). This consistency extended through Mitch’s final interview where he noted “I think you should have the right to choose what is best for you and your family as long as you’re not infringing upon the rights of others” (Mitch, Interview, 02/02/12). Mitch was unique in his focus on a concern for the rights of others. His actions as a teacher and talk during interviews often brought the conversation back to the ways he implicitly reinforced this idea for students.

When asked to connect the idea of ‘rights’ to his teaching Mitch added that students have the right to “make choices independently of you know outside influence” (Mitch, Interview, 02/02/12). Comments like these were common and in line with Mitch’s desire to encourage independent thinking in students. By independent Mitch meant that students had the right and expectation to learn to think for themselves, gather or get information from different sides of an issue, evaluate sources, and use that information to make choices as an informed citizen with the responsibility to be a productive member of their community or society.

Mitch explained the role of the teacher as a politically neutral figure when he said it would be wrong if “I’m holding my personal views over another person’s right to tell me their personal views, but I would never do that” (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11).

Mitch's sense of political neutrality involved offering students the opportunity, and sometimes encouraging students, to disagree with him and each other in respectful ways. Throughout the observations there were instances where Mitch presented ideas with a bias, including favoring non-violent resolutions to foreign policy problems. However, he was consistent in his effort to allow and encourage students to disagree and offer unique perspectives on topics of class discussion like whether or not to go to war to settle a dispute. Mitch offered that students in a democracy had the right and privilege to question authority and have "opinions about people in charge or people who are in control" (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11). The idea that this was a privilege was reinforced by teaching decisions and class discussion that included an instance where Mitch asked a student from Saudi Arabia to offer his thoughts on the differences between life in Saudi Arabia and life in America. Mitch explained that his student told the class:

'Women don't have any rights where I'm from you have to stay at home and you aren't allowed to drive' ...he's their age and he knows, he lived there, and he'll tell them like crazy stuff like, ah that's not true, or I'll show them videos of North Korea, I don't know I think that getting through to them on that level helps to reinforce that privilege that they have here. (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11)

As a teacher Mitch worked to build an appreciation for American democracy through developing an understanding of life in other countries. He did this, while at the same time actively working to open students' eyes to the oppression that is alive and well in American society. His efforts blended two conflicting ideas to convey a message of hope for a better society through recognizing privilege and personal and social responsibility



regarding the life choices students make in the context of considering the consequences of those decisions on the lives of other people and framed this idea as a right.

Mitch hoped that his efforts in teaching for considering consequences of decisions would lead to students being productive members of society. Mitch explained that a productive member of society could take many forms but he shared, “we all have a right to an education but the reason that we get that education is so we can go on to be productive members of society” (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11). A productive member of society involved the participation and concern for the lives and rights of others he so adamantly expressed as a reason for teaching social studies. Mitch, like Amber and Katharine, included the values of freedom, equality, and rights in his conceptualization of democratic living. Through reflecting on practice and discussing the connections of personal practical theories of democracy he too refined specific meanings of and relationships between these values and practice.

### **Mediating the Belief-Practice Dialectic**

The second major theme that emerged as a result of data analysis was the mediation of the belief-practice dialectic. This research was undertaken, in part, because of a gap in the literature on the relationship between social studies teachers’ beliefs and ways in which those beliefs influence practice. It became evident through this research that a dialectical relationship existed between the participants’ beliefs about teaching, their view of the purpose of social studies, and their beliefs about democracy as they related those beliefs to their teaching practice. In particular, this research was designed to understand how beginning teachers’ beliefs about democracy are related to their practice.

To argue that beliefs do influence practice would oversimplify the complex relationship between beliefs about a problematic concept, democracy, and the practice of teaching.

This research led to a view of the relationship between beliefs about democracy and the practice of teaching social studies as a dialectic in which the teachers made content and pedagogical choices to negotiate the myriad of mediating factors. Amber, Katharine, and Mitch planned and made decisions in practice that took into consideration structural and institutional pressures, personal images and identity, and how they knew students. These decisions were a result of placing greater importance on some aspects of their beliefs, pressures, images, and understandings of students than others. It became evident through the data that some factors, their specific sources, and focus were more important to the teacher than others depending on potential consequences and intended learning outcomes.

Table 6 shows the mediating factors and the sources of those factors as they manifest in these three teachers professional and at times personal lives. As result of these mediating factors, the participants identified a variety of focuses in their teaching practice. Though Table 6 does not equally represent each teacher's thinking and teaching, it does summarize the various mediating factors and the related sources and focus of the participants when planning for, enacting, and reflecting on practice. The goal of this section is to present the ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch negotiated the belief-practice dialectic as they made decisions planning for teaching, that were mediated by structural and institutional pressures, their own image and identity, and the ways they had come to know students.

Table 6

*Mediating the Belief-Practice Dialectic: The Mediating Factors, Their Sources, and the Resulting Focus of the Teachers*

Theme	Factors	Sources of Factors	Resulting Focus of the Teachers
Mediating the Belief-Practice Dialectic	Structural and Institutional Pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time (A, K, M)</li> <li>- District (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Colleagues (A, K)</li> <li>- State (A, K)</li> <li>- Community (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Personal Values (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Understanding Students (A, M)</li> <li>- Role of Teacher (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Image of Good Classroom (A)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perceived Political Neutrality (A)</li> <li>- Relevance for Students (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Levy and Financial Issues (A, K)</li> <li>- Test Prep (A)</li> <li>- Teacher as Trusted Figure (A)</li> <li>- Student Needs (A, K, M)</li> <li>- (Lack of) Planning to Teach (M)</li> </ul>
	Image and Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Role of Teacher (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Reasons for Teaching (A, K)</li> <li>- Personal Experiences (K, M)</li> <li>- Non-political Position (A, M)</li> <li>- Advocate for Democracy (A, K)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on learning content (A)</li> <li>- Trust as Focus (A, M)</li> <li>- Unintended Influences (A, K)</li> <li>- Non-violent resolutions (M)</li> </ul>
	Knowing Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student Behavior (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Students' Lives (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Caring Relationships (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Needs of Students (A, M)</li> <li>- Class/Student Diversity (A, M)</li> <li>- Prior Knowledge (A, K)</li> <li>- Student Expectations (K, M)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Values/Practice Tension (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Varied Instruction (K)</li> <li>- Content Focus (A)</li> <li>- Relevance to Student Lives (A, K)</li> <li>- Collaborative Work (A)</li> <li>- Participation in Class (A, K)</li> <li>- Patriotism (K)</li> <li>- Trust Building (A, M)</li> <li>- Justice Judgments (M)</li> </ul>

*Note.* The first letter of the participants' pseudonyms was used to designate their individual and shared ideas. A was used for Amber, K for Katharine, and M for Mitch.

### Structural and Institutional Pressures

The first mediating factor of the belief-practice dialectic was structural and institutional pressures. Amber, Katharine, and Mitch faced structural and institutional pressures that influenced their practice and mediated the influence of their beliefs on practice and in turn mediated the influence of practice on their beliefs. Since all three

teachers worked in the same district, many of the pressures they faced were similar. Throughout the study Amber, Katharine, and Mitch shared insight into the ways they responded to time constraints, district and community turmoil, the expectations of colleagues, and the ways they understand the needs of students. As a result of, sometimes intense, constraints and restrictions, these teachers felt tension when trying to stay true to their own values, beliefs, and images, in particular those specific to teaching, student learning, and their role as a teacher. What follows are descriptions of the ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch experienced these pressures including examples of how the sources of pressure and their resulting focuses as they manifested in practice.

**Amber.** The structural and institutional pressures Amber discussed included the influence of the values and images of teaching she developed as a result of her time in school and college, standardized testing and state mandates, collegial and district-community pressure, and pressure from the ways she understood and knew her students. Throughout her time as a student and teacher Amber developed an understanding of what it means to be a teacher. Through her “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975) she, like Katharine and Mitch, came to view the teacher as a mentor and trusted adult figure more so than the teacher as a political figure. In a description of why she became a teacher Amber explained:

I’m a teacher because I love the kids, I loved school, I loved my teachers I liked having that kind of relationship with them, and I think it’s really important especially like a lot of these kids they have hard home life’s, they have things going on at home that, or anywhere in their teenage drama, but I think it’s

important for them to have someone that you know if something is coming up and they need to talk to someone it's important to ...know if you do I'm here, I just think its good for them to have any kind of adult relationship like that I think it's good for them. (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 11/22/11)

Throughout the data Amber emphasized mutual trust as necessary to her teaching in the context of democracy. Amber stated, "I try not to push my ideas on them very, I mean I'd like them to be able to make their own choices and not so much about democracy and what not, well yesterday they were asking me about my freshmen asked me who I voted for and stuff and I don't like to talk about that" (Amber, Interview, 01/31/12). In her view, Amber believed that sharing her political views may result in students feeling as though their own ideas and perspectives were not valid or free to be expressed in ways that might lead to participation and independent choices. She felt that this limited the level of trust possible between her and her students. Throughout the study Amber remained unwilling to risk sacrificing what she viewed as a trusting relationship between students and their right to make independent choices regarding political matters.

Amber's desire to get to know students in a trusting way influenced her teaching in that she often addressed student misbehavior by talking with students and showing that she trusted them. She referred to this in an interview as "giving them the benefit of the doubt" rather than giving students detentions or office referrals. After an outburst by a female student during an observation, Amber noted, "I think a lot of times I do this I try to talk with kids and work it out and give them the benefit of the doubt" (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11). Although this was her focus and preferred way of

addressing students' behavior issues like tardiness, disruptive outbursts, and inappropriate contact, Amber recognized that this could be problematic. Amber explained her tension regarding the female student outburst, "then it comes back and blows up in my face and I need to just be more I think with her I just need to immediately hand her a detention or get her out of the situation" (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11). The images of what a good classroom looks like and what good teaching is has influenced Amber's decision making as a teacher, in particular regarding addressing students behavior in the classroom. Throughout the interviews and observation field-notes data, Amber suppressed the desire to conform to more behaviorist approaches when addressing student behavior and only gave in to this pressure after a number of trust building conversations failed.

In addition to the influence of how she understood and knew students, Amber was influenced by state and district policy pressure, including her perceived expectations from colleagues. For example, Amber thought her colleagues were all following the district Ohio Graduation Test prep policy for their content area and grade level including regular time to complete the computer test prep activities known as Study Island. Amber commented, "I'm from the understanding that we were supposed to do [Study Island] because the district but now I am finding out no one else is really doing it" (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11). This was not her only reason for having students do the Study Island activities. She admitted that occasionally she just needed time to help students catch up on make up tests and quizzes and grade papers.

Like Katharine and Mitch, Amber was active in student extra-curricular activities. The limits on her time outside of school made it necessary to plan for “catch-up” days to keep up with grading and assure students had adequate time to complete make up work. As a beginning teacher, Amber had to negotiate the pressures of having limited time outside of the classroom and perceived expectations placed on her by colleagues and the district to organize test prep activities for students that she believed they found boring but necessary. The result was a tension between her own values and images as a teacher and the perceived expectations of teachers projected by the state, district, and her colleagues.

The instructional and pedagogical choices Amber made reflected her efforts to balance meeting the expectations she had for her own teaching and relationships with students while at the same time meeting the expectations of others. For example, Amber described her decision-making the day after the levy failed in November 2011 when she said, “I took a good 15-20 minutes in each class and answered their questions because they want to know and I mean it affects them directly” (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 11/22/11). Similar to Katharine and Mitch, Amber worked to negotiate these pressures without compromising her own beliefs, values, and images about good teaching. The nuanced ways in which she made content and pedagogical decisions took into account many factors as they evidenced the intensity or hierarchy of her beliefs and values regarding teaching. The stronger Amber felt about what was best for her students the less likely she was to compromise or give in to the demands of the state, district, or community.

**Katharine.** Like Amber, Katharine held strong beliefs, values, and images about what good teaching was in her social studies classroom. She felt comfortable straying from the pressures of state mandated standards based instruction and district-wide policy regarding the inclusion or exclusion of community political issues. The value that superseded all other beliefs, mandates, policies, requirements and expectations from the state, district, her colleagues, and even herself was whether or not she felt it was best for her students. Katharine took time to emphasize the importance of education as a way to better one's economic life and talked extensively with students about local, national, and global contemporary issues while teaching the enlightenment, the French Revolution, and Industrialization. Katharine explained:

Without having an understanding of the rest of the world and not thinking about how democracy affects you know the lifestyles that we have I just think kids miss that so I try to help them at, like I said before, I love this country very much and I want them to appreciate the wonderful things that it brings with it. (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 01/19/12)

Through data analyses it became apparent that this was related to her personal practical theories about personal and social change through education. Katharine regularly commented to students that “if you don't like how things are...whether it's economic or wanting to be independent or whatever it might be that education is really in my opinion the only real way to change your life” (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 01/19/12).

As another example, Katharine offered students the opportunity to take a “day off” from learning about the French Revolution to talk about Martin Luther King, Jr. and



on another occasion a day off from learning about The Age of Industrialization to discuss the bullying and character building day many of the students attended with Katharine. Throughout the observation field-notes there were instances such as these where Katharine offered students the opportunity to break from the planned content focused routine to discuss topics and ideas that were relevant and encouraged character building, acceptance of others, patriotism, and personal and social responsibility.

Katharine's preference for meeting students' needs over submitting to state, district, and collegial pressure extended to a contentious local political issue to pass a school tax levy. Despite pressure from the community, Katharine believed this issue to be relevant to social studies discussions and the most important political issue in her students' lives. She pointed out that "we've got moles in our district of like tea party parents having their kids specifically asking teachers questions to try to bait them into answering" and went on "I'm not going to let somebody bully me into not allowing the students to talk so" (Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12). Katharine recognized her students needed to have a voice, to speak out about their frustrations and emotions as they faced cutting teachers, staff, honors programs, special needs programs, and funding for extra-curricular activities and athletics. She stated, "the day after the levy failed in November I just threw out my lesson plans and said say your peace and so they were able to say how they felt and I told them you know they could ask me questions" (Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12).

Katharine was willing to risk being reprimanded to offer students the opportunity to share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions about a relevant and tenuous community

issue. During observations it was evident that she did this in a careful and nuanced way as she opened a forum for discussion while restraining her own voice on the subject. She explained:

I would never say “your parents need to vote for the levy” like I wouldn’t say that I promote, every time we have the conversation I’m like “your parents have the right to vote how ever they want but it’s their duty to go out and actually vote” so I promote the idea of voting and being politically active but I won’t come out and say your parents need to vote for the levy. (Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12)

With the prospect of newer teachers in the district, like Katharine, losing their job, she emphasized political participation and voting as a civic duty while suppressing her own opinions about the side of the issue students or their guardian(s) should take on the issue. Like Amber and Mitch, Katharine was aware of pressure from the district, community, and her colleagues but made thoughtful decisions about and in the act of practice to carefully navigate the belief-practice dialectical not stepping too far out of bounds but insisting on meeting students’ needs above expectations from those outside of her classroom.

**Mitch.** Mitch had two roles at Central, and he was new to both roles the 2011-2012 school year. His time was split between being a dean of students and a social studies teacher. Mitch explained that he preferred to teach and expressed his preference when he said, “that way I can go from [dean of students]” to “what I really like to do and teach” (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12). A typical day required that Mitch spend the majority of his time performing tasks related to his role as dean of students,

including occasionally being pulled out from class for these duties. This, in cooperation with his coaching Football and Track and Field, placed enormous time constraints on Mitch. He shared:

I work a lot outside of my hours you know, like I don't have time to grade or anything like that. I work a lot at home, um, where as I didn't the last two years, I come here I got a planning period a lunch I put worked, put my foot down and worked hard from 6:30 to 3:00 and get my stuff done. (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12)

The pressure of time limits made it difficult for Mitch to complete teaching related tasks in a timely manner, and posed a challenge to him being able to focus on what he truly enjoyed, teaching. In addition to the pressure of time limitations, Mitch, as a newer teacher in the district, faced the concern that he may be looking for a new job at the end of the year. Part of the reason he accepted the dean of students/social studies teacher position was he hoped it would lead to job security. However, if it did not he thought "being the dean of students and having that on my resume puts me ahead of other applicants outside of this district if I have to leave, you know" (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12). Like Katharine, Amber, and many new teachers in the district, he dealt with a constant concern that he may need to find a new teaching position for the 2012-2013 school year. In fact, this pressure often drove Mitch to accept more responsibility and become involved in administrative duties, co-curricular activities, and athletics as a part of his effort to improve job security. With this as a solution to potential job loss, teachers, like Mitch, may think they have to make the choice to increase

commitments outside of the classroom making it increasingly difficult to live up to their image of a good teacher.

Mitch, like Katharine and Amber, felt the pressure of the local levy issue. As a new teacher, the tenuous political climate in the community resulted in cautious teaching and at times calculated negotiation of the boundaries established by the district and community balanced with the needs and expectations of students. Mitch shared the nuanced way he approached this with students when he stated, “even the school levy, I gave them my view of it, and even though my job might be on the line I didn’t tell them that because that’s not the worry of a sixteen year old kid” (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11). More specifically Mitch explained he would:

Tell them why you want it to pass, you know and then you tell them why certain people would not want it to pass and why they would vote no. Always fall somewhere in the middle, save you from parent phone calls too, because I know there’s some teachers who got some parent phone calls this week for over stepping their boundaries, not intentionally, probably just emotionally charged.

(Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11)

Mitch understood that teachers had a vested interest but emphasized the need to control emotions in the classroom to avoid being reprimanded. He expressed a desire to have an opinion but recognized the opportunity for students to discuss what might be the most relevant local political issue in their lives to this point. Mitch commented regarding the new levy for March 2012 and the district emphasis on keeping it out of the classroom, he stated:

I can't even explain to them how the new levy that's on the ballot for March even though that's the thing that, that is the political subject, or you know, or the political issue that will affect them probably the most than any political issue has affected them in their lives to this point and I'm not allowed to talk about it.

(Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11)

Mitch made an effort to negotiate these pressures, in particular the levy issue in ways that, as a part time administrator and teacher concerned about job security, continued to address students concerns but also abided by the district policy regarding the issue. This tension manifested as a frustration he felt he had not offered students an adequate opportunity to have their needs met regarding understanding a relevant local political issue that affects them directly. Further he expressed discontent with having limits placed on his own ability to share his ideas, thoughts, and perspectives with students. When asked if he would like to be able to have an opinion in the classroom, he claimed, "Sure, I'd like to have an opinion" (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11).

### **Teacher Image and Identity**

The images and identities Amber, Katharine, and Mitch established of themselves as a teacher acted as important mediating factors in negotiating the belief-practice dialectic. As they each negotiated the tensions between factors that put pressure on them as teachers and their own practice the ways, they viewed themselves as teachers and their role as a teacher mediated their efforts. In many ways their images and identities as a teacher influenced, and were influenced by, the ways they came to know and understand their students and students' needs. This reciprocal relationship between image of self as

a teacher and understanding students manifested as an expression of their beliefs about teaching social studies in the context of democracy and was articulated in their personal practical theories. What follows are the ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch discussed the ways they had come to see themselves as teachers, or hoped students would come to see them as teachers, and how those images mediated their choices as a teacher in the context of democratic beliefs in social studies education.

**Amber.** In the context of democracy and teaching, Amber did not see herself as an advocate for democracy. When asked if she thought she was an advocate for democracy as a system or way of living she commented:

I don't know if I purposely do but I probably do, I think every now and then I'll say things that I'm like, that kind of trend towards like well we live like this which is better than the, you know somewhere else so I think I don't mean to but I think it definitely comes out. (Amber, Interview, 01/31/12)

In fact, early in her first interview Amber did not think there was much of a connection between her beliefs about democracy and her teaching, the classroom, or social studies' purposes. She did, however, quickly connect the content in her U.S. and Global Studies course for 10<sup>th</sup> grade to democratic ideas and values both in terms of democratic systems and democratic living. Regarding whether or not democracy was a part of the content she pointed out "when we talked about types of government and...imperialism I think we talk about it a lot too as far as you know the political reasons [for] our way of life and that we should be democratic" (Amber, Interview, 01/31/12).

When asked during an interview if it would bother her if her students viewed her as an advocate for democracy she replied, “I don’t think it would bother me but it kind of, I try not to push my ideas on them very, I mean I’d like them to be able to make their own choices” (Amber, Interview, 01/31/12). Her own view of herself as a teacher, and how she hoped her students view her as a teacher, reflected the teacher as someone who encourages and allows students to form their opinions and make choices without her pressuring them one way or another. From her perspective, Amber did not view advocating for democracy as a system or democratic living as a contradiction to this image. This view was also evident in her personal practical theories in that she hoped students would have freedom of choice in the sense that they should not feel pressure to take one side of an issue or another from the teacher.

Amber offered a result of how this influenced her teaching practice when she explained, “my freshmen asked me who I voted for and stuff and I don’t like to talk about that... but I definitely, I’m not trying to stay away from telling them about democracy” (Amber, Interview, 01/31/12). Amber’s image, and hopes for her students view, of her included being an unintentional advocate for democracy and democratic living with a focus on students’ freedom to think and make choices independent of coercion from the teacher or other authority figure. This was expressed in her personal practical theories and manifested in practice as a degree of political neutrality where she limited sharing her own political inclinations and preferences while at the same time admitting that she advocated for democracy and democratic living in terms of free choice and semi-unregulated living.

**Katharine.** Katharine's image and identity as a teacher in the context of teaching for democracy and democratic living focused on a subconscious but intentional advocacy for American democracy over other ways of organizing society. In teaching content, Katharine saw herself as an advocate for American democracy and patriotism, but recognized the subconscious influence of this patriotism on her pedagogical choices as a teacher. In a post-observation interview she explained:

I am fairly certain that subconsciously I make these decisions, I wouldn't say that I think to myself consciously saying oh this is very democratic of me I need to do this I've kind of had . . . all the ideals of America engrained in my soul and so I think everything is subconsciously done but I'm fairly certain I do it for those reasons but I don't think about it specifically when I make things, but I do now I do consciously point out that democracy is better than everything else, I will come out and say to the kids yes I'm biased, democracy is the best thing in the world and anything else sucks compared to us, sorry but I do. (Katharine,

Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12)

In this sense Katharine's view of herself as a patriotic advocate for American democracy positions her as one who places value on American perspectives of content, including the grand narrative of American Greatness, as part of her purposes including her previously discussed efforts to help students to understand life in other countries as a way to gain an appreciation and preference for life in America over other places. The framing of her personal practical theories and their connections to practice were represented in ways that reinforce this sense of American patriotism and were meant to convey a message of



appreciating life in America including but not limited to the freedoms, opportunities to participate, and value of education in democratic life as a part of American democratic structures and institutions.

**Mitch.** In the context of teaching for democracy and democratic living, Mitch viewed himself as an involuntarily politically neutral mediator in the classroom. He favored large group discussions and facilitated in such a way that encouraged students to share their ideas and disagree with each other and himself as the teacher. He positioned himself as the authority figure in all aspects of the classroom except during discussions. During discussions, Mitch allowed and actively encouraged students to share ideas and disagree with each other, often taking the conversation in whatever direction the students saw fit. He explained his view of his role in the classroom as:

The mediator and I want them all to feel free to share their ideas and their beliefs and even if it comes from home which I'm betting it does and I don't want them to feel intimidated or feel like that it's going to fall on deaf ears if they have an opinion. (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12)

This effort was an outgrowth and expression of Mitch's personal practical theories in that he hoped students would develop a sense of independent thinking as a result of freedom of choice in the classroom. Mitch hoped that students would view him as someone who allowed and encouraged independent thinking and free choice. This desire mediated his decisions as a teacher and facilitator during discussions. For example, Mitch described a class discussion where a few students held views and voice that overpowered many less academically confident students. He explained one incident where he changed his plan

and limited the role of these overpowering voices. Mitch commented, “they just overpower everybody with their views and sometimes I just don’t like them to steamroll the class with their opinions” (Mitch, Interview, 02/02/12). Mitch recognized the limits he places on his own political neutrality and students’ freedom to express their beliefs free from fear of being contradicted by the teacher.

In one class discussion I observed about the Cold War era, and war in general including the current War in Afghanistan and potential war in Iran, he shared, “I think that’s something I won’t compromise on, like I just think it’s a silly practice that I’m not going to encourage any type of war in front of kids” (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12). It became evident throughout the research study that Mitch’s political neutrality in the classroom had limits. As a result, there was some indication that his claim to not slant anything did not extend to issues or topics that might be particularly harmful to society, his students, or for some other reason he held stronger personal beliefs about than normal, like war and violence. This was a nuanced approach to teaching for democratic living where he recognized a guiding principal for when to redirect, end, or otherwise become more active in the class discussion. Mitch considered the idea that “if I sit there and correct them too much then my colors will shine through and I don’t want that to happen, I don’t want them to see where I stand I just want to stand on the fence” (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12). Mitch hoped students view him as politically neutral in the ways he presented information and issues in the class, but he recognized that he had to “correct” some students’ opinions that he viewed as potentially detrimental to society or their own well-being as a community.

## **Knowing Students**

The ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch came to know their students became the most prominent mediating factor in their negotiation of the belief-practice dialectic. The ways these three teachers understood students' lived experiences, the needs of their students, students' prior knowledge, student diversity and difference, behavior expectations for students, and the value placed on their relationships with students were closely related to practical decisions and actions. Each teacher placed a high priority on their desire to meet students' needs or meet students' expectations, but did so in different ways. What follows is a description of the ways each teacher's view of students and aspects of their relationships with students was related to their thinking and teaching in the context of teaching for democracy and democratic living.

**Amber.** In her personal practical theories of democracy, Amber specifically addressed the need "to get to know students and let them know you are there for them" (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11). Modeling democratic living in ways that showed caring and concern for students based on the ways she came to know students was evident throughout the interviews and observations with Amber. She valued getting to know students and clearly expressed the relationship between the ways she understood students' needs, prior knowledge, ability, and student diversity and her decision-making in practice. When discussing how she decided groupings for collaborative student activities, Amber said:

I just kind of see how they are how they interact with each other I guess, especially in a class with IEP kids too it makes it different because, like my 10th

period class I have a bunch of kids on IEPs like I'll pick the groups...second period there's just so many of them that they won't get to choose, I'll choose, but these kids for the most part of worked so might as well let them pick what they want. (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 01/10/12)

Selecting students' work groups was a thoughtful process for Amber. While she considered the size of the class, purpose of the activity, she first and foremost considered how she had come to know her students, their strengths, how quickly they work, how disruptive they might be in particular groups, among other factors. Her approach to making these decisions reflected her personal practical theory that students were individuals. Amber explained, "every kid is so different in their learning styles...so I guess that would be that every student is treated a little bit differently depending on their needs" (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11). Amber's view of students as individuals with unique academic and behavioral needs that should be met by her was a part of her personal practical theories of democracy; furthermore, this view of students was an extension of what she saw as related to the democratic values of equality and rights previously mentioned.

The ways Amber relied on her understanding of her students to mediate her efforts to negotiate the belief-practice dialectic also extended to her facilitation of class discussions. When asked if all students should have an opportunity, or be required, to speak during a discussion, she replied:

I think I just don't know if they understand what we're doing because not that every kid needs to answer a question but it's just like at the first day one kid

answered every question so it's like I don't know if they get it, are they quiet because they don't want to talk are they quiet because they have no clue. (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 01/10/12)

Amber recognized, as an extension of her understanding of how students were different, that not all students needed to answer or reposed to questions during every discussion. However, during a class discussion the first day of the semester, one student tried to answer every question she posed to the class. Throughout the interviews, she expressed that her rationale for student participation was less directly related to democracy and more of a practical or pedagogical reason for needing a variety of students to participate in discussions. She previously indicated that participation was a part of democracy, but when pressed about students' involvement in discussion her main reason was focused on informal assessment of student learning. This was the only reason Amber gave for encouraging a variety of students to participate in class discussions, but as Kennedy (2004) suggested, teachers may have more than one reason for what they do in the classroom. Amber's practical rationale for student participation was enough to justify her decision, possibly because she placed such a premium on student learning. Meeting students' needs was important to Amber, and prior to this research, she had no catalyst for having to think about the role of participating in discussion as a way to develop the skills and dispositions necessary for democratic living.

After a lesson where she had the entire class work together to earn points for a quiz by responding to questions during a review session, Amber recognized a tension regarding the way she structured the activity and potential outcomes for some students.

She noted that during the activity students throughout the day would hold their peers accountable to participate and respond with acceptable answers through peer pressure. Amber liked the idea of students holding each other responsible for paying attention and participating as she asked questions and called on students to respond. However, in one particular class there were some English as Second Language (ESL) learners and she admitted that, “it’s like some of them don’t really understand English so when they get it wrong and they are getting yelled at it’s like eh that’s a little harsh” (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12). This dilemma caused Amber to rethink how she might do a similar activity in the future so that this class in particular and the few ESL students would feel comfortable participating, while also helping the rest of the class to understand the needs of their peers who may not understand the language as well as themselves. She explained:

I don’t think high school kids can always...realize that hey this kid doesn’t even really understand English that well so... I can’t really get mad at them for getting the wrong answer, so it’s kind of good and bad, I guess it did make them focus because they were like ‘okay, I don’t really want to get yelled at anymore, I better start focusing’ so it takes the pressure off of me and puts it on them. (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12)

Amber experienced a tension where on one hand she desired to include collaboration and participation in a way that led students to hold each other accountable, develop responsibility to a group, and help her as the teacher get a better sense of what students were learning. On the other hand, she relied heavily on her democratic belief, and

resulting personal practical theory, that all students are individuals with unique needs that they have the right to be met so they can have as much of an opportunity as any other student might, to learn.

Reflecting on her instructional choices led Amber to experience this tension and consider the implications of the experience for her students. The tension was a result of how she understood her students' needs, in this case her ESL students, and the ways she may not have met those needs throughout the review activity and class discussion.

Amber took tensions such as this personally as a teacher and often emphasized her desire to meet student needs was also a part of building a relationship that she felt many students needed. She explained that if students "need to talk to someone...here, I just think its good for them to have any kind of adult relationship like that I think it's good for them" (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 11/22/11).

**Katharine.** Like Amber and Mitch, Katharine placed a priority on her relationships with students in her decision-making. Throughout the data the cornerstone of Katharine's connections between her beliefs about democracy and her students' learning was the students' behavior. She recognized a need for students to behave in ways that supported positive, or what I would call democratic, interactions with each other. When asked about students' behavior toward one another she explained, "I mean it fits into democracy, that's just manners, I just get really annoyed when they don't have manners" (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12). In Katharine's view, the connection between democracy and what she viewed as appropriate student interaction was secondary. During my observations of Katharine's teaching, evident that her

emphasis was on students learning manners for the sake of character building or kind interactions with other people was evident.

Katharine recognized adolescents as “very self absorbed not intentionally or like to be rude to others it’s just I think at this time I think they’re all just very focused on their own like little tiny circle of life” (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 01/19/12). As a result of understanding, or knowing, students in this way she made certain content and pedagogical choices. For example, Katharine took a day out of a unit to discuss Martin Luther King, Jr. and his “I Have a Dream” speech. She explained:

I love Dr. King...he has a lot of good messages and I think it’s important to bring up individuals like him for the kids to get to know better, like I know next year they’ll have a big unit on civil rights and so they’ll learn more information about him but I don’t think you can give them too much access to the ideology of Dr. King. I think he is a good role model for the kids, I think they can learn a lot from you know how he handled himself and the situations that he was in... a lot of teachers don’t like breaking up a unit or taking out a day to teach something that is not in a unit but I guess that just goes along with teaching the kids about the world I just think it’s good character building so. (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 01/19/12)

Katharine’s intentional break from her unit to focus on learning about Martin Luther King, Jr. in the context of learning history for character building was unique. During my observation of this lesson, the focus was on learning history through discussion and



questions in particular about Martin Luther King, Jr. and sociopolitical context in which he lived his life in the 1960s in America.

Katharine connected the lesson on Martin Luther King, Jr. to the other ways she taught students about the world in that they shared a common purpose. In part, Katharine hoped students would come to appreciate their lives and the social, political, and economic contexts in which they live, but she also hoped they would develop the values and dispositions necessary for living in a democratic society. When discussing students' experiences at a daylong workshop meant to build an increased acceptance of others, Katharine explained:

We're supposed to be founded on equality so...I wanted to bring it up in the classroom so that they would just have another person, I would think most of my kids have a good relationship with me so I just felt, hearing it from me, would just kind of reinforce what they did the day before and just allow them to talk and allow them to make fun of me since I got up and shared my thoughts and cried or whatever, um, you know they have someone that they could relate to the experience so. (Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12)

Katharine's relationship with students and the ways she understood students' needs guided her decision making was evident in interviews and observations of her teaching. At times she was willing to allow students to poke fun at her in the interest of modeling openness and showing concern for others as acceptable ways of interacting within a community.

On other occasions Katharine asserted herself as a less vulnerable authority figure, but she did so in the interest of caring about her students and as a result of her understanding of what students needed to know. For example, when asked about her response to a male student's sexist comment, she explained, "it's necessary [to address it] because they are going to hear it wherever they go so they might as well have it here and have a female in the classroom who has no problem you know putting him in his place" (Katharine, Post-Observation interview, 12/07/11). In a conversation about this incident, Katharine also noted that she thought there was a place in the classroom to discuss issues of racism, sexism, and homophobia in productive ways that do not suppress students' voices. She particularly liked when students were willing to address these comments amongst themselves. Then she, as the teacher, could make sure her students realized those comments were unacceptable and explain why while giving the class the opportunity to come to their own conclusion on the matter. She explained, "as long as they are not...really trying to be offensive or really trying to attack someone and the kids jump in both guys and girls and that's good to see that the guys jumped on him too" (Katharine, Post-Observation interview, 12/07/11).

A tension did emerge when Katharine acted in ways that contradicted what she thought students expected and traditionally have done in school. She shared that it bothered her that she did not focus more on note taking skills or opportunities to practice note taking in favor of more time spent on primary source literacy skills and understanding history through primary sources. She explained:

It's more important for me to have them read these primary sources and you know actually be able to look at something from the time period we're discussing and see what people were actually thinking and you know try to analyze these things and apply it to what we are learning, that's more important to me and I know it sounds bad but that's more important for me to get out of my class than learning to take notes. So, it bothers me like I really am not cool with that but for me to make sure they learn what they need to learn and then get that step in honors of actually getting them really important documents and materials, um that's my sacrifice I have to make (Katharine, Post-Observation interview, 12/07/11)

Katharine made a conscious decision in the interest of her students. Her understanding of what was most beneficial, or important, for students mediated the belief-practice dialectic in her decision-making. She placed students' interest above satisfying students' expectations of schooling and pressures from her own experiences. Katharine felt some pressure from these sources to make sure students learned to take notes in her class, often thought of as a traditionally accepted method of learning history (Kincheloe, 2001). She connected her beliefs about teaching social studies in the context of similar pedagogical and content choices when she said:

I can be a dictator I sure can and that conflicts with what we're doing but it really is in their best interest, like I know that's what dictators say to all their people it's like I am making the decisions and it's in your best interest I really am doing the decision making in their best interest but yeah so I can, I can, yeah I can go against my ideology sometimes. (Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12)

Katharine recognized her decisions as a teacher were at times tenuous, and acknowledged the ways her choices were in conflict with her own ideology and students' expectations for teaching. For Katharine, as with Amber and Mitch, her decisions were justified through a process of rationalizing them as being in the best interest of students. As a result, the ways Katharine came to know her students and understand their needs became increasingly important to her decision making process, planning, and negotiating tensions experienced when her beliefs were in conflict with her practice.

**Mitch.** Similarly to Katharine and Amber, Mitch valued his relationships with students. He claimed trusting relationships with students made him more effective as a social studies teacher and as a dean of students. He explained, "I just need to have personal relationships with each of those people, I need them to trust me" (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11). As a result of this need to build a trusting relationship, Mitch said, "I take a lot of time, there's not a person in either one of those rooms that I can't tell you something unique about them that you know isn't known just by looking at them" (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11). This was a point of pride for Mitch and played an important role in his decision-making and planning as a teacher. When asked why trust was such an important aspect of his relationships with students, Mitch replied:

They put a wall up to most people they don't trust people, um and they don't like many people and I've just put them in to the fact that when they come in here it's probably something that you're probably going to have to deal with some sort of discipline but when they come in here they feel welcome, they know that, they

know that I genuinely care about them and that's just the feeling that they get from me. (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11)

This trust building approach to developing a relationship with students drove many of Mitch's actions and informed his images of good teaching. Trust building also reflects the dialectical relationships between beliefs and practice. In Mitch's experiences, he realized that students who trust him and believe that he trusted him exhibit fewer behavioral problems and perform better academically in his class. He explained that it was important for teachers to know how to:

Talk to those guys and girls...sometimes you can't control them no matter what but that's just part of my style...and also it helps in the classroom because a few of those kids in that 6th period class, they get written up all day for being jerks, not doing their work, you know, screaming "fuck" in a classroom, you know, they won't do that with me and even though it's still a little bit chatty and stuff in my room they are controlled as opposed to how a lot of them act when they are away from me, does that make sense? (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11)

Mitch expressed the practical consequences for a trust-based relationship with students and maintained the importance of this relationship for what he does in the classroom. His efforts in the classroom and experiences with students continued to reinforce his belief that students responded in positive ways academically and behaviorally to his trust-based relationships with him.

In addition to developing a trust-based relationship with students, a number of content and pedagogical decisions were driven by how Mitch understood his students and

their needs. He recognized the diversity of the students in his classroom and explained, “in my two periods we have Muslims, we have black, Hispanic, immigrants...I just like to lay it out there that it’s possible but you’re going to have to work really hard to get what you want” (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11). Mitch’s understanding of his students socioeconomic status and their racial and ethnic backgrounds influenced his decisions and purposes in teaching social studies. He regularly talked with students about the need to work hard and how society is structured to favor some people and not others. When reflecting on a discussion about the demographics of American national and state level government, he commented:

We have such a diverse population I wanted to make sure that they all understand that even though we feel that progress is being made because there is a black president you know as far as, as far as like uh population is concerned we have a long way to go to be represented equally from our different backgrounds and you know, I just feel like this is the type of population that needs to understand that you know, yes white upper class males still run the country, you know, don’t believe that things have gotten better you know. (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11)

In the above example, as was typical of many of his lessons, Mitch emphasized the potentially oppressive nature of American society and political systems with desired implications for students to understand that they will have to work hard to overcome this oppression. This was related to Mitch’s personal practical theories of freedom of choice and concern for the rights of others. In my observations of Mitch’s teaching he often

contextualized these and similar lessons in ways that suggested students may need to work for their freedom to choose. In addition to recognizing and working to maintain or achieve their own rights and freedoms, Mitch thought students should act in ways that show concern for the rights of others.

Throughout the data Mitch explained that he intended to remain unbiased on issues because he wanted students to make up their own minds on issues. In fact, one tension Mitch experienced emerged when he found his threshold for political neutrality as a teacher. In an interview he shared that during a student presentation and class discussion that I observed, he hoped that students would favor nonviolent, or diplomatic, resolutions to issues rather than violence, or going to war. In particular the discussion focused on whether or not the United States should go to war with Iran. During a post-observation interview, Mitch explained his frustration when a student presented her work, which resulted in a non-violent resolution to a conflict but in the subsequent discussion about U.S.-Iran relations she immediately favored war as a resolution. Mitch commented:

Did you notice that she was the only one that after I explained about how people in this room are going to die and that every body is going to go to war she was the only one that still stuck with it “yeah we should keep doing that”, that was odd wasn’t it, it was really strange, because if I’m thinking about the ideas she had in the story things were peaceful right, I mean diplomacy and all that kind of stuff then she wants to go to war with Iran and see her friends die. (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12)

In class Mitch made a deliberate effort to push students toward non-violence. In his personal practical theories and throughout his comments, Mitch indicated he valued students' learning to think for themselves, independent of the influence of authority figures. However, in this insistence, rather than giving students information on either side of the U.S.-Iran War issue he actively worked to get students to choose the non-violent resolution. Mitch recognized non-violent resolutions as something he cared too much about to give students complete freedom to choose a side; however, he did not deduct points from the student who disagreed with him or otherwise punish her.

The result of reflecting on this lesson about non-violent resolutions was a tension experienced by Mitch. The tension was between his belief that students should think independently and his desire to teach for non-violent resolutions and a more peaceful world. This, and other decisions, were made quickly and rationalized based on how Mitch came to know his students and understand students needs as a part of his hierarchy for making decisions in practice. For all three teachers, factors such as these mediated a complicated decision-making process. Through observations and interviews it became apparent that each teacher employed a circumstantial hierarchy of beliefs, rationales, and purposes that guided decision-making. These decisions were often made before and during practice and were points of discussion during post-observation interviews. Amber, Katharine, and Mitch made decisions as teachers in moments of practice that took into consideration a myriad of factors, pressures, images, beliefs, and purposes for teaching.



### **Pedagogy and Purpose in Social Studies**

The third finding, titled pedagogy and purpose in social studies focuses on the aspects of Amber's, Katharine's, and Mitch's expressed purposes, and the ways those purposes were related to other intentions and actions with potential learning outcomes in practice. Through data analysis it became clear that the common focal purposes of all three teachers included challenging assumptions they thought students held, careful consideration of the ways knowledge was constructed in their classroom, and inclusion of issues and concepts they believed to be visible and/or relevant to students' lives. Some of the ways these purposes were related to actions and outcomes were common across two or all three participants. However, it was evident in the interviews and observations that each teacher also recognized and exhibited these actions and outcomes in unique ways.

Table 7 shows an overview of the variety of ways each teacher expressed their purpose for teaching social studies then related their intentions and outcomes to those purposes. The table does not represent all teachers thinking, purposes, intentions-actions, or practice-outcomes equally. These aspects of pedagogy and purpose in social studies emerged through conversations with participants in post-observation interviews about artifacts, observations, and classroom experiences. The purposes all three teachers expressed during interviews and evident in observing their teaching were challenging assumptions, constructing knowledge, and addressing visible and relevant issues. What follows are the ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch connected expressed purposes for teaching social studies to the intentions-actions and learning outcomes in the context of their beliefs about teaching for democracy and democratic living.

Table 7

*Pedagogy and Purpose in Social Studies: The Aspects of Teachers Expressed Purposes, Relative Intentions and Actions, and Practical Outcomes for Student Learning.*

Theme	Purpose	Intention-Action	Practice-Outcome for Learning
Pedagogy and Purpose in Social Studies	Challenging Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relationships with Students (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Students' Lives (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Leveraging Student Thinking (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Lecture (A, M)</li> <li>- Discussion (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Small group work (M)</li> <li>- Considering Consequences (A)</li> <li>- Countering Narratives (K)</li> <li>- Project-Based Learning (M)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Judgments and Choices (A, M)</li> <li>- Alternative Perspectives (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Question Sources (K)</li> <li>- History is not Fact (K)</li> <li>- Understand the World (K, M)</li> </ul>
	Construction of Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student Collaboration (A, M)</li> <li>- Student Needs (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Small Group Work (A, M)</li> <li>- Lecture as a Necessary Evil (A, M)</li> <li>- Student Interest (A)</li> <li>- Using Questions (A, M)</li> <li>- Source Evaluation (K)</li> <li>- Project-Based Learning (K)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand Complicated Concepts (A, K)</li> <li>- Gain Interest in Content (A, M)</li> <li>- Appreciate Difference (A)</li> <li>- Work with Difference (A, M)</li> <li>- Participate (K, M)</li> <li>- Self-Advocate (K, M)</li> <li>- Think Critically and Question (K, M)</li> <li>- Academic Confidence (M)</li> </ul>
	Visible and Relevant Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student Needs and Lives (A, K)</li> <li>- Student Safety (A)</li> <li>- Lack of Efficacy (A, M)</li> <li>- One-On-One Talks (A)</li> <li>- Economic Rationales (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Discussion (K)</li> <li>- District Tax Levy (K, M)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seeing Relevance (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Implicit Learning (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Automatic Transfer (A, K, M)</li> <li>- Patriotism (K)</li> <li>- Participation (K, M)</li> <li>- Voice (K, M)</li> <li>- Adaptability (K)</li> <li>- Social Change (K, M)</li> </ul>

*Note.* The first letter of the participants' pseudonyms was used to designate their individual and shared ideas. A was used for Amber, K for Katharine, and M for Mitch.

### **Challenging Assumptions**

Within the context of teaching for democracy or democratic living each teacher expressed a purpose of challenging assumptions about the world held by their students. In many cases these assumptions believed to be held by students were a result of the ways each teacher believed their students viewed the world in which they lived. In addition, each teacher focused on actions in practice to work toward challenging these assumptions made by students. For example, teachers employed the role of teacher as politically neutral, project-based learning, class discussions, student collaboration, and an expectation of implicit learning. Then, during post-observation interviews, all three teachers were asked about the relationship of these actions to potential learning outcomes. Below are the ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch related the purpose of challenging students' assumptions to democratic practice and potential learning outcomes for students.

**Amber.** Amber's reasons for becoming a social studies teacher were more about her relationships with students than the content she teaches. She explained, "I wanted to be a teacher not because I'm so interested in history...but I'm a teacher because I love the kids, I loved school, I loved my teachers I liked having that kind of relationship with them" (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 11/22/11). Here, discussion of her purposes as a social studies teacher within the context of her beliefs about democracy reflected this broader reason for becoming a teacher. She consistently referred to her relationship with students as important and recognized that many of her students "have hard home life's, they have things going on at home that...I think it's important for them to have someone"

(Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 11/22/11). As with Katharine and Mitch, this focus on building a relationship with students in ways that led to understanding students' thinking and lived experiences resulted in an understanding of the assumptions students make about content, about people, places, circumstances, and decisions related to learning experiences in the classroom.

In November, I observed Amber's teaching of a unit about The Pacific Theater during World War II. She began the unit by spending the first week organizing learning around topics of human rights and genocide, the ethical or moral implications of building and then dropping the atomic bomb, and contemporary nuclear proliferation issues. Her primary way of teaching these ideas was to offer students the opportunity to engage with each other and her through interactive lecture and large or small group discussion and activities. Her approach gave students space to question, or at least recognize, assumptions by coming to their own conclusions. This occurred through asking students to consider the effects of genocide and aftermath of dropping the atomic bomb in World War II with the potential effects of nuclear war today. When sharing how she decided to scaffold student learning by helping students connect the current discussion about World War II in the Pacific and the atomic bomb decision, she explained:

We talk a lot about North Korea because they are a dictatorship and the kids are always like "oh, lets just nuke them" and they seem to always like throw that out there so I thought well lets just talk about it and what the destruction actually is, and I just it's something that I think I'm more interested in versus battles and that kind of stuff so. (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 11/22/11)

Amber's goal was to scaffold student learning through discussion and small group work focused on understanding an issue that many students had already come to take for granted. And in this case of the example above an atomic bomb helped the U.S. win World War II so why not bomb North Korea if we go to war?

Amber's pedagogical and content choices were directed at challenging the ways she believed students understood these historical situations through connecting them to contemporary issues via lecture and discussion. Her approach to this situation and her desire to help students see issues in the world around them from a different perspective were related to her personal practical theories in terms of developing students' abilities to make judgments and choices. One of Amber's intentions was for students to develop the skills, knowledge, and in this case perspectives necessary for making choices as a part of democratic living. When asked about these skills, knowledge and perspectives she explained:

I mean I think it affects their life as far as especially when it comes time to deciding who they want in office or just do they want to be involved in political change do they want to be someone who just votes, do they not want to vote, do they want to be in a political party, I mean it helps them at least make an educated decision in how involved they want to be and help them understand bias and what's true, what's just being put out there so. (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12)

Amber's reflections on her purposes for teaching and the ways they related to actions in the classroom and potential student learning outcomes placed an importance on

challenging students assumptions through pedagogical and content choices that encouraged learning knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for living in a democracy.

**Katharine.** Like Amber and Mitch, Katharine focused on understanding and knowing her students by building a relationship with them influenced her purposes as a teacher. Knowing her students as well as she did gave her an understanding of the ways her students thought and the assumptions they brought with them into the classroom. A clear purpose expressed by Katharine, was working against traditional narratives in history. She actively tried to plan for and teach in ways that would challenge what students may have learned prior to coming to her class. For example, when discussing her students' assumption that Olympe de Gouges, a central figure in her lecture/class discussion about the French Revolution, was a man when she was in fact a woman. She explained:

I'm trying to get them out of their little funk of only being taught about old white dudes, and they need to realize that women and minorities play a part and they also need to understand that the way that they are taught is usually taught by the victor's perspective I mean that's just life, whoever wins I mean that's the one who gets to tell the story and so I was just trying to make the fact that she was female and they need to know that. (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12)

Katharine's emphasis on students needing to realize the roles of individuals and groups that traditionally have been marginalized had implications for her content and

pedagogical choices. She recognized that “a lot of times the students will just take the textbooks as like the final word on things” (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 01/19/12). For example, she explained, in reference to textbooks. According to her students’ perspectives on slavery, the Civil War and contemporary issues of race and racism, that:

The south always gets like a super bad rap for everything when the north was just as culpable for everything that happened, but I feel like it just gets put on the south, and I just think it’s annoying like the south was terrible I don’t disagree with that but I think the kids see the north as just this wonderful haven where they just gotta get on the underground railroad and get up here and that wasn’t [what it was] like, I don’t know I think it just becomes too simplified and...I think it’s just always bothered me so I just always make a point to tell them that the north wasn’t like this super great haven and you know there were plenty of Klans members up here and right now I think Indiana has like the second most population of Klu Klux Klan members. (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 01/19/12)

In this example Katharine explained the need for students to recognize their assumptions, and in particular the fallibility of the textbook as a perceived authority on subject matter.

In observations of Katharine’s class not only was it difficult for students to view the textbook, or other historical resources, as potentially fallible or misleading in the perspectives represented, or those they fail to represent, it was also difficult to turn this critical lens back on themselves or the place they have been raised. Katharine’s example

was offered during a post-observation interview as she reflected on her teaching of the American Civil War. She shared that it was challenging to get students to think of the North as “just as culpable” as the South when looking at American slavery and racism. Moreover, it may be difficult for some students to view their own region, state, or community as “bad” as any other place. In part this may be due to factors inherent in Katharine’s comments. On two occasions she discussed in interviews and frequently reminded students during my observations that “history is written by the victors and so you get a lot of people that are ignored” (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 12/07/11). Her reminder suggested that there is no need, as the writer of history, to include anything negative about one’s self, anything positive about the losing side, or in fact anything about those who one does not care to include. Katharine continued:

I try to represent those that are ignored or oppressed and they need a voice too and they typically don’t get it because they are just not mentioned in their textbooks, so. Plus I do try to bring up women a lot because women always do get the short end of the stick we are never like seen as important ever. (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 12/07/11)

Katharine discussed here her intention to bring in voices of those who have been marginalized, excluded, or represented in ways that leave out alternative perspectives. In doing so she hoped to challenge students’ assumptions about the nature of history, reliability of traditionally acceptable sources of information about history. She also actively worked to help students relate what was being learned about history to contemporary issues, such as discrimination against women, child labor, or issues related



to poverty. She often did so relying on large group discussion, interactive lecture, projects, and primary source analysis as cornerstone approaches to teaching in the classroom. She employed these approaches to vary her instruction, maintain student interest, and offer opportunities to gain new perspectives while working together to come to an understanding of the world around them while challenging students' assumptions.

**Mitch.** Similarly to Katharine and Amber, Mitch's emphasis on relationships with students led to knowing them in ways that informed his decision-making and purposes as a social studies teacher. Mitch often pointed out that he taught a diverse population of students; in particular, as the dean of students, his classes included students with a variety of ability levels. In relating his understanding of student difference to the learning outcomes he hoped for as a result of his actions in the classroom, he explained:

In my two periods we have Muslims, we have black, Hispanic, immigrants, I mean we are just so you know, I just like to lay it out there that it's possible but you're going to have to work really hard to get what you want. (Mitch,

Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11)

Mitch believed that his students in particular were going to face greater obstacles than their wealthier or whiter counterparts. With fewer opportunities and a greater possibility for discrimination looming, Mitch often emphasized to students that they needed to make good choices, think for themselves, and work hard.

Mitch worked toward challenging students' assumptions in a variety of ways including, primarily large group discussion, lecture, small group work, informal small group or individual conversations, project based-learning, and lecture. For example, I

observed two classes where Mitch organized a project for students where they would write an ending to Dr. Seuss' *The Butter Battle Book*. His intention with this project was to allow students to learn about ideas and concepts they were discussing in a foreign policy unit. As a large group the class discussed the Cold War corollary of the book. Then, students were given some class time during which they were allowed to talk through their ideas with peers, followed by the opportunity to present their ending to the class and large group class discussions of the topics presented. These small and large group discussions offered students the opportunity to consider the implications of the decisions they made regarding their outcome and allowed Mitch the opportunity as the facilitator to question students assumptions about the ways the resolutions they proposed. Choices and independent thinking were aspects of Mitch's personal practical theories and were often framed in ways that indicated making choices and thinking independently required working hard. For students to act in these ways, for democratic living to take hold in a system that Mitch characterized as oppressive for many students in his class, Mitch made it clear that students would need to work harder than their privileged counterparts to maintain and create opportunities for themselves to be successful and productive members of society.

### **Construction of Knowledge**

Through classroom observations and interviews it was evident that the purpose of construction of knowledge was integrated throughout the participants' practices. Construction of knowledge, here, refers to the ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch allowed students to come to their own understandings of ideas, content, and concepts. In

some cases, even when the teachers' disagreed with their students' perspectives, students were not punished for their differing views by point deductions or otherwise. In addition, all three teachers tended to favor discussion and project-based learning as ways for students to think critically, independently, and collaboratively to develop their own, in some cases, unique understanding of the ideas and concepts being learned. Despite similarities between the intentions-actions and practice-outcomes for learning, each teacher discussed and enacted these purposes in their own way. What follows are the ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch considered the purpose of construction of knowledge in their practice within the context of their beliefs about democracy and teaching for democratic living.

**Amber.** In Amber's practice, and in her personal practical theory of democracy where students are viewed as individuals, she placed a value on students working with each other. In particular, she claimed it was important for students to learn to work with different people. Amber explained, "they need to learn to work with different people and every student has different needs...that's kind of an overall theme that I think about as I am planning" (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12). Amber planned keeping in mind that students are individuals and have different needs in mind, but exhibited it more through her decisions in practice. For example, Amber relied often on small group work as a part of students developing an understanding of the concepts discussed that day. She expressed a variety of reasons for doing this, like the students enjoyed it more, they worked faster in some cases, it was part of an effort to address students' learning needs, and it allowed her to walk around and give more one-on-one attention to students.

In interviews Amber recognized that she did this to give students the opportunities to learn to work with peers who were different from themselves, sometimes choosing their work partners and other times working with someone she assigned.

In a post-observation interview Amber responded to a question about why she answered questions during lecture, but in small group work sessions she turned the questions back on the students and often refused to give them the answer. She explained:

Well I think that when I give them an assignment I want them to find information it's more I guess student centered and then when I'm lecturing it's more me just trying to get them information and make sure they get the information. (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12)

Amber recognized here the different purpose in each approach to teaching, lecture and small group work. With small group work it is organized for, and she intended it to be for, letting students construct their own, or guided, understanding of the concepts or ideas. In contrast, lecture was intended to be a time for students receiving information. During observations the few times Amber lectured, it turned toward large group discussion within minutes. Amber admitted, "I like kids to get involved, I like to do a lot of different things because I get bored standing up here talking all the time" (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11). In observing these instances Amber appeared concerned that students were bored, as well, and would begin asking them questions as a way to bring them back and make sure they were paying attention, even letting the conversation digress a bit to maintain student interest. This strategy required an understanding of students' differences, needs, interests, and tolerance for the experiences they encountered

in her classroom. Amber's use of questioning and small and large group discussion were actions meant to be guided by students taking part in the construction of knowledge, in being active participants in the creation of their own understanding of the concepts and ideas discussed in Amber's class.

**Katharine.** One of Katharine's purposes for teaching social studies, and part of her personal practical theories of democracy, was that students should "learn to participate, learn to advocate for themselves. Learn to be engaged in their surrounding community" (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11). To achieve this Katharine believed students needed the skills and ability to construct their own understanding of the world around them for the purpose of making decisions. Included in these skills, for example, was the need to "learn to evaluate sources and evaluate information" and to "learn to value our system of government and our founding documents and understand the founding documents and see how they are applicable to their lives. They need to know what their rights and responsibilities are as a citizen" (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11).

Katharine gave students the opportunity, through WebQuest projects on child labor and industrialization to visit websites with information, locate information, interpret information, and evaluate the reliability of the sources. Based on artifacts and observations students were considering the sources they were viewing by questioning who sponsored or wrote it, when it was written, and the perspective the author(s) took. Students discussed their understanding of the ideas embedded within the websites as well as the reliability of the websites used. Students were allowed to come to a variety of conclusions and encouraged to think critically to develop adequate but diverse

understandings of issues of child labor during industrialization. While discussing their perspective with peers and Katharine, she walked around the computer lab to help students with questions. Her efforts in this example and throughout her course were aimed at encouraging students to think and question while working together to develop an understanding of the concepts and ideas related to the course content.

**Mitch.** The ways Mitch understood his students' and their needs influenced his purposes for teaching social studies. In particular Mitch's viewed his students as diverse and less confident academically. Mitch noted in interviews that this view led to a perception of his class as a group that needed a greater opportunity to have their responses viewed as acceptable than some other classes might. In observations of his class, Mitch often allowed students the opportunity to interact during large and small group discussions. Mitch typically began class by asking students questions about last class and then about the topic for the current day's lesson. When asked about his reason for this Mitch replied, "I just wanted to hear them, what they know and for them basically with a bunch of different people answering the questions for them to understand that they do know something" (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12). Knowledge construction then for Mitch became about constructing academic confidence through constructing knowledge in the classroom. Mitch explained:

You know and even the people that aren't talking go "oh I know about that" and then they can relate it to the topic because the words "foreign policy" I mean I'm not an expert on it but I mean just kind of getting terms and stuff out there that the

kids are familiar with and that their peers know then it kind of makes it be like it's a lot less intimidating of a topic. (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12)

This was a way for Mitch to begin to help students become familiar with the topics, concepts, and vocabulary for the lesson or unit, but he also thought of this activity as a way to begin building academic confidence through constructing knowledge together. Instead of the teacher telling, their peers were reminding them and in a way encouraging them to participate. This was related to Mitch's personal practical theory of democracy regarding independent thinking in that Mitch hoped students would develop a sense of independent thought without simply taking what the authority figure says as the rule. To get to this point, though, Mitch felt it was necessary to build students' academic confidence, letting them know in effect, that they are smart; they do know something and can participate in the conversation. Mitch commented, "they were barking up the right tree, yeah well like anything they said that wasn't absolutely ridiculous was going to be accepted" (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12).

Mitch also relied on these types of conversations as a way to assess student prior knowledge and make decisions about what students might be missing in terms of skills and knowledge to be learned. He explained, "I want them to feel that they have some type of base and then that helps me figure out where I need to be and the gaps that I need to fill in" (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12). Even though Mitch positioned himself in this comment as the one who will be "filling in" these gaps in knowledge, understanding, or skill development he explained in that same post-observation interview:

I think they only learn when they're engaged, if I just sat up there and made them all not talk and listen to me I feel like I'd miss, you know probably half the people in the room that don't learn that way...I think so to be engaged...with each other I think they're going to probably, you know it fills in learning capabilities of every body when we're trying to hit up on everything you know, there's visual there's me there's them talking to each other. (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12)

As he discussed in this comment, Mitch hoped students would be engaged throughout his class. He believed that was how many students learned best and in fact believed that if students were engaged with each other in discussions or group work they would help fill in these gaps in their learning rather than him doing so as the teacher. Mitch organized and taught for student learning in ways that positioned knowledge as something constructed together. According to Mitch and in my observations, students were offered regular opportunities to contribute to class as they developed their own understanding and influenced their peers' understandings of the concepts and ideas discussed.

### **Visible and Relevant Issues**

The third purpose for teaching expressed by Amber, Katharine, and Mitch involved teaching for visible and relevant issues. Content and pedagogical choices were an expression of teaching social studies to address issues these three teachers noticed or had recognized in their respective schools, classrooms, or students' lives. All three participants made connections between their intentions-actions and potential learning outcomes in ways that reflected economic rationales within the context of discussing or



teaching for democratic purposes. These economic rationales, found in interviews and observations of participants' teaching, often included explanations to students about the relevance of or reasons for learning particular content or skills. In all three cases, the teachers gave a primary reason for what students were doing in class that focused on students' economic lives rather than their lives in a democratic community. What follows are descriptions of the ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch addressed visible and relevant issues, including economic rationales as a justification to students, related to their intentions-actions, and potential learning outcomes.

**Amber.** Within the context of thinking about the relationship between her beliefs about democracy and her teaching practice, Amber discussed a variety of issues and the extent to, and ways in, which these issues are addressed in the classroom. During her first post-observation interview, Amber was asked about whether issues like race, racism, sexism, homophobia, bullying, gender, etc. were addressed in the classroom or if they even had a place in the classroom. She responded, "I think they definitely do, I think it would depend on what's kind of going on, I think if there were a situation where someone was getting bullied, or it was a constant, I think it would be important to bring it up" (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 11/22/11). In her comment, here, and throughout the interviews and observations Amber reinforced the claim that issues that needed addressed in the classroom were those that posed immediate harm or were otherwise visible.

As another example, when discussing whether or not participation in gangs was addressed in the school she offered an example where she described violence amongst students in the year prior to this study. She explained:

I think it I would assume that if it was a bigger issue in the school we would talk about it as a staff I mean we have staff meetings once a month and last year we had an issue with the Somali population there was a lot of fights between them and other kids so it got addressed as an entire school in a staff meeting but as far as if it were one or two kids I probably wouldn't I probably would just deal with it on an individual basis. (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12)

Amber, as a beginning teacher and, like Katharine and Mitch suffering from time constraints and the pressure of possibly losing her job at the end of the school year, did not feel a sense of efficacy as a teacher to where she could push for the staff to address many of these issues unless they were visible enough to cause a disruption in the school. However, Amber did address these issues in her class on an individual basis as she found out about students experiencing these issues. She explained what she would do:

If I find something out about an individual kid I kind of try to push them on it a little bit and see if I can get any information out of them and find out if it is something major or not and we have a school psychologist here and then I'll usually go tell her if I find out something about a kid and she'll at least direct me in the you know at least here is who I need to go talk to. (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 01/17/12)

Her approach to these situations is in line with her personal practical theories and her effort to get to know her students and understand them as individuals with individual needs. This is a logical outgrowth of her images of good teaching and beliefs about teaching in a democratic society within a diverse community and diverse population of students.

A final aspect of addressing visible and relevant issues as a purpose for teaching is the use of economic rationales to justify relevancy to students. This study took place within the context of discussing and reflecting on teaching as it was related to specific beliefs Amber had about democracy and the ways those beliefs were connected to practice. It was fascinating then to discover that all three teachers, including Amber, relied heavily on economic rationales for what students are learning or doing in the classroom rather than rationales more relevant to democratic living in social or political contexts. For example, Amber explained:

I did have a conversation with a girl yesterday because she had been acting up a lot recently and I was like you can't act like this you know if you go to a job and act like this you're going to get fired or sent home for the day and not get paid that day. (Amber, Post-Observation Interview, 11/22/11)

In this example, I observed Amber was trying to get students to complete their group work assignment. She explained to the student who was causing a disruption and distracting others that her behavior needed to change in economic terms instead of behavior necessary for democratic living. She could have explained to the student that her actions were disrupting others and as a member of a community she should show

concern for the well-being of other members of that community, but instead chose to focus on a rationale for behavior that focused on relevance to the students' economic life. In a similar activity, students were assigned groups and work partners for an activity. When asked what she would say if students asked her why they had to work with this person, Amber replied:

Any job that you have you're going to work with people that you don't like or don't get a long with or any day you're going to do things that you don't want to do but you know if you want to get somewhere you have to do it. (Amber, Interview, 11/07/11)

All three teachers expressed this as a particularly relevant rationale to justify content and pedagogical choices to students. In post-observation interviews discussing similar incidents it became clear that Amber hoped students would learn some democratic skills and dispositions implicitly from classroom activities.

**Katharine.** Katharine sought to address visible and relevant issues as a purpose for teaching social studies in the context of thinking about the relationship between democracy and democratic living. As an ardent patriot, Katharine believed many of the values and ideals commonly associated with democracy, and in particular American democracy, to be particularly relevant to students lives as citizens and residents of a community. When discussing the relevancy of students learning about and for life in a democracy, she explained that it was important for students to learn because:

They need to be able to understand that their voice matters and they need to be able to participate in the discussion whether it's voting for a levy or voting for a

president or something so I think it's important to give them that opportunity or to build on an interest or things going on in the community so I think it's necessary to take that time out. (Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12)

The community's district tax levy became a central issue for her class as freshmen faced the possible loss of academic and co-curricular programs that might put them at a disadvantage to their peers when applying for admission to post-secondary institutions or for jobs. She recognized this saying, "the day after the levy failed in November I just threw out my lesson plans and said say your peace and so they were able to say how they felt" (Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12). Students were frequently given the opportunity in Katharine's class to discuss issues and topics, sometimes of their choosing, that were relevant to their lives. She hoped that by doing this she would "give them an ability to share their thoughts, to work with each other, um, you know there's times I get a little dictatorial and that's fine but I try to give them options and things" (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11). Katharine viewed this as important to learning for democratic living because there are skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to exercise and intelligently express one's voice as someone living in a democracy.

Through discussion, small group work, projects, and lecture Katharine reinforced these ideas and claimed that students "have to learn their civic duty to be informed, they have to participate" (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11). Katharine's intention was that students would learn what is necessary to be an informed decision-making, active participant. This was consistent throughout the data and in line with her personal practical theories of democracy regarding the value of education and participation.

Like Amber and Mitch, Katharine also relied on economic rationales to explain or justify pedagogical and content choices to students. For example, Katharine encouraged students to be comfortable with change and emphasized the need to be able to adapt. When students asked why, she would explain that, “when they are grown and they have jobs it’s not going to be the same thing every day and they need to be able to adapt” (Katharine, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12). Rather than explaining the need to be flexible and adaptive as a member of a community or during deliberative discussions in communities or as someone in political office, she presented students with a primarily economic rationale for being able to adapt to different situations. Even when developing a rationale for her personal practical theories of democracy she focused primarily on a justification that emphasized political life. She explained, “I tell them all the time how important education is and how you can change the world through education, you know how they can change their status in life whether they are from high SES or low SES” (Katharine, Interview, 11/09/11).

In other interviews Katharine explained her personal practical theories related to education as an essential aspect of democracy and education as a necessity when preparing people for citizenship. In fact, in her final interview, Katharine was more specific. She commented:

I mean they’ll learn to work with people especially the honors kids because they all think they’re right and they all think they’re smartest and they all think that they can do it on their own and a lot of their jobs that they’ll eventually get that’s not going to be possible so there are times to like work together even if it’s only

like five minutes to do like a quick group project or something I think it's important that they learn to work with people because that's another part of democracy is to work with people and you have to learn to work with them whether they're in political parties or civic organizations or whatever it may be they have to learn to be able to respect others and communicate and compromise because that's what a lot of adults don't know how to do, so maybe if they learn now we won't have morons in DC. (Katharine, Interview, 01/31/12)

In her explanation, Katharine does begin with a primarily economic rationale for students learning to work with others through collaborative and small group work in the classroom. However, she extends her rationale to include the variety of other ways this might be relevant for students' lives including being active in political parties and civic organizations, and effective communication and compromise. It was evident through the ways she expressed addressing visible and relevant issues that Katharine's purposes covered a range of reasons for what she does in the classroom and what she hoped students would learn.

**Mitch.** Similar to Amber and Katharine, the ways Mitch came to know his students influenced his purposes. One of those purposes was teaching about issues that were visible or particularly relevant to students' lives. The example Mitch discussed throughout the interviews was the local tax levy for the school district and the political climate of the community. Supporters of the levy on the November ballot had worked since last spring only to be met with strong anti-levy resistance as members of the community organized and actively campaigned against its passage. After the November

levy failed, Mitch, like Amber and Katharine, offered his students the opportunity to discuss the issue and its implications for their future at the school and after graduating. According to Amber, Katharine, and Mitch throughout the winter months, the district administration reminded all teachers and staff they could not talk about the levy issue in class. Mitch, as a part-time administrator and social studies teacher, explained his frustration:

I can't even explain to them how the new levy that's on the ballot for March even though that's the thing that, that is . . . the political issue that will affect them probably more [sic] than any political issue has affected them in their lives to this point and I'm not allowed to talk about it. (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11)

Given his images of good social studies teaching, his perceived role in the classroom, emphasis on a trust-building relationship, and his preference for small group discussion and contemporary issues, Mitch's frustration made sense. All three teachers discussed the levy and the ways they addressed it with students, even the pressure and limitations they felt from the district. However, Mitch was more vocal about his frustration with being told not to discuss the matter with students and the resulting tension in practice. He explained:

Obviously I want them to vote yes for the levy, they want to vote yes for the levy and the majority of their parents will vote yes for the levy but the ones that don't...it can be misconstrued to a parent that he was preaching on the levy, so what I'm saying is that...you have to really sit on the middle of the fence and



every time, you gotta keep score, every time you take a shot or you promote this person then you better say something nice or something negative about this side of it and that's how I feel like I have to do my classroom and I think that's bull shit. (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11)

Mitch insisted that he did not “want to sit there and mold their thoughts and their mind but I think that I could be a lot more effective if I was allowed to incorporate my way of thinking and go with what I say” (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 12/06/11). Mitch's sense of political neutrality in the classroom was not about avoiding potentially controversial topics or only presenting one perspective while demanding students agree with him. Rather, Mitch focused on asking questions about controversial topics and questions that reflected a critical perspective of society and the status quo. During observations it was evident that he did this while at the same time he worked to create an environment where students felt academically confident enough to disagree with him and their peers. The trust-based relationship he built with students resulted in students realizing they had voice in the classroom and thinking independently or presenting alternative perspectives would not result in negative consequences for them or their course grades.

Akin to Amber and Katharine, Mitch relied on primarily economic rationale to explain or justify democratic intentions-actions, and learning outcomes to students. He envisioned a goal of his teaching was to encourage students to be productive members of society. Mitch previously identified productive members of society as individuals who make a contribution that makes society a better place, or that makes the lives and jobs of

others better in some way. One of the skills he thought necessary for this productive citizenship was to learn to work well with other people through collaboration and small group work in his class. When asked about what he would say to students who asked, “why do we have to work with other people?” he explained:

If we are going to be productive members of society, unless you’re going to sit down and write books based on hear-say and what you read and never get to talk to people then collaboration is going to be, working with others is probably going to make up more than half of your adult life, um, be it with a spouse/partner, kids, um, co-workers, management, subordinates, you know there’s no body that does it alone. (Mitch, Interview, 11/15/11)

Mitch’s rationale or explanation to students draws on the necessity of working with others in economic life, at a job. Unlike Katharine, who included economic and more democratic sociopolitical rationales, Mitch’s justification for learning to collaborate effectively was viewed as a part of teaching for democracy and did not include any justifications or practical rationale of a social or political nature.

Mitch’s emphasis on small group work was related to his personal practical theories in that he relied on this approach as one of the ways he encouraged independent thinking amongst students and collaboration with others, as parts of his personal practical theories of democracy. Despite Mitch’s belief that these were democratic purposes for teaching and as such, were relevant to students’ lives as citizens in a democratic society, he consistently rationalized these activities and potential learning outcomes in economic ways. Mitch explained that he would tell students they needed to learn to work with

others because, “I still haven’t had a job where I haven’t had to communicate with other people and talk to people and be distracted and get stuff done at the same time, or rely on somebody else for help (Mitch, Post-Observation Interview, 01/05/12). Questioning the use of economic rationales for teaching practices is not meant to suggest that schools do not serve an economic purpose. However, if teachers’ justifications for activities and learning outcomes to students only include economic explanations, how will students come to understand, value, or employ those skills, dispositions, and understandings as a part of democratic living?

### **Toward a Substantive Theory of Enacting Personal Practical Theories of Democracy: Intersection and Overlap of Aspects of Themes**

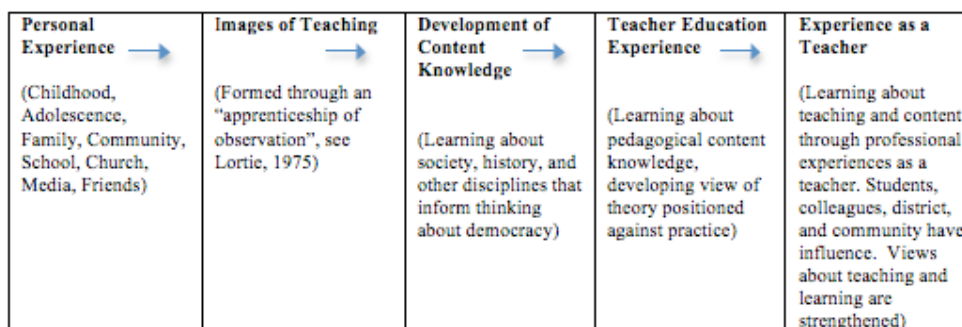
The three beginning social studies teachers in this study developed personal practical theories about democracy as a way to explore their own beliefs about democracy, the sources of those beliefs, and the ways they enacted their democratic education theories in practice. Common attributes of these personal practical theories included value placed on freedom, equality, and rights, the development of skills necessary for effective collaboration with others, and encouraging students’ to make choices and have a voice. As the teachers’ personal practical theories grew to include a broader range of practical connections, their words used to create their personal practical theories remained unchanged. This occurred despite being invited to revise them at each interview.

Throughout, post-observation interviews each teacher was asked to reflect on the relationship between their personal practical theories about democracy and the

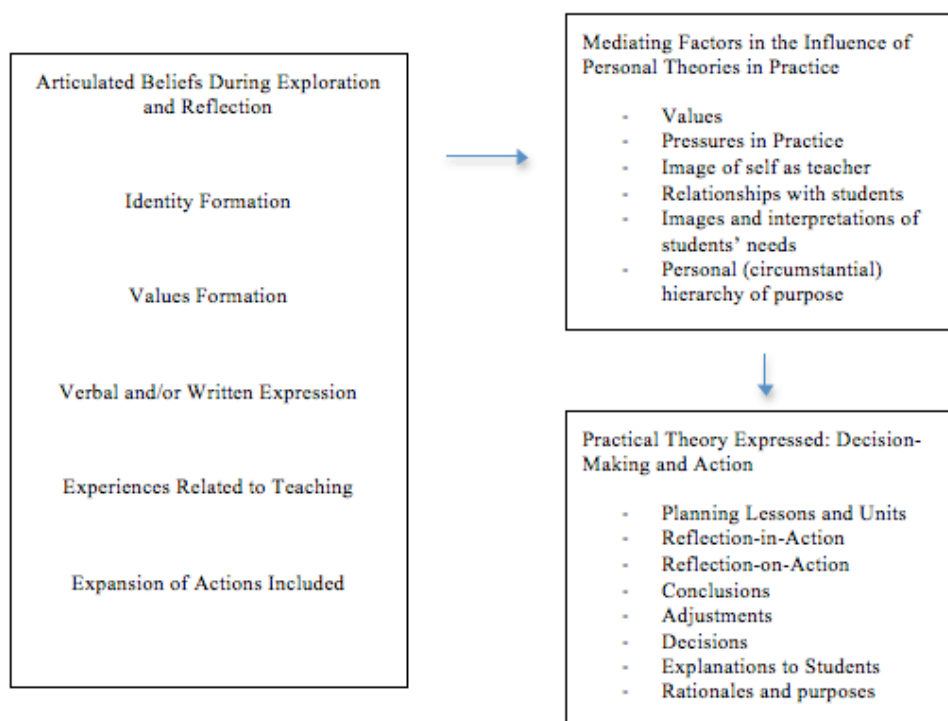
experiences they were having in the classroom. Exploring their thinking led to three major findings about this relationship that included: 1) conceptualizing democratic living in practice, 2) mediating the belief-practice dialectic, and 3) pedagogy and purpose in social studies. The first findings presented the ways each teacher related the values of freedom, equality, and rights as essential values for democratic living to their teaching practice and student learning. The second finding described the ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch had their decision-making process within the belief-practice dialectic mediated by a the various structural and institutional pressures, the images they held of being a teacher, and the ways they had come to know their students and understand students' needs to be successful. The third finding explained the ways these teachers' expressed purposes of challenging students' assumptions, co-constructing knowledge, and addressing visible and relevant issues. These findings were included as a part of teaching social studies in the context of thinking about democratic beliefs and practice were related to their actions and potential learning outcomes. Figure 3 represents the substantive theory that was a product of the constructivist grounded theory process of analysis (see Charmaz, 2006) that led to the three major findings.

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**The Logic of How Beliefs About Democracy Relate to Practice**



**Properties of Personal Theories of Democracy in Practice**



*Figure 3.* A substantive theory of how Amber, Katharine, and Mitch enacted personal practical theories of democracy

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Each of the three major findings presented in this chapter were a result of working toward this substantive theory and related to various aspects of it. For example, the logic of how beliefs influence practice and articulating beliefs are both a part of the first theme of conceptualizing democracy in practice. The second finding of mediating the belief-practice dialectic is related to the mediating factors in the influence of personal practical theories. Finally, the finding titled pedagogy and purpose in social studies is related to the personal practical theories expressed decision-making and action. Aspects of each of these findings are included and in turn conceptualized under the influence of their substantive theory counterpart. The logic of how beliefs were related to practice in this study takes into account the influence of a variety of experiences had by Amber, Katharine, and Mitch as they discussed their beliefs about democracy and the sources of those beliefs. The participants' personal experiences as members of a family and community and images of teaching first established as students played important roles in laying a foundation for what their beliefs would be regarding democracy. During college, these teachers emphasized learning content knowledge and teacher education experiences as instrumental in shaping and refining, but not changing their beliefs about democracy, purposes for teaching social studies, and images of good teaching. It is possible that recent experiences as first and second year teachers were reinforcing the images and beliefs they had established.

Although changes to their beliefs did not happen, these three teachers found a language to express their beliefs through these experiences. This led to a process of articulation influenced by: (a) the formation of their identity as a social studies teacher,

(b) the values they each felt more or less strongly about, (c) efforts to express their beliefs verbally and in written form, (d) efforts to connect their expressed theories to practice, and finally, (e) the expansion of theories to include more actions, activities, and outcomes in the classroom. After these beliefs about democracy were articulated and framed as personal practical theories about democracy, Amber, Katharine, and Mitch worked to enact a practice and reflect on the ways that practice was related to those theories. They each reflected on the planning, decision-making in practice, conclusions, adjustments, explanations to students, and their own rationales and purposes as mediated by a variety of factors. Some of these mediating factors included their own values and images of teaching, pressures from the district, community, and colleagues, their relationships with students, the ways they understood student needs, and their own personally organized hierarchy of purposes for teaching social studies. These teachers quickly weighed these factors and most frequently made decisions that they believed were in the best interest of their students regardless of other pressures or factors that might influence their teaching.

These findings, including participants' personal practical theories of democracy and the substantive theory, were presented in support of an argument. That is, the need for social studies teacher candidates to explore their own beliefs, assumptions, and images about democracy and the nature of social studies through practical inquiry as a process of refinement. This is argued so that teacher candidates, upon entering schools as beginning teachers will have developed a clear and defensible purpose for teaching social studies in a democratic society. This is a process that might require teacher candidates to reflect on a variety of ideas and images. Some of those ideas and images include: beliefs

about democracy in social studies and social studies purposes, the sources of their beliefs and images for teaching social studies, the reasons for those beliefs, and potential implications for learning in a classroom that focused on such concepts and beliefs brought out by this reflective work.

As a result of this research study, since education in American schools is situated within many purposes including the purpose of citizenship education in a democratic society, social studies teacher candidates need the opportunity to explore their beliefs about democracy and the roles of specific aspects of their conceptualization of democracy as they are related to practice. Some of those relationships may be recognized in ways that inform decision-making, classroom activities, and influence student learning. Doing so may lead to a more purposeful practice with clearly expressed purposes aligned with actions and learning outcomes for students, as well as potentially encourage an inquiry approach to practice that may build teacher efficacy and lead to more reflective and improvement oriented life as a teacher. In the following chapter, these findings will be contextualized in the research on teacher beliefs and democracy in social studies education as the literature is revisited and implications for social studies education and future research are discussed.



## **CHAPTER VI**

### **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

School is important to the political socialization of students (Hepburn, 1983). Historically, a central purpose of schools has been to develop the capacities and commitments needed for effective citizenship in a democracy (Kahne, Rodriguez, Smith, & Thiede, 2000). Furthermore, many schools are public and intentionally educative making them the best available sites for teaching political engagement (Parker, 2010). Teaching the capacities and commitments for citizenship and teaching for political engagement can be a part of any subject area or discipline in schools, but it is uniquely positioned as a relevant purpose in social studies given the place of democratic systems, institutions, policies, and actions that are often included in social studies content.

A number of studies have suggested that teachers rely on a personal guiding theory, whether it has been fully articulated or not, that influences instructional actions and classroom decision-making (see Chant, 2002; Chant, Heafner, & Bennett, 2004; Clandinin, 1986; Cornett, 1990; Pape, 1992). The research questions for this study focused on what Cornett (1987, 1990) referred to as subject matter theories. Amber, Katharine, and Mitch were asked to articulate their personal practical theories of democracy, a common concept often taught in the subject matter of social studies in American schools.

In Chapter I, I provided a rationale for this study that identified the purpose of this research. In doing so, I recognized that scholarly work on democracy in social studies education suggests that educators' perspectives, perceptions, and experiences related to

democracy may have an influence on what students in elementary and secondary schools learn about democracy and how they engage in a democratic society (Carr, 2008; McLaren, 2007; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). This makes studying teachers' perspectives, perceptions, and experiences in relation to democracy particularly important given the potential implications for student learning and for teacher education in developing a purposeful practice with teacher candidates.

Teachers' beliefs are less messy constructs than they appear to be and focusing on specific types of beliefs can make research more feasible and more useful in education (Pajares, 1992). Beliefs may be more or less irrational in thought, but as teachers work to articulate and connect them to practice those irrational thoughts begin to be rationalized. Purpose and practice are considered and related to belief through a reflective process. With this in mind, Amber, Katharine, and Mitch were asked to put their beliefs into statements of theoretical practical knowledge, called personal practical theories, to make the meanings and images they held about democracy more accessible and easier to work with (Connelly & Clandinin, 1982).

In Chapter II, I presented a review of literature on democracy in social studies education, research on teaching beliefs and beginning teachers, and personal practical theories of teaching. In doing so, I identified a gap in the research by reviewing the literature. This gap suggested a need for research on teacher beliefs and social studies teacher education that addresses the specific ways in which beliefs about subject matter concepts, like democracy, are related to teacher practice. To address this gap and guide this study, research questions were developed that focused on understanding the ways

Amber, Katharine, and Mitch conceptualized democracy, what they identify as beliefs about democracy, the sources of those beliefs, and the relationship between their beliefs about democracy and their teaching practice. An overarching question and four sub-questions guided the research. The overarching question was: In what ways are these beginning social studies teachers' personal practical theories of democracy in teaching related to their practice in the secondary classroom? The four sub-questions consisted of the following:

1. What do these social studies teachers' identify as beliefs about democracy?
2. Where do the participants believe their beliefs in democracy come from?
3. Which beliefs in, or characteristics of, democracy do these participants think are or should be a part of teaching social studies?
4. How do these social studies teachers enact beliefs about democracy as  
Personal Practical Theories of teaching?

With these questions in mind, this collective case study was framed by a commitment to democratic pragmatism. Central to this theoretical framework was the consideration of consequences; in particular the ways teachers may conceptualize intended consequences of their decisions and actions in practice with teaching democracy or teaching for democratic living in mind. In their own ways, each teacher in this study questioned their own understanding of democracy and its relationship to their practice in their social studies classrooms.

Green (2008) recognized the challenge of working toward a deeper democracy through a pragmatic, anti-essentialist philosophy. Working as a diverse community with

pluralistic views and perspectives requires a delicate balance between finding common goals and appreciating the difference, and variety of perspectives and beliefs, that may exist in a community (Parker, 2003). Green (1999) argued that a pragmatic philosophy for deepening democracy consists of “critically attentive, empirically attuned, democratically motivated processes of theoretical interaction among Deweyan pragmatism, Habermasian critical theory, and compatible streams of feminism and cultural pluralism...with a cooperative transformative agenda that does not exhaust or dominate their differing separate agendas” (p. 49). This philosophy is informed by Dewey’s (1916/2009) notion that living in democratic communities requires interaction in ways that acknowledges, and finds, varied points of shared interest as well as some common points of interest. If democracy is to be deepened through a pragmatic philosophy, then citizens must take up the arduous task of working toward some common and uncommon goals as well as consequences.

In addition, this study was designed from a social constructionist perspective. Social constructionism is where knowledge and understanding have been constructed through a social process (Burr, 2003). For this research, knowledge and understanding about Amber’s, Katharine’s, and Mitch’s beliefs about democracy and the ways in which those beliefs were related to democracy were framed by a democratic pragmatism and a social constructionist view of the world. This framework informed design and supported the research questions and findings. This relationship between framework and design was evident in the development of personal practical theories, and the ways those theories

connected to their practical experiences, led to knowledge and understanding constructed through a series of interviews, observations, member checks, and peer reviews.

In the following sections of this chapter, I address the ways democratic living, conceptualizing democracy and its values, the role of economic imperatives, the relationship between beliefs and practice and mediation of the belief-practice dialectic, and considering purpose and practice emerged in this research. Illuminating these topics is done through a discussion of the findings as they are contextualized within the relevant literature. This chapter then concludes with implications for social studies teacher education, limitations of this study, and implications for my future research as a social studies teacher educator.

### **The Literature Reexamined**

In Chapter IV, I presented the participants' personal practical theories of democracy in teaching and the nuanced changes in the ways participant's connected them to their practice. In Chapter V, I presented three major findings and the substantive theory for the ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch enacted their beliefs about democracy through developing personal practical theories. These three teachers worked to identify, articulate, and reflect on the ways their practice as social studies teachers was related to their beliefs about democracy and the personal practical theories informed by those beliefs. The relevant literature for situating this process includes scholarship about democracy and social studies education, teacher beliefs, social studies teacher education and beginning teacher professional growth, and personal practical theories in social studies education. What follows is a discussion of the findings in the context of the

literature within these areas of scholarship. The focus of this discussion is on teaching for democratic living and teaching democracy, the oversimplification of beliefs in practice, pressures for beginning teachers, and efforts to refine purpose.

### **Teaching for Democratic Living and Teaching Democracy**

In social studies classrooms, democracy is most often taught as a system of government (Ross, 1998). Amber, Katharine, and Mitch all discussed notions of democracy as a system and behavior within that system as something allowed, or not allowed, as a first response to questions about conceptualizing democracy. However, none of their personal practical theories explicitly focused on a notion of democracy as a system. Likewise, in their teaching practice they modeled behavior that could be characterized as democratic within a system that prohibited or made democratic action difficult.

For example, the district explicitly prohibited the discussion of the district levy with students in the classroom. In fact, parents of students would report teachers who allowed students to discuss the levy issue as a part of their daily lesson plan. Despite this pressure, all three teachers allowed students to engage in discussions about the levy issue, which was something they all believed to be the most relevant political issue in students' lives at that moment. Amber and Katharine threw out their daily plans after the levy failed in November 2011 to allow students to ask questions and discuss the levy failure and its potential affect on their lives. Mitch also offered students a similar opportunity and expressed frustration with not being allowed to discuss such a relevant political issue with social studies students. None of these teachers appeared intimidated by potential

reprimand as a result of their decision to allow students to discuss a controversial and relevant local community issue.

Teaching for democratic citizenship begins with getting students to be concerned with community issues through discussion and participation (Smith, 2009). Here Smith (2009) made an important distinction between teaching politics and teaching for democratic living. If teaching for democratic living requires that social studies teachers work to encourage students to be concerned with community issues but, as in the cases of Amber, Katharine, and Mitch, schools prohibit the discussion of relevant community issues that students are already interested in, it becomes difficult to achieve this practical goal.

**Conceptualizing democratic living in practice.** Price (2008) found that educators' conceptions of democracy included voice, critical thinking, reflective action, community, non-discrimination, and non-oppression. For pragmatists, getting the practical right so that the problem situation, teaching for democratic living in this case, can be resolved or improved requires the embracing difference for communal purposes toward a deeper democracy. In Green's (2008) vision of working toward a deeper democracy this means taking into account differences and similarities in our experiences, a concern for ideals, meanings, habits, and guiding values, then connecting these with critical, reflective, and collaborative knowledge while cultivating and employing shared social intelligence in transformative action. A reason for including this notion of democracy deepening pragmatism as a framework is to support the ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch were asked to connect their values, ideas, and beliefs related

democracy to the practical experiences of planning to teach, the act of teaching, and the ways they expressed these relationships during reflective conversations.

Similarities and differences existed between the democratic values expressed by all three participants in this study and the ways they enacted these values as they connected them to practical experiences through the reflective process. This was no surprise given the range of values, skills, knowledge, and dispositions identified as essential aspects of teaching for democracy throughout the literature. Not only should there be plurality in the conceptualization of democracy and the interpretation of the meaning of its values and tenants but an individual should be willing to change and revise their own notions of what is necessary for democracy in ways that their beliefs become clarified or refined expressions of a deeper democracy. For example, Ochoa-Becker (1999) argued necessary values for democratic living include equality, freedom, due process, respect for all people. Later, Ochoa-Becker (2007) claimed that fairness, equality, equity, freedom, and justice to fight/work for minorities and marginalized people to receive all the benefits of democracy were essential in teaching for democratic purposes. An author, like Ochoa-Becker, may add to or revise what she believed to be necessary in teaching for democratic living. Freedom and equality were consistent across both of these claims, but due process and respect for all people were revised by Ochoa-Becker to include fairness and justice to fight/work for minorities and marginalized people to receive all the benefits of democracy.

Like Ochoa-Becker's refined expression in conceptualizing teaching for democratic purposes, Katharine expanded her practical connections to her personal



practical theories. In interviews and observations it was evident that she began to include an emphasis on teaching about people and perspectives traditionally left out of the textbook. Katharine's effort was similar to Giroux's (1994) "pedagogy of representation" as she worked to challenge students' taken-for-granted ways of knowing history. This was accomplished by bringing the voices of people who have been marginalized in history into classroom content through discussions, lectures, and projects. Katharine connected this way of teaching to her personal practical theory that education can make a better society. By helping students understand these voices through her pedagogy of representation, she hoped they would develop a better understanding of the world around them and the ability to make judgments about where society can be made better. This notion was also connected to Katharine's personal practical theories that suggested participation was a necessary aspect of democracy (see Table 2). Students should learn about those who have been traditionally marginalized and work to understand their voices in the context of considering the ways they can act to make change.

In addition, Amber, in the lesson I observed on human rights in a unit on World War II and the Pacific Theater, taught a narrative that emphasized the genocide and atrocities of the war. She was, at times, critical of American policy and decision-making. In social studies this and similar units are often excluded in social studies classrooms in favor of a narrative of American victory that focuses on teaching the battles and bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Amber made similar connections to her theories but contextualized her practical actions differently. She emphasized a purpose for students that related to her personal practical theories of difference and freedom of choice (see

Table 3). Amber's hope was that through learning about narratives traditionally excluded in social studies curriculum. She thought her students would understand and practice decision-making with a consideration for the consequences of those decisions for people who have been traditionally marginalized.

Mitch offered a similar connection to a project he asked students to complete where they finished an alternative ending to Dr. Seuss' *The Butter Battle Book*. Students' story endings were to include relevant foreign policy and diplomacy concepts as they offered a resolution to the conflict presented in the book. His hope was that students would explain a non-violent resolution that considered a concern for the rights of others, also one of his personal practical theories (see Table 4). Mitch's desire for a non-violent resolution echoed Bickmore's (2004) notion of citizenship as peace-making, settling conflicts, but did not extend to learning peace-building. Bickmore's notion of peace-building included having students address underlying issues toward restoring and building peaceful relations.

In all three cases, the beginning teachers made conscious efforts to teach in ways that expressed different understandings of the values necessary for democracy. All three teachers easily connected their personal practical theories when reflecting on their teaching experiences, but they did not consider their personal practical theories to be guiding principles for content or pedagogical decision-making. Rather, their personal practical theories were one part of a complex circumstantial hierarchy of purposes and values drawn on for planning and decision-making in moments of practical experiences. Professional development beyond the limited scope of this study and with a true focus on

refining purpose for beginning teachers may help to clarify and extend their thinking about teaching for democratic living.

**Shared democratic values of freedom, equality, and rights.** Teachers' views of how democratic classrooms are built includes the idea that teaching with democratic values will build democratic classrooms by demonstrating fair behaviors toward students, enlarging students' ranges of personal freedom, and providing them with equal opportunity (Kesici, 2008). So, necessary for creating democratic classrooms are democratic values of liberty (freedom), justice (rights and fairness), and equality (rights and equal opportunity) (Pearl & Pryor, 2005; Pryor, 2003). Amber, Katharine, and Mitch all thought that the values of freedom, equality, and rights were necessary aspects of teaching for democracy. In this study, freedom was typically characterized and connected to practice as the freedom to choose. Equality was connected to the treatment of and relationship these three teachers had with their students, and rights included making choices and the right to learn.

***Freedom.*** A potential problem with the value of freedom is that many come to understand freedom as unrestricted living and then believe it to be a democratic value (Greene, 1988). All three participants in this study pushed back against their inclination to conceptualize freedom as unrestricted living. At first all three teachers mentioned that students could not just "do what they want" in the classroom and recognized limits on choices for students. The ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch recognized the limitations of freedom of choice supports Griffin's (1940) argument that freedom requires restraint.

In all three cases Amber, Katharine, and Mitch relied on a blend of self-imposed restraint and restraints as an outgrowth of teacher imposed rules and procedures.

Katharine and Mitch made it clear immediately that students could not make choices regarding when to take a test or how the tests or assignments would be structured, and Amber shared that her students could make choices about how to organize their work time but not about when assignments would be due. These conceptions of limited structural or systemic freedom for students were refined to include a notion of the “freedom to think”, or express their thinking free from intimidation or imposition on the part of the teacher, by all three participants. This intellectual freedom is more in line with Greene’s (1988) conceptualization of freedom as it might be a part of education, and requiring thinking and choice (Greene, 1988; Griffin, 1940).

***Equality.*** Griffin (1942/1992) recognized a view of democracy as participatory in that each person has the right to protect their rights, including equality and freedom. Similarly, Amber, Katharine, and Mitch all identified freedom to make choices and equality in terms of the right to an opportunity to learn as important aspects of their teaching and necessary for students being educated in a democratic society. All three teachers addressed the notion of equality as it connected to their practice and student learning. Katharine and Mitch made connections between the value of equality and their pedagogical and content choices. Katharine, through teaching to represent marginalized voices sought to help students uncover or challenge their assumptions about the world around them.

Mitch focused primarily on the demographics of executive leaders at the state and national levels as a way to show his diverse group of students the social and political limitations to gaining power they do or will face. The recognition of a system that perpetuates privilege and results in discrimination (Johnson, 2006) underpinned this connection between purpose and practice for Mitch. The implied understanding evident in Mitch's lesson was that his students would have to work and fight harder for their rights and for power than those born into positions of economic, political, or social privilege. This is in line with Griffin's (1942/1992) and Ochoa-Becker's (2007) assertions that students should learn to protect and fight for their rights, including equality and equity. Amber, Katharine, and Mitch all included issues of democracy, justice, and equality in their pedagogical contexts (Kincheloe, 2008).

***Rights.*** As a value in democracy, all three teachers expressed the importance of "rights" and the ways their ideas about "rights" included "freedom" and "equality". Amber, Katharine, and Mitch believe students have rights in and out of the classroom as citizens in a democracy. At first all three teachers were concerned that I would assume their conceptualization of a democratic classroom meant they let students do whatever they wanted. This common concern results from the way people often fuse laissez-faire economic theory with the value of natural rights in American society. Dewey (1927) recognized this fusion and the dogmatic expression of unregulated living that may result, which these three teachers actively resisted. As Amber's, Katharine's, and Mitch's ideas were refined through a series of reflective conversations their expression of the role of the

value of rights in their notions of teaching for democracy and democratic living became clearer.

Mitch and Amber more clearly expressed the need for self-regulation as a part of limiting actions based on a potential consequences including the ways they may affect other people, or their peer's ability to learn. In Amber's class she connected her value of each student's "right to learn" with her personal practical theory that all students are individuals (see Table 2) and entitled to the help and support that will allow them to succeed in her class, even if that means treating each student a differently. Mitch often spoke with his students about the need to make choices and live their life "free" as long as those choices and their living does not infringe on the rights of others.

All three teachers clearly expressed that citizenship rights and responsibilities exist whether the system or society says they exist. In other words, teaching for democratic living is less about knowing what citizens are allowed to do, or not allowed to do, and more about developing the citizens' capacities to make judgments and live a life in communities that, through deliberative activity, can make society better. Through this democratic living, citizens would work to protect and extend rights to those who suffer from the oppression of a system that inhibits or prevents them from the same freedoms as those who enjoy the privilege.

The connections made by Amber, Katharine, and Mitch support research by Carr (2007) who found "freedom" and "right to choose" were the most common characterizations of democracy by college of education students. The typical citizen action associated with these values as a learning outcome is the act of voting. In this

research study, and in Carr's (2007) research, voting was found to be the primary form of participation expressed by participants. Carr's participants also claimed that in relation to learning for living in society, high school did more to teach them more about the U.S. Constitution, the U.S. Flag, and provided important life experiences than it did to teach them to vote and work hard. Amber, Katharine, and Mitch all expressed the need for students to engage politically as active citizens in their community, and all three teachers included voting as a part of that but they frequently hoped for other forms of participation.

Amber and Mitch hoped students would become productive members of their communities in that they would think critically and independently to consider the consequences of their choices and actions for others. Katharine hoped students would, in addition to habitually voting, get involved in community organizations, political parties, or other means of political or social activity that might lead to a better community or better society. Hepburn (1983) argued that students should be learning about cooperation, justice, equal access, social control, and freedom and its democratic limits through decision-making in the classroom in similar ways to how Amber, Katharine, and Mitch include these ideas in their classrooms. In their own ways each teacher worked toward a democratic classroom that consisted of offering students choices, or developing the skills necessary for making choices, in the context of teaching for the recognition of, or against, dominant cultural ways (Giroux, 2001). This was done to develop a sense of what it means to make choices for the common good (Beyer, 1996b).

**Teaching democratic values and skills in practice.** The democratic values shared by Amber, Katharine, and Mitch were easily connected to their practice as an expression of their beliefs about democracy the relationship of those beliefs to their teaching practice. Throughout this research study, I offered each teacher the opportunity to reflect on his or her experiences and decision-making in the classroom. In the post-observation debriefings Amber, Katharine, and Mitch identified a variety of skills and dispositions they hoped to encourage through learning content and classroom activities. Among these intentions were voice, participation, community, decision-making, and discussion.

**Voice.** The desire to include different voices (Green, 1999) and student voice (Price, 2008; Wade, 1999; 2001) in the classroom was evident in all three teachers' practices and reflections. Amber, Katharine, and Mitch all hoped to encourage students to develop voice, express voice, and feel their voice was respected even if the teacher or peers disagreed. Mitch, during a lesson where students presented their endings to Dr. Seuss' *The Butter Battle Book*, offered students the opportunity to connect contemporary foreign policy concerns regarding the nuclear proliferation of North Korea and Iran with a potential decision to go to war. As a teacher, Mitch valued political neutrality with the hope that students would come to view their voice as appreciated and respected if it did not conflict with the authority figure's perspective. However, Mitch's anti-war view was too dominant in his circumstantial hierarchy to remain neutral during this lesson, and he presented war and violence as an unacceptable solution to foreign policy problems. Interestingly, students did not waiver. Mitch had created a community of learning where



voices were valued, and in some ways encouraged, regardless of the teacher's perspective. Students did not appear to have any reservations about disagreeing with Mitch, and their disagreement did not result in any known negative academic consequence for the students. Mitch, despite his own convictions about the use of war to resolve foreign policy issues, encouraged student voice.

Amber valued voice and student participation in class differently. She hoped students would take advantage of voice through project-based learning and asked students to express the choices they made through their work. For example, Amber asked students to complete a cause-effect timeline and consider the implications of the choices made by those in power throughout the cold war. She remained vague regarding the format and encouraged students to be creative in the ways they expressed their learning while also honoring a wide range of judgments made by students about whether the decisions made by world leaders during the Cold War resulted in consequences that made society better or worse. Focus on voice has the potential to empower students through developing relationships, authentic assessments, reflection, and encouraging interaction (Nielsen, Finkelstein, Schmidt, & Duncan, 2008; Pearl & Pryor, 2005).

***Participation.*** As a result of the desire to develop voice in the classroom, students were encouraged to participate by all three teachers. Mitch did not require participation in class discussions but in one instance offered students extra points to present their work in class and occasionally called on students to speak during discussions to assure they were being attentive and listening. This was an acceptable form of participation in his view. Similarly, Amber, at times, required all students to

participate by speaking during an activity as a way of assessing learning and encouraging interaction with peers. In one lesson, Amber asked all students in the class to respond to questions as part of a review game. During this game if students earned enough points working together, the entire class would receive bonus points on the following day's quiz. This resulted in students working to hold each other accountable for their attentiveness and the quality of their responses in ways Amber viewed as acceptable, with one exception. Reflecting on one class, after teaching this lesson, Amber questioned the productiveness and appropriateness of students holding accountable their classmates who were not native English speakers. She related her concern to her personal practical theories of diversity and individual needs (see Table 2) as she expressed a desire to protect her English as a Second Language (ESL) students right to learn and the need for their classmates to appreciate and respect each other's differences.

Similarly, Katharine frequently offered students the opportunity to ask questions and respond during large group discussions about the primary source packets that accompanied each unit of instruction. During one of these discussions, Katharine used questions to guide the discussion of child labor and industrialization primary source documents back to her personal practical theories that placed value on education in a democracy (see Table 3). She called on a student who she believed was not paying attention and asked him to respond to the question. When he could not answer, she reminded him that he had an opportunity to get an education that these children they were discussing did not and encouraged him not to waste it. In these ways, participation was emphasized in each classroom observed and extended beyond students practicing voting.

In fact, on only two occasions did any of the three teachers offer their students the opportunity to have a vote or discuss voting as a part of the content during class. Yet, all three teachers emphasized voting as an important obligation and consistently included it in their notions of teaching through and for participation as an aspect of democratic life.

Amber, Katharine, and Mitch recognized voting as one means of participation but emphasized communication with others, community involvement, political party, and interest group involvement as other potential avenues for participation. Voting as a form of participation is good and for a democratic system necessary. People should vote, but limiting notions of participation to voting can be problematic. As Dewey (1927) suggested, voting only allows for a limited capacity to shape society because only the dominant group gets what they want. This became evident as the participants' community prepared for another, March 2012, vote on a tax levy to support the school district. Although these teachers did not explicitly recognize the limitations of emphasizing voting as the primary means of participation expressed by Dewey, their decisions and beliefs about democracy and democratic living reflected the limited capacity of voting to improve society and their community. This is, in some way, related to teaching for participation and transforming or reconstructing society (Banks, 1990). Katharine's personal practical theory of the potential of education to change society reflects this intention (see Table 3).

***Community.*** Amber, Katharine, and Mitch shared a focus on community as a necessary to teaching for democratic living (Dewey, 1927; Green, 1999; Howard, 2001; Price, 2008). Absent from their notions of community, or community building, was an

emphasis on, or even mention of service or service learning (Dinkelman, 2001). Students were not asked to engage in any kind of service or to discuss the ways they might serve their communities. Instead, all three teachers emphasized relationships as a necessary aspect of democratic community in their classrooms. Amber and Katharine focused on developing relationships by showing they care about students and by offering students opportunities to engage in one-on-one and small group discussions. Occasionally, these discussions had to do with the content being learned, and sometimes they were unrelated to what students were learning. Regardless, Amber and Katharine still viewed the discussions as important. These conversations gave the students and their teachers an opportunity to get to know each other personally and often included joking around and poking fun in playful ways. Discussions like this occurred daily in both cases and often led to the teacher developing an understanding of students' interests, needs, and ways of thinking that were used during instruction to keep and hold students' attention.

Mitch, on the other hand, focused on trust building and peace-making as a part of building community in the classroom. He emphasized peaceful resolutions to conflict but did not extend those learning moments to peace-building, or addressing underlying inequity to restore relationships (Bickmore, 2004). Mitch often asked students about their day and showed a genuine concern for their well-being. His efforts to help students feel their voice mattered, and focus on treating students with respect in the classroom led to a trust-based relationship with students. In his view these trust-based relationships with students often resulted in higher academic performance than the same students exhibited in other classes. Allen (2004) identified trust as an essential component of

community in that it is necessary to have trust between citizens if they are going to be willing to sacrifice their self-interest in favor of what is best for other members of the community. Concern for the common good and an understanding of diversity through face-to-face interaction, built on student interest and civic empowerment were evident across the cases in this research and are necessary for a democratic classroom (Pearl & Pryor, 2005).

***Decision-making, discussion, and deliberation.*** Decision-making through deliberation in diverse communities is an essential component of learning democratic citizenship (Parker, 1997a, 2001, 2006). Amber, Katharine, and Mitch all included decision-making as a necessary skill for students and expressed a need for students to make decisions in the classroom. They did not, however, encourage, teach, or offer opportunities for students to deliberate in the way Parker suggests. This is another example, in addition to extending peace-making to peace-building, where professional development and the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues as part of a process of refinement could lead to deeper understandings of decision-making regarding teaching through collaborative work for a deeper democracy.

Democratic living requires citizens to work in diverse groups to make decisions. One way to teach this effectively to students would be to develop deliberative skills as a part of participating in collaborative learning activities in the classroom, something none of the participants attempted in this research study. Necessary deliberative skills include listening, speaking up, telling why, avoiding name-calling, trying it out, and learning to be together (Parker, 2006). All three teachers in this study focused on the development

of similar skills through small and large group discussions. In some of the discussions controversial social, political, and economic issues were the focus and used as a way to allow students the opportunities to listen, speak up, refine their position or perspective, and show respect for others. For all three participants, the district tax levy, a so-called closed-area (Hunt & Metcalf, 1968), was a common connection to learning democratic living through discussion-oriented activities.

Even though Amber, Katharine, and Mitch lacked a focus on deliberation, they did emphasize decision-making, discussion, and collaboration in their personal practical theories. In fact, taken apart, Parker's deliberation skills were all included in some way in these teachers' practice. All three teachers emphasized students' need to respect each other's, and alternative, perspectives in the classroom, and they each connected this emphasis to their personal practical theories of democracy. Students were encouraged to avoid being rude or name-calling and insisted students listened to one another during discussions in Katharine's class. Mitch and Amber used collaborative group work and discussion as a way for students to learn to work with peers who were different from them and consider potential or historical decision-making scenarios.

In many instances student decision-making was a hypothetical task with little influence or implication for their own lives or the lives of people in their community. Amber, Katharine, and Mitch did, however, encourage students to consider decisions made by political or social leaders. For example, Harry Truman's decision to drop the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a potential decision by President Obama to go to war with Iran, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s decisions and goals as a leader of the Civil

Rights movement, and the decisions of local community leaders who opposed and supported the controversial tax levy. The teachers used these examples in a way similar to Ochoa-Becker's (1999) conception of teaching social studies using decision-making and counter-socialization while examining values and beliefs in a reflective way. Even though students had few opportunities to make meaningful decisions as a part of teaching and learning for democratic living, all three teachers offered students the opportunity to reflect on the consequences of controversial (Hepburn, 1983; Rossi, 2006) decisions made in the past, present, and potentially in the future.

*Economic rationales for democratic practice.* Amber, Katharine, and Mitch offered clear connections between what they believed to be democratic values and the learning they hoped would take place in their classroom, however, the rationales explained to students, often focused on economic living rather than democratic living. This overlap in economic and sociopolitical purposes expressed to students is common (Brosio, 1994; Ochoa-Becker, 2007). In fact, schooling seems to be aimed at the capital accumulation and the reproduction of the labor force (Giroux, 2001). The established metric for performance evaluation in this capitalist laden scenario is 'success' (Apple, 2000). So the detriment in relying on economic, or more specifically capitalist, rationales for learning the skills and dispositions necessary for democratic living is that students may only come to understand them in terms of their necessity for economic success, a better job, more money, the promotion, the nicer home, the better neighborhood rather than in the context of learning to deliberate with others in communities of difference for the common good. Ochoa-Becker (2007) recognized some positives and negatives of a

capitalist system that perpetuates privilege and inequity (Johnson, 2006). While, as an economic system, it may offer more opportunity for decision-making as a consumer or producer, negative effects of capitalism often result from decision-making based on self-interest that leads to the debasement of human beings and prohibits the expansion of social justice.

With capitalist-economic rationales as explanations for the usefulness and relevance of students' learning, students may be encouraged to deprive themselves or injure others to achieve success (Dewey, 2009/1916). Adler and Confer (1998) found in a two-year qualitative study that pre-service teachers were concerned with the ways democracy required citizens to not only attend to their self-interest but to the interests of others. One might argue that in a democratic society the self-interests of one are only in conflict with the interests of others if capitalism or religious dogma is also a part of society. James (2010) found that teacher candidates who were theologically certain lacked the open-mindedness and acceptance necessary to engage in a meaningful democratic community. Beliefs about the economic life often fuse with natural rights doctrine in a way that leads to dogmatic, and consequently closed-minded views about the world and society. To understand that economic life in the United States is class-based and undemocratic in that equality and personal development are defined the same way capitalism is defined, by the market, property, and power relationships (Bowles & Gintis, 1976) is difficult when perspectives that challenge an unregulated sense of economic freedom or the profit margins of corporations or wealthy individuals are deemed "un-American" or "un-Democratic".



Amber, Katharine, and Mitch all made efforts to balance personal responsibility with social or group responsibility. Amber focused on students holding each other accountable in productive ways during a review session to earn points for the group. Katharine, during class discussions and content choices like learning about child labor around the world and the Civil Rights movement, emphasized the need for students to understand their obligations and duties as a citizen who is working for a better democratic society. Mitch, throughout his lessons and post-observation discussions connected his teaching to the hope that students would act in ways that considered the rights and needs of others. He expressed this clearly as a personal responsibility to act in just ways in the context of living as a socially responsible member of a community.

Despite these efforts and explanations during reflection on practical experiences all three teachers identified economic rationales for what they explained as democratically oriented learning activities. For example, all three teachers offered an explanation for collaborative work as the development of skills necessary for working well with people who are different because when students get a job they will have to work with colleagues or a boss they do not like. Mitch taught for personal and social responsibility as an outgrowth of freethinking and freedom to make choices. However, he explained this purpose to students in economic terms (e.g., job choice or choosing a career that offers a contribution to society) rather than in terms of democratic living in a community. This is a logical connection for many students and teachers given how dominant citizens' economic lives are on a day-to-day basis. After a study of states' standards, O'Brien (2008) found those states that have citizenship outlined focus mainly

on personally responsible. There is little effort by the system, or those who benefit from it, to place importance on working against individualism (Counts, 1932) or self-interest as potentially anti-democratic orientations (Howard, 2001).

As a result of a review of literature that included empirical research as well as conceptual and theoretical scholarship on democracy and social studies education, a framework (see Figure 1) was developed for understanding teachers' conceptions of democracy. The discussion in this final chapter has reflected many of the aspects included in the three perspectives offered in this framework, although they have been conceptualized and put to use in a variety of ways by Amber, Katharine, and Mitch. This framework includes the overlapping democratic perspectives of critical, communal, and personal that are necessary to varying degrees for life in democratic communities that work toward social change and a deeper democracy. Claim that certain values or actions are, or are not, democratic is problematic. As a result, this framework is not intended to be comprehensive in its distinctions of what should be included in teaching for democratic living. The framework should be a starting point to consider and discuss where experiences, thinking, beliefs, or actions may fit within a conceptual framework for teaching democratic living in social studies education. The decisions made by Amber, Katharine, and Mitch were not solely based on their beliefs about democracy or the personal practical theories they so easily connected to their experiences during reflection. There remains then a need to discuss the relationship between beliefs and practice as well as the purposes and pedagogy of social studies education that were also at play in educational practices of these three teachers.

### **The Oversimplification of Beliefs in Practice**

Scholars tend to agree that beliefs influence practice (Calderhead, 1988; Chin & Barber, 2010; Chiodo & Brown, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Clark, 1988; Elbaz, 1981). More specifically, Nespor (1985) argued teachers' beliefs guide the formulation of goals and define the tasks of teaching. The findings in this research do not contradict this claim. However, the findings of this study do support an argument for a more complicated relationship between beliefs and practice than this claim suggests.

Amber and Mitch suggested the connections made between their personal practical theories of democracy and their teaching were made after they taught. No principles or theories they could speak of guided their content or pedagogical choices when planning lessons and units. Both, however, admitted that the theories must have an influence because the connections between their theories and practice were so clear and easily made when reflecting on their experiences. Katharine did claim to rely on her personal practical theories about valuing education for personal and social change (see Table 3) as guiding principles when planning for student learning.

With a view in mind that practice is theory in action (Clandinin, 1985; Ross, Cornett, & McCutcheon, 1992; Segall, 2002), the argument here is not that Amber and Mitch had personal practical theories that did not influence them rather they articulated their beliefs and thinking in ways that reflected an influence that was less conscious or purposeful during the planning phase of teaching. In addition, each of these teachers made decisions and acted in ways that suppressed their own personal practical theories and beliefs in favor of choices that they thought were in the best interest of the students.

This, in effect, implied a circumstantial hierarchy of purposes, values, images, habits, and knowledge that was adjusted for various situations in the classroom and relied on to make decisions in the moment. Across the cases one aspect of this circumstantial hierarchy, and the single most influential guiding principle for planning, practice, and decision-making, was a concern for their students' best interests. The concern for what is best for students in cooperation with pressures from the district, school, community, and the teachers' own images mediated the belief-practice dialectic in ways that may have pushed teaching for democratic living further down their circumstantial hierarchy in some situations.

### **Mediating the Belief-Practice Dialectic**

Nespor's (1985) findings in research with eight teachers' broader beliefs about teaching led to an argument that beliefs do guide and help formulate goals that define the tasks of teaching. However, these beginning social studies teachers' beliefs about a concept in their subject matter, like democracy, were often less of a priority than meeting the demands of pressures from the district or school, the expectations of their own beliefs about student needs, or the pressure of the images they hold as of what it means to be a social studies teacher. Rather than a guiding factor influencing planning, pedagogy, and content choices, beliefs about democracy were more implicitly or subconsciously included in practice resulting in an easy and clear connection made during reflective conversations that followed observations. This supports Wilson, Konopak, and Readance's (1994) argument that the influence of beliefs on practice is present, but the

relationship, ways, or extent to which beliefs influence practice varies depending on factors such as prior experiences, educator's background, and more.

Prominent mediating factors in this study included systemic and institutional pressures from the district and school, the images the teachers had established related to teaching, and their relationship with and understanding of students. These factors previously separated in the findings presented in Chapter V, are discussed here together. Discussing these factors together more adequately reflects the complexity of making content and pedagogical decisions that must take into account a myriad of factors and influences at one time.

### **Pressures: Systemic and Institutional, Images of Teacher, and Relationships with Students**

Teaching is practical work that takes place in an uncertain, complex, institutionalized, and socially constructed world of the classroom (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986). Beginning teachers face a variety of challenges as they enter these environments. Some of these challenges may include a growing emphasis on standards and accountability, an increasingly diverse student population, a lack of support or mentoring, heavy teaching loads, multiple preps, little collegial support, discipline issues, professional isolation, unfamiliarity with routines, high parent expectations, poor administrative support, and a mismatch between expectations and the reality of teaching (Van Hoven & Yeager, 2004). Griffin (1940) argued, "people decide what to do, how to act on the basis of what they believe" (p. 136). However, when mired by the pressures and constraints of being a beginning teacher in the context of American education, beliefs

about democracy, while they have an influence, may not be the basis for action. In fact, beliefs may be more likely to cause tension or be restructured to match experience than they are to serve as a basis for action in the classroom (Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1996).

Mitch, Amber, and Katharine alike frequently discussed their frustrations with the political tension in the school and community as they were ordered not to discuss the levy with students, while at the same time they were informed their jobs might be on the line should it not pass in March. Despite facing reprimand and potential of job loss, these three teachers all offered students the opportunity to discuss the levy issue. In all three cases Amber, Katharine, and Mitch minimized the potential effects of another levy vote failing on their job security and focused conversations on students understanding how the levy might effect them, their classmates, and future students who attend their school. Pressures such as these were negotiated by making choices dependent on what they believed would be best for students and what each teacher considered most relevant to students' lives.

In Tabachnick and Zeichner's (1986) study of the relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom behavior they found that the school setting, rules, and norms have an influence on teachers' beliefs. The teachers involved indicated a willingness to abandon or change beliefs to affirm teaching behavior, and one actually did this. Teachers appear to have three options when beliefs are in conflict with the pressures and expectations that exist within the context that they teach. One option is to refuse to change internally and refuse to take action to change external factors and forces. This

may result in ongoing tensions or some effort to reconcile by settling for small moments in which they may have the opportunity to teach how they believe they should teach.

In my opinion, after conducting this study, another option is to refuse to change external forces but change or revise internal factors, beliefs, perspectives, images, and values regarding teaching to reduce or eliminate the conflict. The result may reduce tension regarding teaching practice through conforming to the expectations and pressures of the existing system but dissatisfaction with their own teaching performance. A final option might be to refuse to change beliefs and actively work to change the external factors and forces within the system. The result could be a greater satisfaction of practice and increased sense of efficacy as a teacher, but pressure and scrutiny from external forces like the community, district, administrators, colleagues, and students could make this a difficult path.

Teaching for change was not a common theme in teacher candidate learning as expressed by Amber, Katharine, and Mitch. These three teachers claimed classroom management, differentiation, and reflection were common themes they took with them from teacher education experiences. After conducting this study, I argue that beginning teachers, in particular, should be taught how to work toward changing these external factors in productive ways and in the face of a number of pressures they will inevitably face to fall in line with the status quo. Even those beginning teachers who have ideas about how to make change within their school might find it difficult as a new faculty member with limited social and professional capital.

Based on what I have learned from this research, one strategy might be to “wait it out”. If new teachers can work through the dissonance of holding on to their beliefs and images of good teaching until they get to a point as more experienced teachers, they might be able to gain support from colleagues and administrators to make substantive changes to the curriculum, system, structures, rules, and routines. For beginning teachers to teach for change, teacher education programs have to provide professional experiences that develop skills necessary to the endeavor. It becomes necessary for teachers to have a confidence in their practice and purpose.

Knowing that their purposes and approaches to teaching social studies have undergone intense self-scrutiny may lead to rationalized and defensible judgments through a process of refinement. This may help beginning teachers endure the pressures of the system until they are able to gain the social and professional capital to make meaningful change in their school, district, and/or community. In addition, if teacher education programs maintain relationships and find ways to support beginning teachers after they have graduated, it may help beginning teachers to continue refining their purposes and beliefs in ways that lead to sustained professional development and an eventual and ever growing movement for change.

Ediger (1995) argued that teaching for democratic living should be a clear and expressed goal of education in American society. As it is, the American school system is institutionally and structurally positioned against teaching for democratic living. The school system is constructed to keep order for safety. However, too much routine in the school and classroom works to create pressures and constraints in a variety of forms



(Beyer, 1996b). The sources of these pressures may come in the form of structural limitations from the ways schools are traditionally built and organized. Take as examples the time limits for Amber, Katharine, and Mitch with class periods lasting only 48 minutes and the limited resources and space within a four walled classroom that had 35 desks. These factors worked to confine the teachers as well as students. Without their critical thinking and creativity, Amber, Katharine, and Mitch may have found it easier to do what they thought everyone else was doing to teach social studies, lecture and note taking to disseminate facts.

Another source of pressure for the teacher born of routines and rituals may be resistance from students or colleagues (Barton & Levstik, 2010). Schooling traditions have developed throughout decades of maintaining similar organizational structures and routines leading to a generally acceptable or expected way of teaching and learning. Deviating from that path may conflict with the teachers' own notions of what it means to teach and learn in schools or result in resistance from students or colleagues who are unfamiliar with, or unconvinced of the value of, the purposes or goals of such tasks. Katharine remained unaware of what colleagues did differently from her. She worked consistently to justify to her students the reasons and desired outcomes for using primary sources and discussion as the primary ways of learning history rather than lecture and note taking. Students resisted Katharine's efforts to teach through primary source documents similarly to the ways students resisted Mitch's large group discussions. Students frequently demanded notes to study or a list of items to commit to memory for the test, over value placed on the understanding they came to as a result of reading or

class discussion. As a result, all three teachers offered time for review prior to formal summative assessments. These sessions helped give students confidence by providing a clearer and more concise set of items to study, and such session also worked to reduce student dissonance and frustration throughout the unit so that the participants could teach the way they wanted with less resistance.

The ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch came to understand their students needs and images of what it means to learn in school were important mediating factors in the belief-practice dialectic. Beliefs are synonymous with thought (Dewey, 1998/1933). Beliefs are in a reciprocal relationship with experience. The product of a teacher's personal and professional experiences as they influence and are influenced by beliefs, perceptions of the world, and other factors are an understanding of what it means to teach and how to go about doing so. This assumes personal practical knowledge is imbued with experience that makes up a person's being, or identity (Clandinin, 1985).

Beliefs, images, and identity are important because they provide a fixed point from where interaction with the world occurs and perceptions are filtered (Hoffman-Kipp, 2008; Pajares, 1992). Participants' images of teaching were a result of their own experiences as students and their teacher education fieldwork experiences. This was similar to Lortie's (1975/2002) "apprenticeship of observation", and led to an over-familiarization with the teaching profession that could potentially pose obstacles to learning as a beginning teacher (Britzman, 1991).

Beginning teachers do not often have time or support to be properly mentored into the profession, and the three teachers in this study were no different. For Amber,

Katharine, and Mitch much of their time was filled with coaching, student activities sponsorship, and administrative duties. These time constraints created a tension between being and becoming a teacher (Britzman, 2003). All three teachers believed professional development days were less beneficial to their teaching and fewer days in school meant fewer opportunities for students to be prepared for the standardized tests and common assessments used in the district. There was little attention to, or concern for, professional growth. Instead a sense of professional survival created by the environment and pressures experienced as a beginning teacher emerged.

### **Beliefs, Personal Practical Theories, Rationales, and Other Efforts to Refine**

#### **Purpose: Teaching as an Intellectual and Contextual Activity**

Beliefs are often considered irrational thoughts, but the process of identifying and analyzing personal practical theories through a reflective process offers teachers the opportunity to rationally isolate an area of practice open for improvement (Chant, 2009). As a result, teachers in this research study were asked to develop personal practical theories to isolate teaching about ideas and concepts related to democracy and a democratic society. Chant (2002) found that all three teachers in his study attempted to utilize their personal practical theories to guide instruction. Amber and Mitch admitted their connections between personal practical theories and practice existed, but were made after the act of teaching, rather than during planning to teach. Consequently, personal practical theories of democracy did not actively guide instruction. For Katharine, her personal practical theories about education leading to personal and social change and

participation did actively guide practice beginning with the planning process, into decisions made in practice, and her thinking when reflecting on her teaching.

Chant (2002) also found that teachers' beliefs evolved. Amber, Katharine, and Mitch were offered at least four opportunities each to change their practical theories and asked about any changes in their beliefs about democracy on each of these occasions. None of the teachers made any changes to their beliefs or the wording of their personal practical theories. However, during post-observation interviews where teachers were asked to reflect on classroom experiences and consider connections between practice and their beliefs or specific personal practical theories, the teachers expanded the ways practice connected to their beliefs to include a broader range of examples.

**Pedagogy and purpose in social studies.** Purpose matters in that it initiates and guides thought (Hullfish & Smith, 1961). Aims and purposes matter to guide practice in ways that avoid assembly line mentality and conformity (Thornton, 2005; 2006). Thus, teachers and teacher candidates need to be given opportunities to thoughtfully and critically consider their own purposes as an outgrowth of or result of a process of refinement of, sometimes, less rational beliefs about teaching and learning in social studies. Also possible is that teachers may have more than one reason for their actions in the classroom (Kennedy, 2004). The relationship between the mediating factors of understanding students, district and school pressures, and personal images and identities of teaching with Amber's, Katharine's, and Mitch's personal practical theories of democracy in terms of influencing or guiding pedagogical and content choices reflected the idea that they may have multiple reasons for one action or decision.

The broader mediating factors mentioned often took precedent over more specific personal practical theories of democracy in the planning process for all three teachers. This was because through creativity (Greene, 1995) and nuanced decision-making, sometimes on the spot choices, these teachers made pedagogical and content choices that met the expectations of two or more of these factors and possibly included beliefs about democracy on what all three participants suggested was a “subconscious level”. These mediating factors were not mutually exclusive from each other or the participants’ personal practical theories, nor should they be viewed as such. Instead the factors were moving parts of a circumstantial hierarchy for decision-making that reflected how teaching is a complex intellectual activity. Teaching for these three participants required an understanding of students, context, community, content, and pedagogy to make decisions and achieve desired goals and objectives.

Katharine actively tried to bring in voices of people traditionally marginalized in the teaching of history. She did so with the intention of challenging assumptions and helping her honors history students recognize their own privilege. In one lesson, she was teaching about Olympe de Gouges, a central figure in her unit on the French Revolution, as a way to bring in the treatment of women and gender issues to the classroom but also to teach about activism and the potential cost of exercising voice. Katharine did not identify the gender of Olympe de Gouges and a few minutes into their class discussion a student made a comment referring to her as “him”. Katharine listened to the students comment then shifted to discussing the ways they might assume gender based on characteristics and pointed out that Olympe de Gouges in fact was a woman.

Challenging assumptions and recognizing privilege are important purposes in teaching for democratic living. Bringing different perspectives, such as a female political activists in the French Revolution, into the classroom in critical ways can help students to uncover or question hidden assumptions about society (Kincheloe, 2008). Carr (2008) found that lived experience and the privilege of whiteness are pivotal factors in shaping one's perspectives. Privilege is received by individuals but granted based on whether or not other people perceive them to be a part of a group or social category that has privilege (Johnson, 2006). This holds true for the privilege of maleness and the entrenchment of people in a society that inundates citizens with perspectives of the privileged. This makes the need to teach in ways similar to Katharine ever more important in social studies education. Considering such purposes is necessary and often the product of deep discussions about the nature of teaching and the nature of the content area as part of a process of refinement. This may happen formally, in a methods class, as a part of an assignment, debriefing, class discussion or other organized learning activity, or informally as people share experiences and discuss ideas.

### **Implications for Social Studies Teacher Education**

Scholars have developed ways to explore and refine beliefs, images, and assumptions about teaching, the nature of teaching, and the subject area. Teacher candidates enter teacher education programs with an over-familiarization with and overly simplistic views of (Loughran, Brown, & Doecke, 2001) the teaching profession from years of formal schooling as a student (Lortie, 1975/2002) resulting in obstacles to learning as a pre-service and beginning teacher (Britzman, 1991). Developing and

working to refine personal practical theories about teaching and specific aspects of subject matter may be one way to actively consider and refine beliefs and shape a clearer, defensible purpose to guide practice (Cornett, 1987, 1990; Chant, 2002).

Another process by which to consider and refine beliefs about teaching and subject matter toward a clearer purpose is rationale development as a core theme in teacher education (Hawley, 2010, 2012; Shaver, 1981). These rationales are often longer and more inclusive explorations of beliefs, assumptions, and images about teaching and learning that may or may not be specific to a content area. The process of developing a rationale can include exploration of beliefs about the nature of teaching in a specific content area, the purposes reflected by those beliefs, and the ways one might go about teaching toward those ends. Also included is an on-going process of reflection and revision as teachers with written rationales engage in teaching practice and consider the extent to which their teaching is a reflection of or supported by their rationale. Through practical experiences, reading, professional collaboration, and revision rationales may be another way teacher candidates can develop a clear and defensible, yet emerging, purpose as they enter their beginning years in the profession.

Other approaches that may hold the potential to work in similar ways to refine beliefs, assumptions, and images through identification, exploration, and critical reflection toward the development of a clear and defensible purpose for teaching social studies could be developing principles of practice (Hursh & Seneway, 1998), self-study methodology (Crowe, 2010) and other means of practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), and autobiographical inquiry (James, 2008). All of these practices hold the

potential for use with teacher candidates to offer similar opportunities to engage in identifying, exploring, and refining a purpose for teaching social studies and the ways those purposes may be effectively enacted through one's teaching. Teacher educators employing any of these approaches should consider their own purpose and the ways they might support teacher candidate's learning through such practices. Teacher educators' understanding of their students and the ways in which they make decisions about practice for student learning require modeling and explicitness with regard to purpose and their process. Teacher candidates would benefit from increased awareness of why teacher educators make the decisions they make and the purposes that underpin those decisions, so they might make similar consideration when teaching their students.

Some way to reflect on beliefs during teacher education is necessary to develop a democratic practice in teacher candidates (Pearl & Pryor, 2005). There is no way for a teacher education program to create and sustain an environment that genuinely equates with the reality of full-time teaching (Loughran, Brown, & Doecke, 2001), but social studies methods courses should make an effort to provide spaces to practice and reflect on doing democracy through considering choices among aims and objectives (Boyle-Baise, 2003). None of the participants in this research study identified any aspect of democracy as a specific theme in their teacher education experiences. Social studies teacher candidates should have the opportunity to consider and discuss a variety of purposes for teaching social studies. Furthermore, this should be done in the context of, or after, exploring their own beliefs about what it means to teach social studies and the potential consequences of those purposes for their students, communities, and society.



Teacher candidates come to teacher education programs with images and beliefs that serve as filters (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). It has already been found that teacher education seems to support or refine beliefs rather than change them (Adler & Confer, 1998). It may not be necessary, or possible, to change these images and beliefs, but I argue that it is necessary to work to uncover and recognize what those images and beliefs are about teaching, the nature and aims of social studies, and potentially problematic concepts in content. This discovery is necessary in that it can lead to a reflective habit and opportunity to challenge or discuss these images and beliefs for the purpose of developing an open mind and creating an awareness of the ways images and beliefs may be related to decisions and actions in practice. This can help teacher candidates to intelligently consider the decisions made in planning and actions in the classroom to uncover the potentially covered influences in their practice. This cyclical process of refinement can help to continue revising and clarifying purpose as a way to improve the alignment of social studies purposes with a variety of aspects of practice. In support of this process and its potential for refining beliefs, teacher education programs should take the potential of teacher candidates to reflect and be open to new ideas into consideration when considering them for admission to programs.

### **Implications for Beginning Social Studies Teachers**

Research in teacher education has, to date, identified a diverse range of factors that could potentially influence beginning teachers' professional development. Some of these factors include the teachers' personality, reflectiveness, skill, and knowledge, their university training, and the school culture in which they work (Calderhead & Shorrock,

1997). These factors, and more, have inevitably influenced Amber, Katharine, and Mitch in their professional development. All three teachers were spread thin because of responsibilities piled on in addition to their teaching obligations. The structural and institutional limits placed on these three beginning teachers was enough by itself to pose a challenge to meaningful professional development or practical inquiry, a practice Sweeney, Bula, & Cornett (2001) argued is beneficial for beginning teachers. Beginning teachers need clearly articulated beliefs and purposes for teaching social studies prior to entering school, but they also need openness to learning and revising their ideas. In addition, beginning teachers need to be capable of using their images of good teaching to recognize and recruit mentors from colleagues. Understanding what ‘good’ teaching is to them can help a beginning teacher recognize those characteristics in colleagues based on their interactions. Unfortunately though, colleagues do not often approach beginning teachers and offer support or mentorship. One challenge is that to get support from colleagues, beginning teachers often have to initiate it on their own (Brower & Korthagan, 2005).

### **Limitations of the Study**

The goal of this research was to understand beginning social studies teachers’ beliefs about democracy and the relationship between those beliefs and their practice through a process of developing and reflecting on personal practical theories of democracy. The findings, presented in Chapters IV and V, and the discussion in this chapter have been influenced by a set of limitations for this research study. The goal of this section is to share these limitations.

A first limitation had to do with definitional problems as a result of differing beliefs and belief structures. Participants held different understandings of democracy and its relationship to teaching social studies. In many ways those understandings were different from my own. In educational discourse “beliefs” tend to be referred to using a number of synonyms: attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideologies, and perceptions to name a few (Pajares, 1992). In this study, beliefs were recognized as personal philosophies of teaching that are “theoretical expressions of practical meaning” and as with theoretical statements, which express theoretical meaning, personal theoretical statements were “torn from the reality” to which they referred and only partially and selectively accounted for that reality (Connelly & Clandinin, 1982, p. 17). The act of teaching and knowledge about teaching is highly contextual, and therefore, statements and expressions of meaning were subject to a variety of influences. Personal meaning is always shifting (Britzman, 2003) and therefore required monthly member checks and peer review to maintain some consistency but without requiring consistency. Efforts to define and articulate ideas and beliefs were made explicit, and as the researcher, I worked to remain open and clear about the meanings of those ideas and beliefs and their origins in presenting the findings, while recognizing the contextual nature of their meaning and influence.

A second limitation of this study was that all three participants were teachers in the same district and two at the same school building. It only took two weeks for the participants to ask around and find out who was in the study with them. There was a benefit to having all three teachers in the same district in that the context in which they

practiced and the struggles they dealt with, like the district tax levy, were similar in many ways. However, a limitation caused by this was that there is no way of knowing the extent to which the other participants-teachers being aware of their participation in the study influenced their comments in interviews or actions in the classroom. In the future, more attention to addressing this limitation in the design of the research to assure a greater sense of anonymity amongst participants, even if they claim they do not want it and seek out other participants, may result in increased trustworthiness in the research and findings. For this study, attempts to maintain participant anonymity were made in that no data from one participant was shared or discussed with the other participants unless the teachers did so on their own, and the teachers were informed that their participation in this research study was confidential. However, as a group of colleagues, these teachers were very close and met regularly through professional development trade days within the district. As encouraging as this closeness amongst colleagues was, it, in the end, was a detriment to participant anonymity.

A third limitation was the teacher-participant racial homogeneity. Amber, Katharine, and Mitch differed in gender but were all white, and Amber and Katharine both grew up in the district in which they taught. This posed potential limitations in the perspectives that might be offered. The district in which all three teachers taught included a diverse student population, but this study focused on the teachers' perspectives and those perspectives were ultimately limited by the teachers' backgrounds and experiences as white mid-western Americans.

A fourth limitation of this study was that all three participants attended different teacher education programs. Amber and Mitch attended smaller more traditionally conservative programs, while Katharine attended a large fifth year teacher education program. Mitch worked in business finance for six years prior to beginning his Master's of Arts in Teaching at a satellite campus of the institution he attended. Each teacher described what they remembered from their teacher education program, but their degrees were earned three to five years ago and it was difficult to get specific information about the major themes, courses, and experiences they had during their teacher education program. If such information were available in more detail, it would strengthen the context in which each case was built. Moreover, such information might offer additional background for understanding the sources of these teachers' beliefs and the potential influence of teacher education programs on teacher decision-making in the context of teaching for democratic living.

### **Implications for Future Research**

This research sought to address questions of beginning social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy, their origins, conceptions, and relationships to practice. This was done through the development of and reflection on personal practical theories of democracy to make them more accessible for reflective discussions. In this section, I present three studies I plan to conduct in the future as a result of what I have learned from this research.

First, I hope to explore in more depth the sources of beliefs about democracy held by pre-service social studies teachers. This focus is of interest because of the ways

Amber, Katharine, and Mitch identified the origin of their beliefs about democracy in childhood. I am interested in the perception of limited changes in these participants' beliefs about democracy over, according to them, long periods of time and would like to know more about these beliefs, their origins, and sustainability. In particular, I am interested in pursuing this inquiry with pre-service social studies teachers. A study of what pre-service social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy are and the sources of those beliefs could be helpful in developing a deeper understanding of the prior knowledge pre-service social studies teachers have when they enter teacher education. This research focus may also have implications for the discovery and refinement processes that should be included in social studies teacher education coursework. Research questions that would guide this study include: (a) What are pre-service social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy? (b) Where do pre-service social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy originate? and (c) What do pre-service social studies teachers think the relationship is between their beliefs about democracy and their teaching practice?

Second, I hope to explore the ways practical inquiry might work to refine beliefs about the purposes and nature of social studies teaching and learning held by social studies pre-service, beginning, and experienced teachers. The central argument in this dissertation is for the use of reflective inquiry of some kind to encourage pre-service social studies teachers to explore their beliefs about democracy as they are related to their teaching practice. This second future study is meant to address the need to understand the ways reflective inquiry might be useful for this purpose in a teacher education

program. Studying this may lead to a better understanding of the potential of practical inquiry to develop a clear and defensible purpose for social studies education, as it is situational and contextually located. Such a research focus could have powerful implications for social studies teacher education and programs of teacher professional development. Research questions that would guide this study will include: (a) How do social studies teachers at different levels of experience understand inquiry into practice? (b) What are the ways that social studies teachers at different levels of experience employ inquiry into practice? and (c) What do social studies teachers using practical inquiry learn from their inquiry experience?

Finally, I hope to work with social studies teachers and their students to better understand the ways economic rationales intentionally or unintentionally become a part of democratic purposes and practices in social studies classrooms. My interest in this as a research focus is related to the ways Amber, Katharine, and Mitch relied on explanations to students that were primarily related to students' economic lives rather than their social or political lives. A better understanding of this issue could have implications for social studies purposes and practices and social studies teacher education. In particular, this research could highlight the implicit learning that takes place when potentially democratic learning activities are explained with democratic values and concepts then rationalized to students in terms of their economic lives. Research questions that would guide this study include: (a) What is the relationship between democratic and economic rationales for learning citizenship skills, dispositions, and knowledge? (b) In what ways do social studies teachers rely on explanations for learning citizenship skills, dispositions,

and knowledge that are related to students' economic lives? and (c) How do students understand the reasons and rationales for the citizenship skills, dispositions, and knowledge they are expected to learn in social studies classrooms? These three research studies are a result of questions left unanswered from this dissertation research study. In the future I hope to continue working to address these and similar questions related to the influence of democratic imperatives in social studies teaching and learning.

### **Conclusion**

The basis for this research study was a gap in the research in social studies education. The gap was identified through an extensive review of literature related to social studies teachers' beliefs and personal practical theories, beginning teachers, and democratic education. Through this review of research, I found a need for research where these subjects intersect. More specifically, there was a need for research that sought to understand the ways social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy were related to their teaching practice.

Framed by a democracy deepening philosophy of pragmatism (Green, 2008) this collective case study included three beginning social studies teachers as participants. Each participant engaged in two in-depth interviews, a series of three to four post-observation debriefings, and allowed me to observe their teaching nine to eleven class period. In addition, all three teachers provided me with a number of lesson plans, lecture power points, project outlines and instruction sheets, handouts, and other materials they created and/or used in class. The interviews and post-observation debriefing sessions served as the primary data to be analyzed for this study because they most adequately



addressed the research questions related to teachers' beliefs and thinking in reflection. To analyze this data an inductive coding process outlined by Charmaz (2006) was used. This process included open coding, in vivo coding, focused coding, axial coding, and theoretical coding toward a substantive theory of the enactment of personal practical theories of democracy in teaching.

The results of this study included the personal practical theories of democracy, three major findings titled conceptualizing democracy, mediating factors in the belief-practice dialectic, and purpose and pedagogy in social studies education as well as a substantive theory from the constructivist grounded theory data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). These results, taken together, support an argument for social studies teacher candidates exploring their own beliefs, assumptions, and images about democracy and the nature of social studies through practical inquiry as a process of refinement. This is argued so that teacher candidates, upon entering schools as beginning teachers, will have developed a clear and defensible purpose for teaching social studies in, and for, a democratic society.

This refinement process requires teacher candidates to reflect on their beliefs about democracy in social studies and social studies purposes, the sources of their beliefs and images for teaching social studies, the reasons for those beliefs, and potential implications for learning in a classroom that is focused on such concepts and beliefs brought out by this reflective work. Beginning teachers can be good teachers in spite of the myriad of challenges and pressures they faced; Amber, Katharine, and Mitch showed poise and effectiveness in their practice of social studies education. With this in mind,

social studies teacher educators should be encouraged. Including a teacher education experience that focuses on exploring then refining beliefs, assumptions, and images about teaching social studies for democracy can lead to a more aligned purpose and practice and more powerful learning experiences for young citizens as part of an effort to deepen democracy through teaching for democratic living.

## **APPENDIXES**

**APPENDIX A**  
**RECRUITMENT SCRIPT**

## Appendix A

### Recruitment Script

***Dissertation Research Project Title: Understanding Teachers' Personal Practical Theories of Democracy in Secondary Social Studies Education***

Andrew L. Hostetler

*\*Below is a script for email or conversation with a potential participant*

Hello (Potential Participant's Name),

My name is Andy Hostetler and I am looking for participants for my dissertation. The work is focused on understanding the influence of beginning social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy on teaching and learning in the classroom. Participation would include:

1. At least two one-on-one interviews lasting around sixty minutes each,
2. At least ten class observations followed by post-observation debriefs lasting 10-20 minutes on at least three occasions, and
3. Collection of planning and instructional documents and assessments you have designed and/or used in class.

These interviews, observations, and documents would be at your convenience and the convenience of your administrators, beginning this November 2011 and expected to conclude around April of 2012.

To be eligible to participate you must: 1) be a teacher employed by a public secondary (7-12<sup>th</sup> grade) school building, 2) in your first three years of employment, 3) teaching at least one social studies class, and 4) claim to have beliefs about democracy. If you meet these criteria you are eligible to participate and I would certainly appreciate your help. Please let me know at your earliest convenience if you are willing to help me in my research.

If you have any questions regarding the possibility of participating, additional details regarding the research procedures and purposes, or the potential inconveniences you might encounter as a participant.

Thank you for taking the time to read this,

Andy Hostetler  
330-936-6589  
alhostet@kent.edu

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE**

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent to Participate



#### Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

##### *Understanding Teachers' Personal Practical Theories of Democracy in Secondary Social Studies Education*

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what you will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you ask questions and fully understand this research to make an informed decision. You will receive a copy of this document to take with you.

#### **Purpose**

This research is a collective case study of five beginning social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy and the ways in which those beliefs influence their teaching practice. This research is situated in the field of democratic citizenship in social studies education as a study of learning to teach and teacher beliefs. It is expected that findings will be valuable to the field of social studies teacher education as it adds to a collective understanding of teachers' beliefs and their influence on teachers' decision-making with implications for democratic citizenship education.

#### **Procedures**

You will be asked to participate in at least two semi-structured interviews, to allow me to observe your teaching over at least ten sessions, and to share documents including lesson plans, descriptions of assignments, personal philosophies and rationales for teaching social studies, and grading rubrics). Observations may be video recorded with your permission and the permission of the school administration for the sole purpose of viewing specific experiences during the interview process. These video files will be kept in a locked drawer in the primary investigator's office with other data and disks destroyed at the conclusion of the final interview. Interviews will be audio recorded and the recordings transcribed. All data collected and transcribed will be kept in a locked drawer of the desk of the primary investigator. *With your permission the individual interviews will be audio recorded with a digital recorder. These files will be transcribed and transcripts will be kept with other data in a locked drawer in the researcher's desk, after transcription the audio file will be deleted. The comments you make will be used as data and may appear under participant's chosen pseudonym, in the final report, and in proposals for conference presentations or scholarly articles for publication.*

#### **Benefits**

The potential benefits of participating in this study may include an opportunity to improve your teaching through reflection and discussion on your practice and the ways in which your beliefs are influencing your practice and student learning.

*There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life. The only anticipated inconvenience will be taking time to participate in interviews, providing me with documents that you agree to share, and allowing me to observe your teaching at your convenience.*

*Understanding Teachers' Personal Practical Theories of Democracy in Secondary Social Studies Education*



*All efforts will be made to keep your participation confidential.*

Your signed consent will be kept in a separate file and locked drawer from your study data and responses will not be linked to you. A pseudonym will be used in all data and reports of this research. Before conducting any interviews all participants'/interviewees names and identifying characteristics will be changed or removed so as not to appear in any of the data, documents, or final report or publications.

Taking part in this research study is entirely up to you. You may choose not to participate in any aspect or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You will be informed of any new, relevant information that may affect your health, welfare, or willingness to continue your study participation.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Andrew L. Hostetler at 330-672-2580 or by email at [alhostet@kent.edu](mailto:alhostet@kent.edu), or Alicia R. Crowe, Ph.D. at 330-672-2580 or [acrowe@kent.edu](mailto:acrowe@kent.edu). This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330.672.2704.

**Consent Statement and Signature**

I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Printed Name



**APPENDIX C**

**AUDIOTAPE/VIDEO CONSENT FORM**

## Appendix C

### Audiotape/Video Consent Form



#### AUDIOTAPE/VIDEO CONSENT FORM

*Understanding Teachers' Personal Practical Theories of Democracy in Secondary Social*

*Studies Education*

Andrew L. Hostetler

I agree to participate in an audio-taped/video-taped interview about teachers' democratic beliefs as they influence social studies teaching and learning, as part of this project and for the purposes of data analysis. I agree that Andrew L. Hostetler may audio-tape/video-tape this interview. The date, time and place of the interview will be mutually agreed upon.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I have been told that I have the right to listen to the recording of the interview before it is used. I have decided that I:

\_\_\_\_ want to listen to the recording      \_\_\_\_ do not want to listen to the recording

Sign now below if you do not want to listen to the recording. If you want to listen to the recording, you will be asked to sign after listening to them.

Andrew L. Hostetler may / may not (circle one) use the audio-tapes/video tapes made of me. The original tapes or copies may be used for:

\_\_\_\_ this research project    \_\_\_\_ publication    \_\_\_\_ presentation at professional meeting

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Address:

**APPENDIX D**  
**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

## Appendix D

### Interview Protocol

#### Interview Protocol for Primary Participants

The researcher will begin by providing an overview of the project and obtaining informed consent. Once informed consent and audio consent forms have been read and signed the interview will proceed.

*Before beginning the interview please read the following statement: “Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I would like to remind you that you have the right to withdraw at any time during the research process. Also, please know that you have the right to not answer any questions that make you uncomfortable or that you simply do not wish to answer. Please let me know if you would like to skip to the next question at any time during this interview.”*

Participant 1: \_\_\_\_\_ (Pseudonym) Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Interview #1

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself?
  - a. How did you come to be a social studies teacher?
  - b. What have the last year or two been like?
  - c. Why did you decide to teach at the secondary (7-12<sup>th</sup> grade) level?
2. Can you tell me about your teacher education program?
  - a. Tell me more about the major themes you believe were the focus of your teacher preparation?
  - b. Can you tell me about the kinds of assignments you were asked to complete in your teacher education coursework?
  - c. Can you tell me about your student teaching experience?
3. What is your planning process like when preparing lessons?
4. Tell me about what you believe democracy is.
  - a. What values are democratic?
  - b. What skills are democratic?
5. Where do you think your beliefs about democracy come from?
  - a. Where did you learn them?
  - b. If you can remember what you thought about democracy when you were an undergraduate, tell me about that.
    - i. Has this changed at all since then?

In what ways do you think your beliefs about democracy play a role in teaching social studies?

- c. In content? Choices you make about what to teach? Not to teach?
- d. In practice? Assessment, activities, ...

6. How would you describe your learning environment?

- a. Tell me about some aspects of your school that you think are democratic.
  - i. Tell me about some aspects of your classroom that you think of as democratic.
- b. Tell me about any aspects of your school that you think of as “undemocratic”.
  - i. Tell me about aspects of your classroom that you think of as “undemocratic”.

**\*Explain Personal Practical Theories:**

The purpose of a personal practical theory in this study is to give you (Participants) a way to articulate your beliefs and their influence on your practice and thinking that is somewhat uniform. It consists of as many statements of personal practical theories as you would like and each statement should include a statement of a beliefs about democracy followed by a brief explanation of how you think that beliefs influences your practice.

Please write down however many democratic personal practical theories you can think of (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, ...etc.)

- 7. Can you tell me what you thought about or how you approached the process of writing down / developing your personal practical theories?
- 8. Do you have any questions for me?

**Post-Observation Debriefs (#1, #2, and #3)**

1. Tell me about any experiences you or your students might have had that are democratic in the school.
  - a. Tell me about democratic experiences in the classroom.
  - b. Tell me about any experiences that you might consider “undemocratic” in the school.
  - c. What about any “undemocratic” experiences in the classroom.
2. Can tell me about any specific examples of aspects of your teaching that you think reflect your personal practical theories of democracy?
  - a. Provide participant with a copy of their original personal practical theories and ask about each one for question (4, 5, and 6).
3. Can you tell me about any examples of aspects of your teaching that are in conflict with your personal practical theories of democracy?
4. How might your personal practical theories of democracy have changed at this point?

**Interview #2 (Conclusion)**

5. Last time you talked about your beliefs about democracy and where they came from can you tell me more about your beliefs about democracy.
  - a. Have you had any instances in the last week that have made you think about this in relation to your practice?
6. In what ways do you think your beliefs about democracy are influencing your teaching decisions and behaviors?
7. Tell me about any experiences you or your students might have had that are democratic in the school.
  - a. Tell me about democratic experiences in the classroom.
  - b. Tell me about any experiences that you might consider “undemocratic” in the school.
  - c. What about any “undemocratic” experiences in the classroom.

8. Can tell me about any specific examples of aspects of your teaching that you think reflect your personal practical theories of democracy?
  - a. Provide participant with a copy of their original personal practical theories and ask about each one for question (4, 5, and 6).
9. Can you tell me about any examples of aspects of your teaching that are in conflict with your personal practical theories of democracy?
10. How might your personal practical theories of democracy have changed at this point?

**APPENDIX E**  
**SAMPLE FIELD NOTES**



## Appendix E

### Sample Field Notes

[Katharine]	[7 <sup>th</sup> Period – 12:30]	Observer: Andy Hostetler	[11/29/11] - #1
Observations		Observers Notes and Memos	
<p><i>Honors US and Global Studies I and II</i>  <b>Lesson:</b> French Revolution – the Cahiers  - discussed a primary source to get a sense of what they complaints were by the French  <b>Classroom:</b> Desks were arranged in rows 4 in a row and 7 rows. There are pictures and posters all over the walls. Electoral map, 9-11 poster, Quote from Churchill (never, never, never, give up), Presidents timeline, pictures of presidents, military photos, signs in support of veterans, and historic reproductions of military (WWI WWII) recruitment posters. A white board up front with an American flag, some motivational posters, a bulletin board with schedules and map of the building and a “work table”. There is a TV with DVD/VHS Combo, a projector with Mimio, Pictures on the wall behind her desk, a white board on the back wall an the right hand wall next to pencil sharpener. The white board in the back had reminders for exam week coming up.  K started class by making some announcements with regard to assignments due that are upcoming. She then distributed the homework due for Friday. One of the assignments is titled “Women of the Third Estate”.  K explained the handouts, vocab on the front will be in glossary, on the back is guided reading for chapter 11 section 1. Then asked them to put it away because it is homework.  K then told students we were going to talk about the reading they had done, primary source reading. She helped them pronounce the word Cahiers and used a computer to demonstrate pronunciation.  K asked questions and students raised hands for the most part to answer/respond.</p>		<p>Why have students focus on “women of the third estate” as an assignment?</p> <p>The students seemed to enjoy this, they laughed, and appeared relaxed. K obviously has a good rapport and relationship with many of her students.</p> <p>Why did you decide to structure your lesson around asking questions?</p>	
<p>A student on crutches entered late explaining he fell in the toilet (may have been joking) and K asked “how are you doing sweetie”  K asked “According to this reading what is a cahiers?” and a student in the back responded with a general definition and probed more for a clearer answer from students.</p>		<p>Do you encourage this kind of sense of community on purpose? (the student offering his extra to another student)</p> <p>Do you see making the class get quiet so someone can speak as democratic or not?</p>	

<p>Students started talking about how they thought they were supposed to answer the questions in class. They said they did not understand what they read and couldn't answer the question.</p> <p>A student came in asking for a south America map she had given out earlier in the year. She said she had no more and he was supposed to keep it all year. Another student had an extra copy and offered it, she thanked him.</p> <p>She polled the class to ask about who had read? Most of the class raised their hand that they had read the assignment.</p> <p>A student wanted to answer a question K asked and the class was talking, she asked him to wait, then the class quieted down and then she said "go ahead" and he shared his response.</p> <p>K makes a point to highlight the social contract idea.</p> <p>Student asks about using "weird words" and K offered an explanation that they might think the way we talk today is weird.</p> <p>Free Press as a key idea, she uses the example of pornography as a limitable genre. Talking about merit system she relates it back to getting a job in America. In general people get jobs here (in U.S.) because they are qualified and good at what they do. Sure occasionally it might be because of who you know (family member, etc.) but in general in America you get hired because of your qualifications.</p> <p>K instructed them to put the primary source away and distributed another handout for students. This handout was a notes sheet for students to write on as K went through the word document of notes on the board through projector. She included text boxes with bulleted lists, and pictures. The information was on the estates and causes of the French</p>	<p>How do you make your content choices? (ask because, social contract, and free press)</p> <p>Is there a difference in students understanding how things work vs. how things should work? (like getting a job)?</p> <p>What about merit system being better for society instead of/in addition to a job/economic rationale for a merit system? What other opportunities to expand on this do you wish you had or will you take advantage of? Like discrimination in the workplace as a part of the merit system? Is that a future topic?</p> <p>Primary source is a focus. And the lecture certainly builds off of that and reinforces key ideas and themes.</p>
<p>Revolution.</p> <p>K asked questions occasionally during lecture. She focused and even got excited when talking about how people are born free and equal and when people start to think for themselves they get to be unhappy with the status quo.</p> <p>K noticed the screen shaking and commented telling a story about the teacher in the room on the second floor above her room and how he has his class jump to mess with her. Students commented and they chatted briefly, she told them about how she had that teacher for geometry when she was a 10<sup>th</sup> grader.</p> <p>A student asks how you get to be nobility then? She</p>	<p>Why tell about yourself?</p> <p>Have you thought about drawing (or asking students to draw) correlations between rhetoric today and the reasons for revolt in France? And how we are used to the way things are?</p> <p>Do you see yourself as teaching for change? Or about change?</p> <p>Is it important for students to apply what they are learning to today? In the sense that they should have the skills do make judgments about when society /</p>

<p>Revolution.</p> <p>K asked questions occasionally during lecture. She focused and even got excited when talking about how people are born free and equal and when people start to think for themselves they get to be unhappy with the status quo.</p> <p>K noticed the screen shaking and commented telling a story about the teacher in the room on the second floor above her room and how he has his class jump to mess with her. Students commented and they chatted briefly, she told them about how she had that teacher for geometry when she was a 10<sup>th</sup> grader.</p> <p>A student asks how you get to be nobility then? She asked the class what they think? Students said born into it. And K explains these were wealthy, dynastic families and passed down from generation to generation.</p> <p>Offers more explanations of how the top 2% controlled, money, government, didn't pay taxes, A student asked "why did it take so long to revolt?" She again turned the question back on the class and after a couple comments she tied it back to prior learning.</p> <p>K talked about how through education and enlightenment come the ideas and thinking and action that leads to revolt. Connects the French Revolution to the American Revolution that happened prior. Talked about how American Revolution was an inspiration to French Revolution. In that model she points out that the French might admire the declaration of independence and the idea that America values "all men being created equally" adding "well except for slaves" but in terms of regular society.</p> <p>K continues discussing the content. The bulleted points are on the board and she helps students through telling and questioning interpret what it means. For example she talked about the estates meeting in separate rooms and how there wouldn't be much deliberation, compromise with so much separation. Again talked about how the status quo was being maintained by 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> estate ganging up on 3<sup>rd</sup> estate, and how the third estate begged the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> to meet with them together and wanted each delegate to have one vote instead of one vote</p>	<p>Why tell about yourself?</p> <p>Have you thought about drawing (or asking students to draw) correlations between rhetoric today and the reasons for revolt in France? And how we are used to the way things are?</p> <p>Do you see yourself as teaching for change? Or about change?</p> <p>Is it important for students to apply what they are learning to today? In the sense that they should have the skills to make judgments about when society / government is unjust and how or why to make change?</p> <p>Have you thought about exploring what 'created equally' may have meant in the historical context of the time versus today? (to begin voters were only white land owning males 21 years or older who in most states met a religious requirement as well)</p> <p>K mentioned 3<sup>rd</sup> estate and under representation as well as failed change, maintaining the status quo. Is there an opportunity to talk about change in society and how those in power are going to be hesitant and resistant to change that leads to less power for them</p>
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## **APPENDIX F**

### **SAMPLE RESEARCH JOURNAL**

## Appendix F

### Sample Research Journal

Andy Hostetler

Topic: The influence of beginning social studies teachers' beliefs about democracy on teaching in secondary classrooms.

Participants	Interviews	Observations	Artifacts
Amber	11/7 (Initial); 11/22 (POI); 12/6 (POI); 1/9 (POI); 1/17 (POI); 1/26 (Final)	11/15; 11/22; 11/29; 12/6; 12/13; 1/10; 1/12; 1/17; 1/19	11/15 (x2 handouts/notes outline); PPT notes, excel sheet (WWII Unit)
Katharine	11/9 (Initial); 12/7 (POI); 1/5 (POI); 1/19 (POI); 1/31 (Final)	11/29; 12/6; 12/13; 1/5; 1/10; 1/12; 1/17; 1/19	1/5 (unit plan/pacing guide)
Mitch	11/15 (Initial); 12/6 (POI); 1/10 (POI); 1/17 (POI); 2/2 (Final)	11/29; 12/6; 1/5; 1/10; 1/12; 1/17; 1/24; 1/26	12/4; 1/26; 2/2

- 9/27/11      Dissertation proposal approved and IRB paperwork submitted
- 9/27/11      emailed Central Ohio Curriculum Coordinators about permission to conduct research.
- 10/11/11     Met with Kenny Lee (Secondary SS curriculum coordinator for South, Central, and North Schools) and received four names of teachers who might fit the criteria. I sent emails with Kenny's permission to each and one replied that she was a 7<sup>th</sup> year teacher, the other three replied they fit the criteria and were willing to participate.
- 11/7/11      **Interview #1 with Amber at South High School. Key points from the interview include:**  
 Freedom is central value in a democracy (especially with regard to choices/decisions – personal and public)  
 Does not see her classroom as very democratic but immediately went to democracy as the system of organizing the classroom (rules, procedures, and where authority lies).  
 She expressed that she did not like politics much and did not believe she should share her political beliefs with students.  
 She did suggest that having students do small group work and at times work with students they may not like was valuable to a democracy/democratic purposes but when probed for a reason she talked about how they might have to work with someone/people they do not like some day (their job) (economic reason)

- 11/8/11           transcribed Interview #1 with Amber
- 11/9/11           Interview #1 with Katharine at Central High School (2:30pm)
- 11/10/11          transcribed interview #1 with Katharine.
- 11/15/11          Observation 1 – Amber – 2<sup>nd</sup> period 8:18-9:15  
Interview 1 – Mitch at Central HS (observation 1 set up for 11/29)

**I am thinking about not doing the video-taping.** I do see how it would benefit this type of research that calls on the participants to remember what they did, what happened and why they reacted or decided to do what they did. However, my reasons are the following:

1. One of the high schools' administrators does not like the idea of a "stranger" in the classroom with students running a video camera.
2. I fear students and the teacher may react in ways that are less authentic the more I introduce additional or new aspects of observations. I felt like it took the first two observations just to get everyone comfortable then introducing a camera might be disruptive, the teachers said they personally didn't care about being video taped but did agree with this point.
3. Given time constraints and the limited 40 minute planning period each of the teachers have, they have generously agreed to a 15-20 minute debrief following every other observation. First, this makes it difficult to rewind and find particular points in the clip because we will not be able to sit and review an entire class period. Second, given the frequency of the observation debriefs and that they occur immediately or shortly after the observations I believe detailed field notes will be sufficient for stimulating teach-participant's recall of a circumstance or experience.

- 11/22/11          Observation #2 Amber followed by a 20-minute post-observation interview.

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