

A Dissertation

entitled

A Phenomenological Study of the Lived Experiences of Social Studies Teachers:

Constructing Ideas about Democratic Citizenship and Teaching

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Curriculum and Instruction

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December 2016

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An Abstract of  
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The purpose of the study was to explore how social studies teachers conceptualized democracy, developed ideas about democratic citizenship, and implemented their perspectives and experiences into teaching. The study used phenomenological approach of qualitative research design. Six participants were selected using a convenient sampling method with data analyzed by Moustakas's transcendental approach. The participants conceptualized democracy as a political system, civic participation, and influence of government decision making. They developed ideas about democratic citizenship from multiple sources, such as family members, networking, citizenship projects, professional development training, political engagement, travel, and involvement in community services. Teachers implemented their perspectives utilizing experiential learning, incorporating student's ideas into teaching methods, and employing technology. This emphasized the need to learn continuously, to reflect on their teaching practices, to use multiple resources, and to participate in professional networking. Other findings that emerged included the educator's inadequate preparation of instructional strategies and student's apathetic responses to learn about the democratic process. This

study reveals the need for educators, teachers, and policy makers to collaborate to develop instructional practices, incorporate experiential learning experiences, and improve social studies curricula to promote student engagement.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

The importance of public education in democratic states is beyond dispute. Too often, however, discussions of democratic education focus solely on policies and systems, forgetting individual teachers who are ultimately responsible for educating future citizens (Bradshaw, 2012, p. 1) Teachers are on the frontline of society, implementing a curriculum, teaching about democracy and perspectives regarding democratic citizenship (Goodlad, Solder, & McDaniel, 2008, p. 17). A vital task such as teaching social studies calls for attention to understanding how teachers conceptualize democracy, develop perspectives about democratic citizenship, and integrate their ideas and experiences into their teaching methods and strategies. Aligned with this focus, Barr, Barth, and Shermis (1977) stated the primary purpose of social studies should consistently be focused on democratic citizenship education (p. 19). To gain in-depth understanding of the primary purpose of social studies education in preparing democratic citizenship, Barr et al. (1977) classified teaching approaches into three divisions: citizenship transmission, social science, and reflective inquiry: “Citizenship transmission has been a dominate area of teaching in social studies which focuses on the purpose of developing democratic citizens in the American society” (p. 19). The goal of social studies is to prepare democratic citizens although the field of social studies is described to Barr et al. (1977) have liked the relationship between social studies education and democracy. Among the three divisions of social studies, citizenship has been the primary goal in social studies teaching as well.

Fundamentally, social studies curriculum standards focus on maximizing democratic citizenship processes. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 1994) has defined the primary *purpose* of social studies education as “helping young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world” (p. 1). Citizens in democratic society possesses the characteristics of informed citizens in the interdependent world. Furthermore, NCSS (1999) stated the primary *goal* of social studies education is preparing citizens with critical thinking and problem solving abilities for a democratic society (p. 24). Although discrepancies between theory and practice exist, particularly in teaching controversial issues such as “civic ideals and practices”, the 10 thematic strands of the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies emphasize that:

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic and social studies educators [should] teach students the content knowledge, intellectual skills, and civic values necessary for fulfilling the duties of citizenship in a participatory democracy. (NCSS, 2010, p. 11)

As expressed, the purpose of social studies education is to prepare effective citizens to participate in the democratic process. Citizenship is the focus in social studies. Cohen (2014) emphasizes that “education is the foundation of democracy and democracy demands of its people... social, emotional, and civic skills and ethical dispositions as well as cognitive capacities to constructively participate in a democratic society” (p. 430). In this venture of promoting civic competence,

schools are the ideal places for learning values and knowledge regarding democratic citizenship. Supporting this belief, Dewey (1916) asserted that students learn their first and most enduring lessons of practiced democracy from school and family:

Democracy is more than a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experiences. The mode of associated living, as a shared, communicated experience applies to the school classroom first, and second to the family. (p. 87)

As democracy is learned both in school and the home, there is a shared responsibility for equipping students with necessary knowledge to effectively participate in a democratic society. Dewey (1916) explained that teaching about democracy is a shared value among many constituents and that educators serve important roles in developing democratic citizens. According to Dewey (1916), the opportunity for developing democratic core values within students becomes possible when teachers enter the classroom prepared to teach using democratic ideals such as:

Preparing young people to be full and active participants in all aspects of democratic life, the ability to think critically, a sense of efficacy, a commitment to compassionate action, and a desire to actively participate in political life by engaging in local decision-making processes. (p.22)

These necessary ideals used in the classroom to effectively prepare democratic citizens highlight the significant relationship between human experiences which contribute to civic participation and the promotion of democratic values within students.

Although there is an understanding that educators share responsibility in developing democratic values within students, there are many factors that make this a challenging task. Goodlad (2000) explained No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) as an obstacle for implementing democratic practices in the classroom. According to Goodlad (2000), the implementation of NCLB was a school reform attempt and its priority has concentrated on the rise of standardized tests, however, it has ignored a broader purpose of schooling, particularly developing civic character in a democratic society. Furthermore, Goodlad (2000) argued, “High-test scores predict high-test scores, but not much else: not problem-solving skills, not good work habits, not honesty and not the dispositions and virtues embedded in our expectations for schooling” (p.19). Goodlad stressed the development of character development more important than high test scores because social skills are more important that one expects to be learned from schools.

While NCLB aimed at progress and positive school reform, it fell short of developing effective democratic ideologies within students. The development of democratic ideologies within students positively contributes to their becoming contributing members of society. Goodlad, McDaniel, and Solder (2008) explained the positive impacts associated with the development of democratic values and civic skills in students. These democratic values and skills are considered an essential component of building a flourishing society. As such, schools are pivotal locations where the development of democratic culture is not only learned, but also practiced. In this regard, comprehending how teachers construct their ideas about democracy and how their ideas of understanding affect their teaching methods and strategies is crucial to understanding the development of civic lives. This crucial component in the process of developing



responsible, young, democratic citizenship requires further in-depth understanding of the perceptions, processes, and ways in which teachers construct their ideas about democracy and teaching practices. In developing values, knowledge, and skills in the young minds of students, Goodlad et al. (2000), states the necessity of democracy: “Without democracy, a society lacks freedom to act in its own best interests. Teachers are on the front line where schools become a site of democratic culture in developing core democratic values, attitudes, and practices towards civic engagement” (p. 58). Teachers are crucial for developing civic engagement within students, nurtured by learned values and understanding relative to democratic culture. In teaching, Ochoa-Becker (2007) has described the challenges of social studies teachers in fostering the civic capacities of students. She expressed that social studies teachers needed to have perseverance and consistency in order to deliver the complex ideas of democracy. Furthermore, Ochoa-Becker (2007) elucidated:

Social studies educators recognize that we still have a long and difficult way to go. Each generation will face such challenges and social studies educators have the professional responsibilities to foster the capacity of student citizens to address complex and controversial issues that that are essential to strengthen a democracy. (p.20)

As described, social studies educators significantly help develop students’ democratic values that are universally perceived and practiced in a democratic society. In fostering democratic core values, Cuenca (2011) stressed teachers’ roles in developing democratic ideals and beliefs necessary for a democratic society. Cuenca (2011) and Ochoa-Becker (2007) advocated that social studies teachers teach democratic principles in students to

build a better democratic society. Similar to Goodland (2000) and Cuenca (2011), Cohen (2014) realized the importance of schools and educators in developing democratic citizens: “[The] foundation of democracy is education and democracy demands social, emotional, civic skills, ethical dispositions, and cognitive capacities of citizens to constructively participate in a democratic society” (p. 30). As such, educators are held responsible for transforming citizens into effective democratic citizens, and providing democratic education is a key to evoking students’ participation in democratic society.

Furthermore, although the main goal of social studies education has traditionally focused on preparing citizenship, studies in the past have not investigated how social studies teachers conceptualize democracy, develop ideas about democratic citizenship, and incorporate their ideas and experiences in their teaching practice. As such, this dissertation aims to understand the conception of democracy and the development process of ideas about democratic citizenship, which contributes to “building a capacity of our citizens to strengthen democracy and tackle pressing challenges for democracy and democratic citizenship” (Parker, 2003, p.21). Democratic society is better built with the abilities of citizens in which the roles of teachers become vital in preparing democratic citizens.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The role of social studies teachers in preparing students for democratic citizenship is crucial. Dinkelman, (1999) described the significance of American schools in developing and promoting democracy in society. He, too, further addressed the shared responsibility of educators in developing democratic citizens:

The relationship between democracy and public schooling has been an enduring theme in U.S. educational and social theory. Among the many charges that have been put before schools in this country, perhaps none have had such long-standing rhetorical appeal as has the responsibility of preparing the nation's young to inherit their role as citizens in a democratic polity. (p.4)

The significance of democratic education through public schooling in the U.S. has been a matter subject of discussion. However, the responsibilities of schools in preparing students has been the primary goal of schooling. The emphasis of preparing youths as democratic citizens leads to the concept of democratic inheritance of school education.

The NCSS Task Force (1984) also supported that educators serve a crucial role in developing democratic citizens: "Social studies programs have a responsibility to prepare young people to identify, understand, and work to solve problems that face our increasingly diverse nation and interdependent world" (p. 25). Social studies educates students for citizenship, equipping them with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that help them become competent and responsible citizens who are informed and thoughtful as well as who participate in their community. In developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes about democratic citizenship in students, schools serve as the foundation for teaching about democracy, while teachers are agents for promoting democratic

citizenship. In the process of preparing democratic citizenship, NCSS (1994) also stated the purpose of social studies is helping young people develop their abilities, and Goodlad (2004) emphasized that citizens need to have problem solving abilities in order to develop as civic characters within democratic culture. Because of the abilities necessary for thriving in democratic culture, teachers are considered prominent and necessary mechanisms for preparing students. Carpenter (2013) also highlighted the roles of teachers in preparing students to better understand democracy and engaging them in democracy: “We need to prepare better our students with a broader understanding of what democracy entails. Since democratic citizenship is not in our DNA, teachers need to develop understanding of values [with]in [students]” (p. 21). Teachers are responsible to develop values of democratic citizenship in students since democratic values are developed and learned. They are not self-developed. In the process of developing democratic valued and making students understand, teachers have the responsibilities. In addition, Logan (2011) explained that “The United States and its democracy is constantly evolving and continuously needs citizens who can adapt its enduring traditions and values despite these changes” (p. 151). Democratic values are emergent and it is the citizens who can learn and adapt changes of values in society.

Along with schools being a location for acquiring knowledge about democracy, they are also locations for *engagement* with democracy. As expressed by Wood (1990), schools represent a platform for students to experience democracy, as schools serve as “laboratories where democracy is experienced, but not as museums where it is observed” (p. 37). This attention to differences between observation and experience is essential when understanding the role of teachers in preparing democratic citizenship. Further, this

attention highlights the significance of schools as being sites of opportunity for students to gain perspectives and ideologies regarding democracy as well as the ability to share these principles and perspectives effectively within environments comprised of community members. As such, effectively preparing students to *engage* in democracy is a crucial responsibility of social studies educators. Though many researchers (Carpenter, 2013; Cohen, 2014; Cuenca, 2011; Goodlad, 2000; Logan, 2011; Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Parker, 2003) have understood the responsibility of social studies educators to prepare students for a democratic society. Rauh (as cited in Torney- Purta et al., 2011) highlighted the result of a study which showed that the educators' perception was lacking about how they are formed, is lacking and there was not enough focus on the development and implementation of teachers' perceptions and how these factors affected citizenship education.

As described by Rauh (as cited in Torney Purta et al., 2011), the impact of teachers' perceptions on how they are implemented in the classroom for democratic citizenship has yet to be extensively researched. However, a few recent studies have concentrated on the impact of citizenship education on students. Hans et al. (2001) conducted a civic education survey nationally representing a sample about 30,000 students on measuring civic knowledge for democratic values. The result showed that the knowledge of understanding civic education of the age of 14 year students in 28 countries was low. DeMulder, Stribling, and (

Wood (2011) presented the significance of schools where educators can highly influence students and believed that educators contribute to the understanding in developing democratic knowledge in students. Furthermore, DeMular et al. (2011) stated:

When educators are not modeling or implementing democratic practices, students' perceptions about democracy suffer as students witness the adults in the schools where they spend so much of their young lives following orders and customs rather than participating in democratic life (p. 237).

The roles and responsibilities of educators in imparting democratic education in students are long lasting. If educators failed to do the modeling for students, particularly in teaching, students will not be able to foster much understanding related to democracy and democratic citizenship.

Furthermore, Dewey (1916) and Gutmann (1987) also highlighted challenge of teaching democratic citizenship: "Teaching... democratic citizenship... should be undertaken by those actually committed to democratic ideals that they embed in their daily educational practices" (p. 237). Teachers must believe and practice that they would actually embody democratic principles to effectively equip students become thriving democratic citizens.

Similarly, Edmundson, Lupinacci, and Martusewicz (2011) described how students struggled with understanding the nature of democracy (p. 30). Edmundson et al. (2011) study revealed that students had problems with understanding the concepts of democracy and democratic processes. A lack of understanding among students illustrated the importance of investigating how teachers conceptualized democracy and they developed ideas about democratic citizenship. By studying teachers', much insight can be gained about reforms needed for improving citizenship education for students.

Significantly, the study by Edmundson et al. (2011) elucidated that students' failure to

understand democratic concepts and the democratic process is directly related to their perceptions of how they are constructed by their teachers.

Furthermore, a report from the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP, 2014) on the assessment of students' understanding of civic knowledge in grade 4-12 revealed that the level of civic knowledge of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students was higher than that of students in senior grades, as there is a significant drop in civic knowledge of students in grade 4 compared 8 through 12 (p. 3). The result showed concerns about finding the possibility of reasons for the significant drop on the understanding of civic knowledge of students. According to Boyte (2015), modeling and working toward democracy is a “fate” that educators must live up to, and their practices must be aligned with democratic processes:

The fate of democracy is tied to the work of educators, as well as to the meaning of citizenship and the practices of civic education. If we are to create a citizen-centered democracy-which citizens capable of tackling the mounting challenge of our time-we must revisit conventional ideas. We will have to reinvent citizenship as public work, for the sake of ourselves, as well as for our students and for the democracy itself. (p. 2)

Despite the understanding that educators must model and actively engage in democratic processes within the classroom and schools, there is minimal existing research which seeks to understand how teachers construct perceptions about democracy and how these perceptions affect their practice, which, ultimately, affects their ability to effectively educate students and equip them to be democratic citizens. Studying teachers' perceptions and practices is important, as supported by Vinson and Ross (as cited in

Ritter, 2013), because students "... can learn important civic knowledge, skills, and values of democracy in the classroom" (p. 42). Understanding how social studies teachers conceptualize democracy and develop ideas about democratic citizenship, as well as how they integrate these ideologies in their methods and teaching strategies, is significant when attempting to maximize democratic values and skills in the classroom. Unless we understand how teachers conceptualize democracy, develop ideas about democratic citizenship, and integrate these ideas and experiences into their teaching practices, we will not be able to determine how social studies teachers can more effectively promote democratic citizenship in the classroom.

Further, as described by Stanley (1985), teachers can motivate students and can challenge them to think about and formulate their own views of democratic society (p.24). By effectively challenging students in this manner, the understanding of democratic concepts and the development of ideas about democratic citizenship is nurtured. However, how teachers conceptualize democracy remains unknown, prohibiting us from understanding how we can more effectively transform students' knowledge of democracy and democratic citizenship. Furthermore, Stanley (1985) referenced Dewey (1916) in describing the challenge of educators is to equip students for their futures as citizens in democratic society when they are operating in undemocratic institutions (p. 31). Nelson and Drake (1990) also argued:

Unless we as social studies educators defend the field in more than one-dimensional ways, our credibility will be continually questioned and eroded.

Social studies teachers will be able to understand the foundational underpinning



of the content today rather than feel mired in a miasma of contemporary issues that arouse public truculence than understanding. (p. 52)

The quote informs us that the focus of social studies teachers lies to the understanding of contents and they struggle to survive the field in various ways.

### **Significance of the Problem**

Rose & Gallop (2000) stressed the importance of educators in the K-12 grade levels to create responsible citizens for democratic society. However, different people defined conception of democracy within different contexts. Accordingly, understanding the conception of democracy within teachers will be helpful practices aimed at developing students into thriving democratic citizens.

By understanding teachers' conceptions of democracy and the development of ideas about democratic citizenship, professional and in-service teachers will be able to prepare themselves into a democratizing force. They will be also able to reflect more on their own teaching to improve their pedagogical practices, explore their theoretical assertions, and internalize processes of learning to work within differences. They would also gain personal awareness to the group collaboration and accountability that is necessary to be successful and enforce collaboration as well as invite students to be active participants in the classroom and beyond.

In addition, results illustrated how a small group of teachers advanced their current knowledge and beliefs regarding conceptions of democracy, developing ideas about democratic citizenship, and implementing ideologies and experiences in teaching practices in ways which may be associated with decision- making as well. This study seeks to add to the current body of research regarding the preparation of students for

democratic citizenship, focusing on the development of democratic perceptions of educators and how they impact the teaching of democratic principles, concepts, and processes. Hahn (2001) suggested that teacher beliefs affect their decision-making (p. 44). Because these beliefs affect teachers' decision making processes, understanding how teachers conceptualize democracy and the development of democratic ideas is essential for the growth of critical thinking abilities within students and within classroom teaching practices aimed at improving democratic citizenship education.

Furthermore, understanding teachers' conceptualization of democracy will enable us to encourage students to be active, engaged citizens in democratic society. Zarrillo (2011) emphasized the necessity for students to become active inquirers about democracy through social studies education. He claimed, "The knowledge children acquire as a part of social studies tends to be the highest priority for teachers since social studies must be a vehicle for children to become active citizens in our society" (p. 319). Teachers' roles in preparing students for democracy is significant, as teachers are in a position which allows them to encourage and model democratic processes in the classroom.

In exploring the teaching and learning phenomena, Wilson and Paterson (2006) stressed that "learners who understand more about their own learning, metacognitive awareness, have greater capacity to transfer their learning to new problems and context" (p. 6). It must be understood that, teachers are learners who need to understand not only the practicalities of teaching, but also the core values of teaching, in order to develop in their abilities and understand their students' construction of knowledge. The significant problem is that we do not know how teachers construct their own ideas about democracy

and, thus, we cannot determine how they can effectively interact with democratic content to make it accessible for students.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Learning is constructing meaning from experiences and understanding how teachers involve students in the construction of knowledge (Gray, 1997). In order to understand the process of how teachers develop ideas about democratic citizenship and implement their ideas and experiences in practice, constructivism serves as the theoretical framework for this study. Bentley, Fleury, and Garrison (2007) described constructivism as a process of understanding the contingent nature of knowledge to induce a more critical reflection about various educational institutions and practices. In this regard, the ideas of constructivism remain a viable approach to teaching and learning about the practices of democratic society as well as education (p. 10).

There have been various definitions of constructivism; however, the fundamental meaning of this theoretical framework is the connection between gaining new knowledge and understanding based prior experiences. Dewey (1916) and Piaget (1977) stated that construction and reconstruction of knowledge is based upon prior experiences and understanding. It is a continuous process that develops over time. Therefore, understanding how teachers conceptualized democracy, developed ideas about democratic citizenship, and implemented their ideas and experience into teaching align with the theoretical framework of constructivism. Bruner (1960) emphasized that learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas and concepts based upon their existing knowledge and experiences (p.1). Therefore, in conceptualizing democracy and development of ideas regarding democratic citizenship, learning becomes

an important activity and process of learning is dependent on what we already know while allowing us to adapt and change when new ideas occur, contributing to newly developed conclusions (Gray, 1997, p. 3). Ideas are constructed from experiences which carry personal meaning. Constructivism enables an understanding how learners construct new understanding by actively building upon prior knowledge and experiences (Schunk, 2012). The appropriateness of using this framework in this study is discussed as well as the connection between democratic citizenship and constructivism. Utilizing constructivism in this study is an attempt to answer a primary question relative to democratic education: “How do we come to know what we know?” (Bodner, 1986, p.1). As such, I believed that the use of this theoretical framework helped to connect how teachers know what they know and how they utilized their knowledge in preparing students for democracy and democratic citizenship. In social studies, the role of constructivism, as defined by Fosnot (1996) is a “self-regulatory process of struggling with the conflict between existing personal models of the world and discrepant new insights, constructing new representations and models of reality” (p.76). Thus, learning is built upon pre-existing knowledge and there is a construction of new knowledge.

In addition, Phillips (2000) explained constructivism as a higher order of experiences that grows as the individual is engaged in active role-play. Learners construct new idea and knowledge based on their prior experiences. Fosnot (1996) described a relevancy of constructivism in the formation of knowledge as below:

Constructivism represents a break from the traditional positivistic assumptions of the social studies. Traditionally, the search for knowledge within the social studies consisted of the search for “truth”; that is, the acquisition of knowledge

that mirrors or corresponds to a singular “reality.” Constructivism, however, employs a more flexible, culturally relativistic, and contemplative perspectives, where knowledge is constructed based on personal and social experience. This relativistic perspective encompasses the belief that knowledge claims of truth, falsity, or vitality are always dependent upon, or relative to, personal, cultural, or historical perspectives. (p. ix)

Constructivism involves the active creation and modification of thinking, ideas, and understanding the results of experiences that occur with the individuals. Doolittle (2016) explained about the individual experiences of learning as “the primacy of social and individual experience in the process of learning and knowledge attainment by a learner may vary in its accuracy as a representation of an external reality” (p. 1). Learning and understanding the meaning is variable. Individual’s experience also causes accuracy of obtaining meaning. Furthermore, Kukla (2000) described person’s activities to derive understating. Kukla (2000) stated that, “A reality is constructed by our own activities and that people, together as members of a society, invent the properties of the world” (p.57). Studying the experiences of individuals who belong to the same profession will share understanding of common phenomenon of the research questions. Constructivism will help explain how social studies teachers constructed their ideas about democracy and how these ideas affect their teaching.

Therefore, the theoretical framework of constructivism used in this study is relevant to understand the process of how the participants conceptualized democracy and developed their ideas about democratic citizenship.

Furthermore, Schwandt (2003) described the process of the formation of knowledge as an “integrated form” (p. 308). The construction of knowledge, then, is the results of combined experiences of the individuals. Regarding the variety of experiences which construct individuals’ knowledge, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stated, “there is no single interpretative truth; there are multiple interpretive communities, each with its own criteria for evaluating an interpretation and the criteria for evaluating research are relative” (p.26). Hence, I used constructivism as a theoretical framework for understanding a phenomenon of the participants for the research questions stated below.

### **Research Questions**

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do teachers, who teach 7-12 grade social studies, conceptualize the meaning of democracy?
2. How do they develop ideas about democratic citizenship?
3. In what ways do they implement their perspectives and experiences into their teaching?

### **Limitations of the Study**

Each study has some limitations and this study has also some limitations for the study. The first limitation was the representation of a small size of population. Due to a small size of population, the results of the study may not be generalized. A larger sample size could produce different results. Therefore, the results of this study may not adequately represent the phenomena in depth.

The second limitation was that the follow up. The follow up could not take place due to busy academic year. All the participants were busy to prepare their students for

upcoming tests. The participants were not available as standardized tests were approaching. The outcomes of the study may not be generalized as this study represents rudimentary in nature.

The third limitation was a lack of diversity of the participants from interdisciplinary disciplines. There were six participants who were from a small area of Northwest Ohio. Although, the number of participants was an ideal number for conducting a phenomenological study in qualitative research, participants from different ethical background and representation could have been resulted richer data and more generalizable outcomes of the study. Therefore, results from this qualitative study are not intended to be generalized to draw inferences to a larger population. The outcomes reflect subjective experiences of the six participants from Northwest of Ohio.

The fourth limitation was a selection of purposeful sampling. The participants were selected using the purposeful sampling. The convenient sampling purposely searched for likeminded participants. The participants who had the expressed interests in democratic citizens. Therefore, choosing the participants with similar interests was certainly useful in collecting rich data, however, it did not contribute to see the perspectives of the potential participants out of this limitation.

Last, interviews were conducted in English. However, English is the second language of the researcher. There were certainly some linguistic barriers such as lack of clarity, choice of words, presentation skills, and accents. On the contrary, English was the native tongue of all the six participants. I believe that the language limitations may have definitely impacted the way in which participants perceived or internalized and responded to the interview questions and the way results of interpretations.

### **Data Limitation**

Data were collected through a single interview with each six participants. The follow-up interviews did not take place due to busy academic year. All the participants were preparing their students for the tests and the possibility of the follow up interview could not take place.

The accuracy of all the transcriptions was maintained with several times revision for word for word. The recruitment procedure created some challenging situations. Such challenges were the limitation of time without the possibility of exploring more about the participants' lived experiences and having more interaction about the issues the participants raised in some context related to the question. However, the data were rich enough to answer to support the research questions. While conducting the interview, the student researcher asked participants to clarify any unclear meaning and also encouraged them to probe when confusions existed.

While conducting the interview, I asked clarifying and probing questions when participant statements were unclear. When defining the conception of democracy and expressing ideas about democratic citizenship, when necessary I requested the participant to elaborate on their answers in order to explore meaning of their responses and ensure their answers as well. If they had any new ideas and concepts, they could have changed or elaborated.

### **Impact Limitation**

This study carried a narrow area of population in Northwest Ohio. The narrow regional focus within a city constrained to reveal a broad outcomes of the research problems. Although, the study selected the participants randomly, the impact of the



outcomes may be conducive to incremental findings only. A larger number of sample size could have provided much more broad impact on the issues.

### **Definition of Operational Terms**

The following terms defined in the study provide readers contextual meaning of the dissertation work.

*Active citizens:* Active citizens are also needed in opposition to ‘good citizens’, who tend to obey the law, be polite and well-behaved, respect individual rights, address moral virtues of care and concern for others, be good neighbors, and generally relegate ideas of the good life to their private sphere (Crick & Lockyer, 2010)

*Democracy:* Democracy is more than a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experiences. The mode of associated living, as a shared, communicated experience applies to the school classroom first, and second to the family (Dewey, 1916, p. 87)

*Democratic Citizenship:* Someone who has knowledge of democratic processes, possesses skills for civic engagement, and possesses democratic values and respect for individual and group identities as well as concern for the greater good (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006)

*Education for democracy:* Type of education that fosters democratic ideals in the classroom characterized by discussion, deliberation, debate, and decision-making process (Parker, 2001)

*Good Citizen:* Someone who obeys the law, participates in community activities and takes an interest in local and community issues and citizens who are responsible, participatory and justice oriented (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006)

*Lived Experience*: the pre-reflective dimensions of human existence (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2004, p. 1)

*Phenomenology*: A study that attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives, and understandings of a particular situation (Zahavi, 2003).

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Review of Literature**

This review of literature provides a historical background of social studies, definitions, purposes, and the relationship of the field with democracy and democratic citizenship. National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 1994) first published national curriculum standards which aimed at providing a framework for the improvement of teaching and learning experiences at all levels of schooling in the United States of America. Furthermore, NCSS described “social studies as an integrated study of the Social Sciences and Humanities to promote civic competence-the knowledge, intellectual processes and democratic dispositions required of students to be active and engaged participants in public life” (p. 1). The definition stated aims of social studies curriculum focused on preparing citizens by developing knowledge and values necessary for active participation for the promotion of civic life (Adler & Sim, 2008; Engle & Ochoa, 1988; Hahn, 2001; Ross, 2006). Hence, the relationships among social studies, citizenship education, and democracy inform us of an integral part of democratic education and state the ability of citizens to discharge responsibilities in society (Parker & Jarolimek, 1984). Therefore, understanding the perceptions of social studies teachers regarding democracy, development of ideas, and implementation of their ideas and experiences into their teaching practice is vital.

Democratic education is perceived to develop highly functional citizens who engage and participate. National Council of Social Studies (NCSS, 1994) described the aim of democratic education to be requiring students to be active and engaged participants in public life, and to educate students who are committed to the ideas and

values of democracy to use their knowledge within their communities, nation, and world. Kahne and Westheimer (2006) defined a “good citizen as someone who has knowledge of democratic processes, who possesses skills for civic engagement, democratic values and respect for individual, group identities and concern for the greater good for society” (p.2). The goal of democratic education is to develop good citizens who are engaging in social activities and are willing to work for the common good of all.

Similarly, Ochoa-Becker (2007) has stressed the purpose of social studies education for improving the lives of individuals as widely as possible. Furthermore, Ajiboye (2009) defined social studies as citizenship education which provides students with the knowledge, skills, values, dispositions, and attitudes which are characteristics of good citizens (p. 21). Civic engagement, democratic values, and knowledge for citizenship education have consistently been used in the field of social studies, situating democracy in the goals for social studies education:

In democracy, the focus has been on how education can contribute to the formation of democratic citizens and the promotion of a democratic culture, while in established democracies the focus has been on how to nurture and maintain interest in and engagement with democratic processes and practices. At stake in these discussions are not only technical questions about the proper shape and form of education for democratic citizenship but also more philosophical questions about the nature of democracy and the possible configurations of citizenship within democratic societies. (p. 5)

As such, the roles of educators in nurturing democratic education and democratic processes have been a central phenomenon to understanding how citizens can maintain interest in active participation.

Additionally, the definition of social studies is an important conversation when considering its role in nurturing students to be thriving, democratic citizens. According to Mhlauli, (as cited in Engle & Ochoa, 1998; Hahn, 2001; Ross; 2006, Adler & Sim, 2008) the term “social studies” is used in the United States to refer disciplinary contents taught within the K-12 school curriculum. Social studies is considered to be a subject for preparing citizens to be democratic citizens, equipping students with knowledge, skills, and values necessary for active participation. Additionally, Biesta (2011) stressed the proper ways of enhancing the democratic process and practices in society where the impact of education is vital. According to Biesta (2011), “there is too much emphasis on the teaching of citizenship and too little consideration to the ways in which citizenship is actually learned through the processes and practices that make up the everyday lives of children, young people and adults” (p. 1). As expressed by Biesta (2011), emphasized the need to be on how students can acquire citizenship knowledge rather than just passively consume class content.

### **Historical Background of Social Studies Education**

The origins of social studies as an academic discipline cannot be attributed to an exact date. However, Saxe (1991) identified the 1820s a conceptual beginning for social studies education in Great Britain, which aimed at promoting social welfare. Furthermore, Saxe (1991) describes how the promotion of social welfare via social studies education was quickly adopted by the United States:

The foundation of social studies education stems from the attempt to utilize education for the promotion of social welfare. This concept has its beginning in the Great Britain after the 1820s and it quickly spread to the United States.

Typically, in the U.S., social welfare leaders lobbied government and industry to protect women, children, families, and workers in general from the social, economic, and political exploitation commonly associated with a rapidly expanding urban and industrial environment. (p.11)

The establishment of social studies education was meant to protect citizens from any form of exploitation. The primary focus of the subject was to address social issues, educate, and protect citizens from socio-political exploitation in the industrial environment of the country.

In addition, Saxe (1991) pointed out further reasons for the realization of social studies education. Social re-construction was initiated after Civil War and a rapid flow of immigrants to the United States. These two factors led to the emergence of social studies as a significant subject. Social studies scholars stressed every content required to focus on the social utility and contribute to the understanding of contemporary social problems. Ross (2014) explained social studies education for students in acquiring “democratic values via teaching and learning leading to a process of being informed citizens” (p.26). Saxe (1991) and Ross (2014) have expressed the significance of social studies for developing democratic values where as Saxe (1991) further described reasons for the emergence of social studies as a subject:

Social studies emerged as an attempt to use education as a vehicle to promote social welfare, and its subsequent development was influenced both by Americans

and others. The 1880s were a seedtime for the remarkable growth of the public high schools and the forces that shaped its curriculum. The United States had only recently recovered from the trauma of the Civil War and reconstruction. The immigrants flowed into the country and powerful new ideas and institutions arose, and old ideas and institutions were modified or transformed to meet the exigencies of the new age. The public schools, historically conceived as essential to the future of a democratic society, were bound to become one arena in which this transformation would take place. (p. 15)

Similar to there being a purpose for social studies education in Britain, the arrival of immigrants to the U.S. and the start of reconstruction after the Civil War in the U.S. created a necessity for introducing social studies education as a means for developing democratic citizenship. The United States adapted the British vision of promoting social welfare and recognized the subject of social studies as a vehicle for progress.

Subsequently, the growth of social studies education continued by recognizing two components: “traditional history curriculum” as a source of citizenry education for democracy and “social science” as a process for social control (Saxe, 1991, p. 1). The growth of the field showed the integration of contents from social sciences. The development of history curriculum towards the promotion of citizenship education and the integration of contents from social sciences was an approach to the promotion of democratic citizenship education.

Furthermore, Nelson (1994) described the 1916 Report of the Committee on Social Studies, which legitimized the term “Social Studies” for formation of citizenship education and recognized social studies teaching as a goal of citizenship education (p. 8).

However, Hertzberg (1981) had earlier explained that the 1916 Report of the Committee on Reorganization of Secondary Social Education stressed that the nature of inquiry should be the goal of citizenship education rather than prescription, as prescription would not fully create a democratic society. The committee emphasis was on the “inquiry process rather than indoctrination of knowledge to help produce the rich and many-sided personalities a democratic society needs and deserves to the fullest development of every individual” (p.45).

Saxe (1991) stated the aim of social studies education in America’s high schools, which also supports an inquiry-based process, is to develop citizens:

The social studies of the American high school should have for their conscious and constant purpose of the cultivation of good citizen. The social studies should cultivate a sense of membership in the “world community”, with all the sympathies and sense of justice that this involves as among the different divisions of human society. (pp. 204-205)

The aim of social studies education in American schools has consistently been grounded in promoting democratic citizenship education to create a greater human society. The goal of social studies for citizenship development fosters traditional democratic principles and challenges students to be more critical thinkers. Thus, the goal of social studies can be defined as preparing democratic citizens (Saxe, 1991, p. 11). Despite many reforms over the years, the central purpose of social studies has consistently remained citizenship education, while the importance of social studies teachers has also been a consistent focus within the field.

Byford & Russell (2007) underlined the 1950s as a period of reexamination of



social studies through various projects on promoting democratic citizenship. Byford and Russell described:

In the 1950, social studies came under attack from both citizens and the government for its failure to promote citizenship. Curriculum reformers, politicians, and average citizens pushed for change within the social studies.

Events both at home and abroad eventually led to a collective reexamination of the overall purpose and goal of social studies. As a result, over fifty curriculum projects were developed to promote individual sciences and advances in curriculum design. (p. 38)

The projects focused on the social studies curriculum reforms, emphasis of citizenship education, construction of new social studies curriculum. Some projects were “The New Social Studies Project and The Harvard Social Studies Project” under which several others were formed to promote democratic citizenship. The projects contributed to “create teacher made supplementary materials to be used in the classrooms, emphasized student’s inquiry learning process and stressed the constructivist approach to engage students to establish the values and attitudes in social studies classes” (Byford & Russell, 2007, p. 46). The initiatives of social studies reform during the 1950s pushed social studies forward to its firm goals of preparing democratic citizenship. In addition, Bonner (1958) explained four factors leading U.S. to the promotion of democratic education naming them as Korean War, Structure of Social Studies Curriculum and Content, The Bill of Rights, and The Soviet Union’s Launching of Sputnik in 1957.

According to Bonner (1958), conservative Americans were upset at the absence of decisive victory in the war and many of them blamed the lack of will of home, church

and school to develop good character among the nation's youth. The second was the Structure of Social Studies Curriculum and Content being taught in school required to focus on the organizational content based on "closed areas of society". The "closed areas of society" referred to the inclusion of any neglected areas such as interracial marriage or teenage etc. The teaching also needed to focus on the reflective process as well. The third factor was The Bill of Rights which emphasized the ideal of justice establishment within the framework of the amendment and the fourth component was the Soviet Union's Launching of Sputnik in 1957. The U.S. took the launching of Sputnik as an alarm for its own weakness and lagging behind of education and included social studies for lack of preparation and identification of citizenship and civic participation. It pushed the U.S. education for change as well. All these four factors accounted the promotion of democratic citizenship as the key to the practice of the development of democracy and citizens and explained significance of teaching for democratic citizenship as well.

Furthermore, Engle (1960) described the rationale for social studies education in 1960, when two approaches developed:

First, social studies was conceived as the social sciences "simplified for pedagogical purposes" and second, "social studies was mainly concerned with developing good citizens". The pedagogical purpose focused on applying content from social sciences to address social problems, and the concept of good citizens stressed the decision-making abilities of citizens to be an essential purpose and rationale for social education. (pp.12- 14)

In 1965, Bruner introduced "Man: A Course of Study," which attempted to develop a curriculum to help students learn and transfer general principles of humanity

within a broad sense of thinking and inquiry processes. Bruner (1965) stressed, “human behaviors can be shaped by the inquiry process rather than indoctrination” (p. 36). As the concepts of democracy are complex to perceive easily, MACOS set the goals of social studies education for promoting students’ thinking about the world through “investigation of human behaviors and promoting an appreciation of the common humanity that all humans share” (p. 43). The goal of social studies did not change, but a change in the process of acquiring knowledge about democracy was emphasized through understanding human behavior and the knowledge was believed to be self-constructed rather than indoctrination.

Furthering the understanding of social studies education, in 1970, Stanley (2001) cited Barth et al., (1977) for viewing social studies as a field of content selection, organization, and teaching. Barth et al., (1977) introduced three components of social studies education: Citizenship Transmission (CT), Social Science (SS), and Reflective Inquiry (RI). Citizenship Transmission (CT) became the main philosophical position to prepare democratic citizens (p. 316). Responsibilities of social studies educators included preparing students to be able to “identify social problems and evaluate data to make decisions related to them and citizens with such abilities were defined as good citizens” (Barth et al., 1977, p. 749).

Adhering to the concept of citizenship transmission, Stanley (1985) provided the continuation of social studies development from 1976 to 1983. For almost a decade, citizenship education was emphasized and the NCSS also stressed the importance of the “development of citizens who are able to make rational decisions and participate actively

in a democratic political system” (p. 326). Need to stress the importance of citizenship education here and lead it into the next reviewed literature which focuses on teachers.

Due to the importance of citizenship education within the field of social studies, it is logical to assume educators serve an important role in nurturing young citizens. Thornton (2005) described teachers as curricular- instructional gatekeepers. They are part of interactions, systems of beliefs, and contextual factors which must be understood. Teachers determine both what content and experiences students have access to and the nature of that content and those experiences (p.329). Since the conceptual idea of citizenship education in the field of social studies was conceived, the development of democracy was assumed and schools were the most trusted institutions. As time passed, studying teachers’ perceptions about democracy became imperative and understanding how teachers integrate their ideas and experiences in teaching practice is essential for understanding how to effectively equip students to become thriving, democratic citizens.

Additionally, Rose and Gallop (2000) stressed the importance of educators in K-12 to create responsible citizens that tremendously contribute to renewing the processes of democracy. Similarly, Evan (2004) stated the impact of unifying the role between history and social science and emphasizing citizenship education as a goal of instruction in schools. Thornton (2005) discussed the importance of the Report of Committee of Social Studies (1916) for its “significant role in providing a vision and consistency for the development of American democracy, comprehensive and deeper knowledge of the vital problems of social life, thus securing a more intelligent and active citizenship education” (p. 40). Furthermore, Beal, Bolick, Martorella (2005) summarized the success of new social studies classes that helped in developing instructional strategies,

investigating learning process, and establishing principles related to significant beliefs, attitudes, and values within social studies classes (p. 16). Thornton (2005) and Beal et al. (2005) expressed social studies as a significant course to develop the abilities of citizens in identifying social issues and help them learn social values as well. Similarly, Goodlad, et al. (2008) stated the significance of public schooling in emphasizing the purpose of democratic education:

Our system of public schooling has increasingly given up over the past several decades its commitment to democratic public purpose. The elementary and secondary schools across the United States showed that they neither clearly articulated public democratic purpose nor ensured that the ongoing total staff dialogue, decision making, action, and evaluation necessary to renew the process of democracy significant that took place. (p.33)

Reviewed research highlighted the concern about democratic citizenship and reiterates the purpose of democratic education. Although, Goodlad et al. (2008) described the poor performance of schools giving up their commitment to democratic purpose. Levstik and Tyson (2008) recognized the roles of teachers in renewing and sustaining a democratic environment thorough educating youths. However, previous studies did not indicate how “teacher’s knowledge, beliefs, thinking and attitudes impact their practices and student learning” (Levstik & Tyson, 2008, p. 340). Social studies teachers are supposed to hold responsibilities for creating a classroom environment where students can learn democratic values and democratic process. Carpenter (2013) claimed that, “Social studies teachers clearly accept citizenship education as part of their mission. They understand the

need for a well-informed citizenry to ensure the survival of democracy” (p. 2).

Furthermore, Carpenter (2013) argued:

In a democratic system, each and every person needs to develop an individual rights consciousness and combining the values inherent in the definition of democracy and we can come up with a relatively long list of democratic values such as freedom, justice, authority, participation, and personal obligation for the public good. (p. 3)

In a democracy, well-informed citizens who are able to inherit core values of democracy are important assets for the public good.

### **Summary**

Historically, concept of social studies education emerged from Great Britain in the 1820s with the purpose of promoting social welfare. The United States (U.S.) adapted the British vision of social welfare and social efficiency when the process of rapid urbanization and industrialization was taking place in the U.S. One way that U.S. educators thought of making progress was through educational reforms, such as integrating contents into social studies from social sciences, stressing the necessary improvements in teacher education for pedagogical practices, and emphasizing the inquiry-based teaching and learning. Similarly, the flow of immigrants to the U.S. and the impacts of civil war led the U.S. education system to further develop and design rigorous curricula and to make policies which would educate well-informed democratic citizens. The knowledge of citizenship became the primary purpose of social studies education in k-12 curriculum. Furthermore, the formation of the National Educational Association (NEA) undertook the task of reorganization and reorientation of secondary education

(Smith, Palmer & Correia, n.d., p. 50). Nelson 1994) described the legitimated the "social studies" to designate formal citizenship education and placed squarely in the field all of those subjects that were believed to citizenship education (p. 1). The historical background of social studies highlighted that the vision of the field, developmental phases of subject, wider consent of definition and goals of social studies for preparing young people as democratic citizens.

### **Defining Social Studies**

The Madison Conference in 1892 defined social studies. According to Saxe (1991), social studies consisted of history, civics, and economics to be conceptualized as a subject to social reforms. The integration of those components of social studies were criticized by some scholars, such as, Hanus in 1899 (as cited in Saxe 1991) as a narrow definition. Hanus (as quoted in Saxe) argued that the social studies needed to be broadly defined as an integration of interdisciplinary components, such as, civics, history and the arts more of a sociological approach (p. 26). The sociological approach for enriching social studies was perceived as an essential part of it as an interdisciplinary field of studies as well.

The emphasis of integrating social science into social studies was, furthermore, emphasized at the beginning of the 1900 century. Blackman of the University of Kansas proposed social science to be integrated into social studies with the goal to occupy [the] future of schooling (Saxe, 1991, p. 26). The refinement of defining social studies continued from a narrowly defined of subjects into a broader concept of the field.

Definitions of social studies occupied much richer conceptualization by the 1916. Saxe provided the 1916 first official definition of social studies as “the social studies are

understood to be those whose subject matter relate to the organization and development of human society, and to man as a member of social groups and the keynote of modern education is social efficacy” (p.9). This definition designated social studies as a subject linked with human experiences and their association with each member of social groups. Social studies was defined as a field directly related to social organization and development of human being.

Dunn (1916) also introduced idea of citizenship to focus on citizenship education and described that the purpose of social studies education towards the development of good citizens. Furthermore, during the 1920s to 1930s, definition of social studies shifted to the individual level where citizenship participation was conceived as a significant approach to defining social studies. Hertzberg (1981) defined social studies as a subject closely related to “back to basic, the basic in social or individual level and individual utility” (p. 13). The individual in society was perceived as a part of social foundation in building a society. The relationship between an individual and society was described essential component in society.

The establishment of NCSS in 1921 played significant roles for strengthening social studies. Barth and Shermis (n.d.) explained the goal of the inception of NCSS in 1921 for the promotion of citizenship education. They presented the definition of “social studies as a field developed to assist students to integrate knowledge concerning with social phenomena” (p.35). This definition helped to redefine the goal of social studies for engaging students to discover the social phenomena. The values of social studies education for promoting social well-being and the continued focus on the development of democratic citizenship continued the field. Furthermore, Barth and Shermis (n.d.)



highlighted the formation of NCSS for developing teaching of social studies and enhance the process of integrating function of knowledge in democracy. Moreover, “social studies was defined as a combination of facts and skills that was called upon to transmit to younger generation to carry out citizenship role” (p.33).

Hertzberg (1981) and Barth and Shermis cited Wesley’s definition of social studies in the 1937. The authors stated that Wesley (1937) definition of social as a social science simplified for pedagogical purposes and reorganized of social sciences for instructional reasons as an oversimplification (p. 12). Barth and Shermis (n.d.) noted that Wesley’s definition received criticisms from some scholars because of its narrow definition. However, Wesley supported his idea of defining social studies as a social science simplified for pedagogical purposes to make the definition of social studies easily understandable, clear, and convincing (p. 37). Hertzberg (1981), furthermore, elaborated Wesley ‘definition intended to address three the needs of society: students’ needs, needs of society, and introductory college courses as a form of general education (p.12). Social studies definition broadened its structural areas of connecting students through different levels of educational degrees as well.

The second definition of social studies was more inclusive in its nature by being a combination of unitary fields of various materials which ignored disciplinary boundaries and was organized around the needs of society, students, or of some combination (Hertzberg, 1981). Hertzberg argued that the second definition was much less in practice than Wesley’s definition and the conception was most usually implemented in junior high school (p.13). However, the integration of contents from interdisciplinary approach was regarded important in the definition of the field. Compared the first and the second

definitions of social studies, it revealed that the stress on the instructional processes and a combination of interdisciplinary of contents were required for the growth of the field and results of the integration of human experiences and knowledge. Saxe (1991) and Hertzberg (1981) linked the first and second definitions as unitary field within inter-disciplines and the scope and sequence were included in the social studies curriculum as well.

Next, the third definition of social studies, as Hertzberg (1981) found inclusive in its nature as it designated almost any school subject as a “social study” aimed towards achieving the goal of “social utility” (p. 13). This definition was described any subject taught in schools to be believed to translate and transmit some essential aspect of social purposes or social welfare. Hertzberg (1981) found the characteristics of the third definition similar to the definition during 1920s to 1930s extracted from social science. Perhaps, back-to-basics movement was related to this definition in intent, if not in terminology, by defining certain subjects as “basic in social or individual utility” (Hertzberg, 1981, p. 13). Definitions of social studies prevailed the scope of social studies while the concept of defining the field revolved around some confusions without a specific definition. The fourth definition uses the term “social sciences” and “social studies” virtually as interchangeable terms emphasizing Wesley’s definition, while ignoring his pedagogical purposes.

Similarly, Little and Wilson (1993) expounded the definition of social studies which covered a wide range of scope of the field. Social studies was described as “identifying the relationship between social studies, realities of the social world, realities of schools and students, methodologies, and materials used to achieve the goals” (p. 26).

Little and Wilson' definition presented social studies for establishing human relationship, looking at the social realities as well as consider realities of schools and students together for meeting the goal of the subject. The definition of social studies included pedagogical consideration as well. The National Council for the Social Studies Task Force (1993) adopted the following definition of social studies:

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. (p. 213)

The definition by the Social Studies Task Force (1993) covers a wide applications of social studies including the combination of interdisciplinary of contents to develop the efficacy of citizens in decision making to being global democratic citizens.

Evan (2004) explained the success of the NEA Commission in becoming the dominant curricular pattern for most of the 20th century, emphasizing the broader goals of citizenship education, and aiming social studies education for social effectiveness as well as and being inclusive in integrating the social gospel ethos of both community civics and problems of democracy with American ideals. The development of social efficacy became the central theme of social studies education and the definition of social

studies included the unifying approaches to social change.

Moreover, Wolfe (2004) claimed that “teaching for democracy is challenging as democratic teaching is faced along with limitations of teacher capability and insufficient professional development that causes a gap in teaching practices” (p.2). Wolfe has raised a concern for the development of teacher’s skills in teaching and it resonates with the purpose of gap of understanding how teachers develop and implement their ideas and experiences in the classroom. Understanding a process of educating students for a democratic society requires understanding how educators have perceived the ideas of democracy and practiced teaching. Kubow (2005) emphasized the essence of educators in teaching democracy. She argued that educators should be on the frontline of any curriculum implementation with the social and moral obligation of preparing citizens for future citizenship.

Definitions of social studies varied from time to time. The level of redefinition of the field revealed that social studies was emergent field. The conception of social studies originated from social welfare, social efficiency, preserving urban workers. Although the definitions shifted from time to time and inadequate definitions, development of democratic society and responsibility of social studies educators for the improvement pedagogical practices were emphasized. In addition, citizenship education has been consistent goal of social studies as well.

The next section provides definition of democracy, democratic citizenship, and the relationship between citizenship and democratic education.

## **Definition of Democracy**

Zimmermann (2013) briefly summarized the practice of ancient Greek Athenian democracy:

In the ancient Greece, the three main branches of Athenian democracy, the Assembly of the Demos, the Council of 500 and the People's Court Assembly, and the Council were responsible for legislation along with ad hoc boards of lawmakers to make decisions about democracy. Those three branches of the Athenian democracy played significant roles for promoting the state welfare in the country. (p. 1)

The formation of the council for the people was aimed at making decisions about democracy and promoting the welfare in the nation. It shows that the purpose of the branches of the Athenian democracy was intended towards developing democratic values. Gradually, the influence of the practice of the Athenian democracy, thus, expanded to other parts of the world. Giroux (1988) described the aim of public education for developing values to become active citizens striving to realize a vibrant democratic society and Americans have defined schooling as a public good and a fundamental right. Giroux (1988) argued about roles of schools for developing democratic values as:

Schools are a significant indicator of the well-being of a democratic society where the development of political and social practices needed to recognize the valuable roles in strengthening and extending the most important principles of a democracy are practice and how schooling can help students to practice active citizenship. (Giroux, 1988, p. 5)

Obviously, in strengthening democratic values and knowledge to students rely on the teaching. Furthermore, DeLeon (1997) informed us democracy in America has been conceptualized as a dominate interest of the country since a longtime in its history.

DeLeon (1997) explained:

The predominant American political belief-attained, pretended, or otherwise- from before the establishment of the Republic and throughout the nation's history has been the democratic dream, nominally based on some version of popular representation and governance. (p. 1)

This description entails democracy politically driven faith of citizens with a political mechanism devised for governance. Furthermore, the definitions of democracy are perceived beliefs "probably as numerous and flexible as any single expression in the political science lexicon" (DeLeon, 1997, p. 13).

Crick (1989) stated the definition of democracy at the time of Plato. He stated:

Democracy is simply demos (the mob, the many) and kracia (rule). Plato attacked democracy as being the rule of many, the poor and the ignorant over what should be, he thought - the rule of the few as the wise and disinterested. His fundamental distinction was between knowledge and opinion: democracy is thus the rule of mere opinion (p. 15).

This definition has provided some abstract definition because there is always a discourse between the knowledge and opinions for the rule and ruler. Democracy is perceived as a political agenda that generally governs the poor and the ignorant with the rule of opinion as the key to democratic principles.

Similarly, DeLeon (1997) presented that most scholars agree Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address in 1893 distilled the essence of American democracy: "a government of the people, by the people, for the people". This definition has been used even today around the world to understand the "democratic sovereignty and implied to the simultaneous operation of the two fundamental elements such as government by the majority and the protection of individual or minority rights" (Sigel & Hoskin, 1991, p.71). Thus, the fundamental definition of democracy is perceived for the protection of rights of citizens who are in the minority. In the U.S. the definition of democracy was further redefined during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Zimmermann (2013) informed us the Age of Enlightenment for democracy and highlighted:

Democracy as we know it today was not truly defined until the Age of Enlightenment in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, during which time the U.S. declaration of independence was penned, followed by the U.S. constitution (which borrowed heavily from the Magna Carta). The term evolved to mean a government structured with a separation of powers, provided basic civil rights, religious freedom and separation of church and state. (p. 3)

Democracy, then is perceived as a form of political government in which the rule of the people is present to ensure civil rights and the prosperity of the people in society.

Crick (1989) and Zimmermann (2013) agreed with the goal of democracy for protecting rights of people where Chief Linchwe (1989) defined democracy as a way of life of people integrated for co-existence in society. Chief Linchwe (1989) explained:

It is not a matter of theory but a way of life. The latter makes a difference for the average citizen for it involves *modus of vivendi* or an arrangement for the peaceful coexistence of people in a society. It entails a covenant between the ruled and the rulers to create within the community mutual respect for all citizens and a collective responsibility for everybody's political and material survival. (p. 99)

By the nature, democracy is a political system where mutual respect and collaboration among citizens and between ruler and ruled are established. Similarly, Benjamin (1994) has presented a definition of democracy even further as “a moral conception of how people ought to live together, driven not by considerations of efficiency, but by a powerful vision of what is right and proper” (p. 9). Benjamin's definition refers democracy as a system where citizens live together to fulfill their social efficiency.

Definitions by Crick (1989), Chief Linchwe (1989), and Zimmermann (2013) represented the central defining democracy for maintaining co-existence in society. Chief Linchwe stated:

It is not a matter of theory but a way of life. The latter make difference for citizens for it involves some *modus of vivendi* or an arrangement for peaceful co-existence of people in a society. It entails a covenant between the rules and the rulers to create within the community mutual respect for all citizens and a collective responsibility for everybody's political and material survival. (p. 99)

Definition of democracy informed that it is a purposefully designed political system to



govern people and maximize citizens' collaboration for survival in mutual respect.

In addition, The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 1995); Dahl, 1998; Cohen, 1998; and Danziger, 1998 explained democracy as a political system to achieve social progresses and engage citizens in participation within a political system.

### Democratic Citizenship

Hamburg (1985) urged that schools and educators are responsible for establishing guidelines for behaviors and teaching young learners to internalize consensus building for coping up with the problem solving (p. 13). The centrality of democratic citizenship is to promote practices of good citizenship. In order to promote good citizenship, Engle and Ochoa (1988) stressed a classroom teaching practice from which the learners develop effective citizenry through participation and decision making. The decision making process should be at the core of social studies instruction.

In the teaching of democratic citizenship, Brophy (1990) stated that most changes in teaching that have occurred are related to the growth of the subject area such as to approaches to social studies contents teaching and focus more on relevant content area as well. In addition, Brophy (1990) integrated social studies curriculum has reinforced in the development of active citizens and helped students to develop problem solving habits nationally and globally. The change in the preparation of interdependency concept of global democratic citizenship has further strengthened by NCSS (1994) position statement. The NCSS (1994) described its vision of social studies for preparing democratic citizenship for "building social understanding and civic efficacy, and preparing citizens for a global community and promoting good citizenship in a democracy" (p. 82). The goal of social studies education was further restated in the

position statement of NCSS.

Braungart & Braungart (1998) described citizenship as a cornerstone of American democracy with the wellbeing and survival of the country's institutions largely dependent on the successful education and integration of each new generation of children and youth (p. 98). Various scholars have also emphasized social studies education as a way to developing democratic values for the American society as well. Avery (2004); Nelson (2001); Stanley (2001); Vinson & Ross (2001), and Shively (2014) stressed the role of educators to be focused on improving pedagogical practices which leads to the essence of the key area of the desired outcomes as students are considered active participants in democratic process.

Rose and Gallop (2000) reported a conclusion of their report of a survey on K-12 educators and parents about how they wanted to see their children in a democratic society. The survey result presented the majority of parents and educators interest wanted their children to be responsible citizens through democratic participation. Similarly, Cohen (2006) described Adams and Jefferson, the founding fathers of the United States, who stressed the roles of public education to prepare capable citizens to partake in and strengthen democracy (p. 43).

Diamond (as cited in White, 2000) stated the children deserved clear moral values to provide a framework for the learning and judging what they would subsequently do (p. 12). Hence, the necessity of democratic citizenship education becomes a focus to learning about human dignity and beyond. Parker (2001) described, "education for democracy as a type of education that fosters democratic ideals in the classroom characterized by discussion, deliberation, debate and decision-making" (p. 5). In

preparing democratic citizens, instructional practice becomes the key to constructing knowledge. The phenomenon of meaning of democratic citizenship leads to the understanding of how teachers develop ideas and practice their ideas and experiences into their classroom. Lee (n.d.) described citizenship education in the U.S. as being recognized as a central goal of schooling and integral part of social studies education where Parker (2008) has advocated the preparation of citizens as democracy is essential for knowing democratic values.

Kahne and Westheimer (2006) defined the term ‘democratic citizenship’ as someone who has knowledge of democratic processes, possesses skills for civic engagement and democratic values of respect for individual and group identities, and concern for the greater good (p. 260). The essence of democratic values, knowledge, and skills are dependent on citizens. These democratic citizenship leads to the ideology of preparing citizens to promote democratic values and respect. In addition, democracy is a way of life and focused area to make even better while equipping teachers and student future citizens.

**Citizenship Education and Democratic Education.** Levinson, Schugurensky and Gonzalez (n.d.) explained:

During the last decade, countries across the Americas have been active in revising programs for civic education in order to create a broader and deeper democratic political culture, particularly civic education has been reconceived as a space for fostering democratic citizenship education. In discourse across the Americas, civic education is giving away to “citizenship” education, and the broader term, “citizenship formation,” is often preferred and “democratic citizenship education”

includes state-sponsored initiatives in schools and in non-formal education program, as well as informal socialization processes. (p. 2)

The importance of citizen education was realized in schools with to develop citizens of understanding democratic political values and schools were emphasized to promote democratic citizenship education.

The great American philosopher Dewey explored the deeper meaning of the connection between citizenship education and democracy in a majority of his work, most notably *Democracy and Education* (1916). Dewey stressed the experience is the “key to communication and the formation of experiences requires seeing how another would see it and can appreciate its meaning” (p. 10). Sharing experience and growth of an individual and society’s progress contributes to social fulfillment and a good life. Educators are charged with the responsibility of preparing citizens for democratic life as social studies teachers serve a fundamental role in sustaining the democratic character of society. Cuenca (2011) highlighted democracy in peoples’ lives emphasizing democracy as a way of life:

Democracy is a way of living together and a social contract that supports an appreciation of diversity. It demands of its people the social, emotional, civic skills, and ethnical dispositions as well as cognitive capacities to participate constructively in a democratic society. (p. 43)

In democracy, individuals learn democratic habits, associate, and participate in political activities, which are not solely confined to political institutions. Because democracy is viewed as a way of life, the social studies curriculum is vital in teaching democratic citizenship and democratic core values in students that are essential for producing good

citizens. The social studies curriculum is significant for the overall development of a society and its future. A democratic society is a society in which each individual has an equal opportunity to reach their potential. Adding to the assertion that democracy is a way of life, Snauweart (2003) quoted Ronald Glass (year needed) who defined democracy as inherently pluralistic, deliberative, and felt in the context of a rising tide of moral dualism and intolerance:

Moral pluralism in democracy is described as inherent in democracy and with it moral disagreement and conflict. The existence of moral pluralism in turn necessitates democratic deliberation. It is deliberation between citizens that is the defining moral feature of democracy. Not only is deliberation necessary politically, it constitutes the process through which morality is structured. If democracy is so constituted, then, Glass argues, a democratic education must be devoted to the cultivation of deliberative capacities. (p. 167)

According to Snauweart, the apparent downplaying of the importance in democracy exists as a system of rights as well as being deliberative. In this sense, “democracy requires a heightened idealism and a dedicated acceptance of democratic values among its citizens” (Ochoa-Becker, 2007, p. 4). Democracy has core values that become part fundamental beliefs and are expressed as characteristics of democracy and citizens have the rights to make decisions. This links a relationship between citizenship education to democratic education. Citizens develop democratic values from diversity in society as a pluralistic society (Ochoa-Becker, 2007).

Furthermore, Ochoa-Becker (2007) stated the goal of social studies education is incontrovertibly linked to the democratic ideal. She described:

Social studies, at its best, is that part of general education that specializes in the preparation of effective democratic citizens, citizens that are deeply dedicated to democracy and are seriously concerned with the improvement of their pluralistic society and its role in the global community. They must be informed, thoughtful and constructive critics of public policies and practices committed to improving the quality of human lives. (p. 4)

Individuals in society use one another to get desired results and work together to improve shared democratic values as well. Schools play roles for “cultivating the civic values, knowledge, and virtues of citizens” (Gutmann & Ben-Porath, 2015, p. 1). Schooling becomes part of developing citizenship and democratic values.

Goodlad (2004) argued about our system of public schooling, which has increasingly given up its commitment to democratic public purposes over the past several decades. This lack of commitment needs to be considered by educators to build a better democratic society and produce effective democratic citizens. The authors argued that historical, philosophical, and sociological foundations of education, which were once regarded as the intellectual core factors for teachers’ education, are quickly disappearing from the curriculum.

Citizenship and democratic education are integral part of promoting civic lives. The civic and democratic values are also interdependent, shared, and co-existed for developing a better democratic society. There is emphasis on deliberative concepts of democracy and the educational institutions and the ground work of democratic

citizenship education rely on citizens' responsibilities where teachers become instrumental for foundational knowledge. The major ideologies of citizenship education and democratic education, both informed a combination of functional of knowledge and acceptability of pluralistic social values.

In the following paragraphs, a brief description provides related to teaching social studies as an institutional practice for democracy.

### **Teaching Democracy: An Institutional Practice of Social Studies Teaching**

Warring and Thomas (2006) illustrated a popular phrase “teaching for democracy” that appeared in literature about American education, and often accepted as a given in a nation founded on democratic ideals (p. 38). The argument extolled a deeper consideration of the meaning of democracy to educators who are committed to exploring and implementing ideas about teaching democracy. Teaching for democracy involves deeper understanding of democratic values where experiences become instrumental in understanding a democracy.

Considering teaching for democracy, Little, Wilson, and Wilson (1993) stressed social studies educators concentrated more on developing human values and life experiences where “the values learned from experiences would be viewed by many not as something to be handed down or reasoned out, but rather as something to be hammered out on the anvil of the total experiences of humankind” (p. 3). Values learned from experience were the matured and counted experiences as total experiences. In other words, social studies as a subject has focused on creating the opportunities for gaining values of desirable results of citizenship society.

A study of a number of 135 students from 8<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> grade social studies in Chicago showed that students of high schools had a lower-level thinking and engagement compared to students in lower grade levels and the result revealed that a lack of understating of high school students was due to an inadequate democratic learning in the classroom (Kahne, 2000). This issue of having lack of understanding leads to inquire of how teachers actually teach and understand the phenomena of teaching democracy and how ideas of democracy are transmitted to students as well. Challenges in teaching has realized and the processes for improving teaching needed to be explored.

To understand the nature of knowledge of social studies, Barr et al. (1977) classified the traditions of teaching social studies into three approaches: Citizenship Transmission (CT) Social Science (SS), and Reflective Inquiry (RI). Among these approaches, the Citizenship Transmission has been dominant in the field even today. In addition, Barr et al. (1977) discussed the approach to Citizenship Transmission as an early emergence from the traditional history curriculum for promoting citizenship education. The CT is also perceived as the “oldest legacy of social studies towards developing knowledge, skills, and values for the survival of the culture and democratic society” (p.19). Teaching social studies does not only refer to the conceptions and expectations of other people, Tickle (2000) explained social studies teaching as broadly accepted images in society regarding how what teachers should know and do. It also refers to what teachers themselves find important in their professional work and individual lives based on their experiences (p. 108).

Similarly, in promoting democratic citizenship education, National Councils for Social Studies Education (NCSS, 2001) identified the key features of ideal social studies



teaching and learning. These characteristics involve “integrative, value-based, and active teaching and learning practices to enhance citizenship in democracy” (p.4). Therefore, one of the significant goals of social studies is the task of developing effective citizens where roles of teachers are the key to preparing future citizens.

Furthermore, Parker (2003) also added to prepare type of citizens we want schools to develop. He further insisted that “those who are democratically engaged citizens with civic consciousness are what a democratic society needs” (p. 76). This endeavor of connecting ideas of teaching and schools as institutions represent a balance of understanding the inner play of processes of how teachers develop ideas and implement them into teaching. Moreover, Ochoa-Becker (2007) claimed that the roles of social studies educators are to prepare student-citizens for the future and expound the ability of social studies educators to face challenges in teaching as well.

Zarrillo (2011) stressed the roles of teachers in shaping democratic ideas and attitudes of students to become active citizens in democratic society. He explained, “The knowledge children acquire as a part of social studies tends to be the highest priority for teachers, parents and the children since social studies must be a vehicle for children to become active citizens in our society” (p. 319). Scholars (Goodlad, 2000; Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Parker, 2003) advocated the responsibility of social studies teachers to prepare students for a democratic society. Rauh (as cited in Torney et al., 2011) highlighted the result of a study regarding educators’ perceptions. The result showed that the participants the formation of ideas were lacking. This study informed us that how participants conceptualized the phenomenon of democracy teachers conceptualize democracy,

develop ideas about democratic citizenship, and implement their perceptions and experiences into their teaching.

More importantly, understanding how social studies educators develop ideas about democracy and implement their ideas and experiences into teaching can help shape a teaching landscape of social studies. The teaching practices of individual teachers and institutional practices are equally important to foster social studies teaching. Next, I present the research questions for this study.

### **Research Questions**

The literature reviewed leads me to ask three questions which cover three major areas of the study as teachers' conception of democracy, ideas about developing democratic citizenship, and the implementation of their ideas/perspectives and experiences into their teaching.

1. How do teachers, who teach 7-12 grade social studies, conceptualize the meaning of democracy?
2. How do they develop ideas about democratic citizenship education?
3. In what ways do they implement their perspectives and experiences into teaching?

### **Chapter Summary**

The reviewed literature highlighted the field of social studies being used to culture the growth of individuals into becoming democratic citizens. Since the inception of social studies as a field, the focus has been promoting individuals in a political system and protecting them from various forms of exploitations, such urban workers. The primary goal of social studies education has been centralized in democracy and democratic citizenship where citizens are privileged to exercise their rights to make own

decisions and be informed citizens. The traditional history curriculum was recognized as a source of citizenship education while the integration of contents from social sciences was considered the field to be more helpful in identifying and developing abler democratic citizens as well.

In addition, the goal of social studies broadened from local to global perspective while Brunner's (1965) attempts to revamp social studies curriculum providing students intellectual tools for investigating human behavior (p. 43) underlined the significance of democratic citizenship in the field. Dewey's (1996) stance for building a new knowledge relating with the existing knowledge links to the constructivism approach to democratic citizenship education.

The social reconstruction gained its momentum after Civil War and the flow of immigrants into the United States led the U.S. schools to emphasize democratic citizenship education. In teaching, the integration of democratic knowledge and skills has shown a continuous process over the years. Even in a broader term, educating immigrants about democratic citizenship was considered instrumental in creating a future democratic society. As Saxe (1991) highlighted the 1916 Report on Social Studies that encouraged the development of ideas of social efficacy through developing instructional practices. The instructional practice was another area a need for acquiring knowledge on democracy and democratic citizenship

The literature also focused on educators' construction of the meaning of democracy and instructional practices. The reforms made in the past by various committees such as the Committee of Ten (1892) under the National Education Association, and National Council for the Social Studies (1921) explicitly stressed the

consistent goal of social studies education: developing democratic citizens. Educators are significant in nurturing students' understanding of the democratic process and encouraging participation in community activities by "possessing skills for civic engagement and democratic values" (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006, p. 2).

Goodlad, Soder and McDaniel (2008) presented that public schooling have been giving up on commitments to democratic public purpose whereas schools are considered as platforms for developing democratic citizens. In order to improve social studies curriculum, the social studies curriculum has been quite often reviewed and improved to incorporate pedagogy and inquire methods in teaching as well. Furthermore, the review of literature informed that democratic citizenship education serves as a foundation for developing a better democracy society, cultivating human values, virtues, and attitudes (Ajiboye, 2009). Furthermore, modeling the democratic process within the class involves enabling students to be political, moral, and aesthetic agents. Furthermore, the preparation of democratic citizenship is viewed as an ongoing process (NEA, 1916 & NCSS, 1994) where challenges exist in the classroom for educators.

The review of literature stated a relationship between democratic citizenship and schooling as a continued educational goal in social studies. Scholars such as Carpenter (2013) claimed the roles of teachers in preparing students to better understand and engage in democratic processes. He continued that "Democratic citizenship is not our DNA; teachers need to develop understanding the values of it" (p. 21). Similarly, (Goodlad, 2000; Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Parker, 2003) advocated responsibilities of social studies teachers for preparing students for a democratic society and Torney Purta et al. (2011) highlighted that study regarding educators' perceptions and how they are formed,

is lacking.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

I used the phenomenological approach of qualitative research methodology to explore the lived experiences of social studies teachers in Northwest of Ohio from grades 7-12. I selected this methodology because I was interested in capturing the lived experiences of an individual or a group of individuals regarding how people interpret the phenomenon they experience. The following sections provide descriptions of the methodological procedures to be used in this study.

In the first section of this chapter, I provide a rationale to qualitative research inquiry in general. The section two highlights phenomenological approach to be used in the study. The third section explains the recruitment procedures; participants' selection criteria, sample size, gaining access to the participants. The fourth section gives a brief description of data collection. The fifth section presents procedures of data analysis. The section six describes the researcher's lens and the final section summarizes the chapter.

#### **Rationale to the Qualitative Research Inquiry**

Qualitative inquiry is best suited for studying phenomena that has not been previously described. The literature related to how teachers conceptualize democracy, develop ideas about democratic citizenship and integrate their ideas and experiences into teaching remains limited. Ignoring teachers' understanding of the concept of democracy and development of ideas about democratic citizenship calls for research about how social studies teachers of grades 7-12 experience the phenomenon about democracy and democratic citizenship. Furthermore, understanding the phenomenon of construction of ideas will provide an opportunity to reflect on teaching to maximize civic knowledge of

educators and students. Understanding the phenomena requires data collection and analysis. Therefore, this study used qualitative research method in exploring a phenomenon of teachers' lived experiences. Various scholars have provided their rationale for the use of qualitative process as a suitable research method to interpret experiences of an individual or a group of people.

Weinberg (2002) described that the qualitative research method is used for interpreting facts from data, where the facts depend on the qualities that people actively use in gaining experiences of the phenomena. In this sense, qualitative research is an activity that is interpretive of the phenomena of the voices and experiences of the participants. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stated:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self...qualitative study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

Qualitative research methods, as Glesne (2006) delineated, are used to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural-political setting, and sometimes to transform or change social condition. Qualitative inquiry involves an interpretive, inductive, and naturalistic approach of the world. Glesne stated:

Qualitative research has broadly expounded on the essence of the use of

qualitative research method as being a best instrument for understanding social phenomena from multiple perspectives of those involved in various forms of socio-cultural, political milieu to transform social conditions. (p.4)

Various perspectives of the participants provided a profound opportunity for exploring the phenomena in-depth. Creswell (2007) described the researcher's strength lies in the interpretation of the phenomena to have a significant effect on the nature and quality of the data collected in organization and the trustworthiness of the findings (p.223).

Conducting qualitative research empowers individuals and shares their in-depth experiences, enabling their voices to be heard.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) argued:

In short, the strengths of qualitative studies should demonstrate for research that is exploratory or descriptive and that stresses the importance of context, setting, and participants' frames of reference. A well-reasoned and convincing explanation for qualitative methods should include a concise but strong rationale that is firmly grounded in the conceptual framework and that justifies the specific data collection method. (p. 92)

In explaining a phenomenon of the problem, this study used the qualitative approach, which was relevant to address the research questions in an exploratory level of understanding the phenomena of how teachers engage in understanding the ideas of democracy and putting them into teaching for democratic citizenship.

### **Phenomenological Research Approach**

The research studied a common phenomenon of the participants related to their concept about democracy and development of ideas about democratic citizenship. Van



Manen (1990) defined phenomenology as a depiction of the lived-through quality of lived experiences. The term “Phenomenology”. On one hand is the “immediate description of life, whereas on the other hand, it is the mediated description of the life-world as expressed in a symbolic form” (p.25). Patton (2002) and Descombe (2003) described a common meaning of phenomenology for describing and analyzing the meaning of the lived experiences of individuals. Furthermore, Patton (2002) stated that phenomenology is about interpreting “how participants perceive a phenomenon, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others” (p. 104). Todres and Holloway (2004) explained similar goal of phenomenology where “people who have experienced a phenomenon can communicate their perceptions to the outside world and therefore answer questions of meaning in understanding an experience from those who have experienced it” (p. 215).

Rossmann (2006) and Creswell (2007) explained phenomenology approach as one of the most effective ways of interpreting the lived experiences of a person or a group of people for in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and express participants' individual accounts. In addition, Patton (2000) explained the phenomenology that “It is essentially interpretative, but also draws on descriptive phenomenology in allowing the participants to give a credible account of a phenomenon from their perspectives. By following this approach, an explanation as well as a description of an experience can be achieved” (p. 216). Different scholars have provided the purpose of phenomenological approach in research a new experience and knowledge is built upon experiences. Zeek cited Giorgi (1997) that “Synthesizing of meaning in phenomenological is a process to bring all fundamental structural and textural descriptions into a combined statement of the

essences derived from the experiences of the entire phenomenon” (p. 36). The experiences of participants are interpreted based on the meaning found among the participants. The research was framed in a constructivist theoretical framework to understand how social studies teachers conceptualize democracy and develop ideas about democratic citizenship from their lived experiences. Therefore, the goal of the research was to understand and interpret how the participants conceptualized the meaning of democracy and developed ideas about democratic citizenship. As the phenomenological approach is constructivist: the goal was to explain the essence of the lived experiences of a phenomenon or concept, under a study of individual or groups.

In conclusion, the phenomenological approach is used to describe experiences of an individual or a group of people. The phenomenological approach was considered suitable for this study.

### **Recruitment Procedures, Participants’ Selection Criteria, Gaining Access, and Ethics**

**Recruitment procedures.** After obtaining the approval from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Toledo, I began recruiting the participants. First, a request notice was published in the Ohio Council of Social Studies (OCSS) newsletter stating the purpose of the study and listing the contact persons if any participant would have an interest in taking part in the study. The research invitation briefly describes the research topic, the selection criteria for participation, meeting requirements for the participation, tentative interview time commitment, and contact information of the principle research investigators and the researcher. As a medium of contact, I had provided a phone number and email address. The potential participants were encouraged

to share information with other interested participants with whom they might have known or they would show interests in the study. The second method I utilized in conducting the recruitment process contacting the potential participants via a recommendation of few dissertation committee members they knew each other. Once participants were identified, they were sent an email to fill in the teachers' demographic information sheet (see Appendix A). The selected participants received a recruitment cover letter from me (see Appendix B). The cover letter stated information such as: purpose of the study, criteria for the participant selection, and contact information of the principle research investigators. The Adult Informed Consent Form (see Appendix C) describes parameters of the inquiry that entailed the purpose of the study, selection criteria, potential risks and benefits, methods to maintain confidentiality.

**Participants' selection criteria.** The goal of qualitative research is to interpret the common lived experiences of the individuals. In order to understand the central phenomenon of the research, I utilized a purposeful sampling for finding participants through snowball technique. The rationale for using the purposeful sampling was to identify the participants having similar scholarly interest in democracy and democratic citizenship. Polkinghorne (2005) stated:

The qualitative research employs a purposeful sampling in which the researcher intentionally selects participants who could serve as providers of significant accounts of the phenomenon of collective experiences. This nature of selection of the participants will deepen the understanding of the central phenomenon in the study and provide information-rich cases for study. Those cases can provide

substantial contributions to filling out the structure and character of the experience under investigation. (p.140)

A purposeful sampling is primarily a conscious selection of methodology in which rich data from the participants with the similar experiences will be chosen.

In selecting the participants, a sample size of participants needs to be considered. Patton (1990) informed that there are no rules of sample size in qualitative research (p. 155). However, Leedy and Ormrod (2010) suggested:

The number of sample size in phenomenological research should range from five to 25. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling. (p. 169)

In this study, there were six participants selected through a purposeful sampling following a snowball technique. At the initial level, some of the dissertation committee members recommended me to contact some of the potential participants' and inquiry them about their interest in the study. Following were the criteria for the candidates to be eligible in the study.

1. A participant who had been teaching social studies, at least three years
2. A participant who had been holding a state teaching license from Ohio
3. A participant who had expressed scholarly interests in democratic citizenship

**Gaining access.** Study on human-subject requires an approval from Institutional Review Board (IRB). I was required to complete the IRB online training to conduct the study. After the completion IRB online on human subject, I followed procedures to gain access to the research sites and the participants as well. I emailed the participants with a

request of exchange of the contact information and follow-up activity. In understanding the phenomena of problem, the role of the researcher is to “gain entry to the research site and consider the ethical issues” (Creswell, 1994, p. 147). The respective school authorities were contacted and the permission was obtained from respected authority for the entry to schools. I explained all ethical issues to the participants related to conducting research and followed the entire procedures until the completion of recording interviews. Merriam (1988) listed some of the ethical issues to follow during the gaining access. Those were the “researcher required to maintain confidentiality of data, preserve the anonymity of informants, and use research for the intended purposes” (Merriam, 1988). I followed all those ethical features and finally, the interview were recorded followed by debriefing the participants.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected using the purposeful sampling method. Patton (2002) explained purposeful sampling as a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information - rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (p. 2). Painkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, and Hoagwood (as cited in Creswell & Clark, 2011) described a purposeful sampling to be helpful in selecting individuals or a group of participants that are especially knowledgeable about and experienced with a phenomenon of interests (p.32). Therefore, I used the purposeful sampling to collect data in this study. Creswell (2007) suggested that placing sufficient space between the questions in the protocol form allows the researcher to take notes during an interview and go over responses (See the interview protocol (Appendix D).

In data collection process, building trust is vital. Glesne (2006) stated, “Building rapport is a distance reducing anxiety-quieting, trust-building mechanism that fundamentally serves the interest of the researcher (p. 110). I maintained trust with the participants being critical about the research ethics. I remained unbiased to their opinions and responses so that they expressed their ideas confidently. McCracken (1988) stated that a long interview allows the researcher to understand how the individuals see and experience the phenomena. In order to collect rich information, I listened to the participants attentively and witnessed the participants’ interests in sharing their experiences. Throughout data collection, I maintained courtesy manner to make the participants feel comfortable and help them share their experiences in a more comfortable way. After the interviews were audio-recorded, they were transcribed and all the interview transcriptions and data were stored in multiple device safely. Finally, when the procedure of data analysis was completed, all data were deleted.

### **Data Analysis**

Once the data were collected, they were analyzed using Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological model. This included phenomenological reduction, and synthesis of textual description and analysis (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; & Royce-Davis, 2001). I applied the phenomenological reduction method to manage large chunk of raw data. I used the phenomenological data reduction process developed by Moustakas. Creswell (1994) elaborated that the data generated in qualitative methods are voluminous, such as collecting information from the field, sorting it into a story or into themes and then the data reducing into patterns, categories or themes, and then interpreting information to some schema. Miles and Huberman (1994) explained a method of how a large chunk of

data is sorted into a manageable data and themes are identified. In addition, identifying the key words and themes from a large chunk of data is a difficult process. Coffey and Atkinson (2013) affirmed that a large chunks of data can be managed for analysis. I reduced a large chunks of data into smaller units to easily understand the phenomena of experiences of participants and identify patterns of themes. The reduction process included removal of all extraneous words which made reading and understanding responses easier. The reduction of unnecessary texts helped to recognize themes easily. Moreover, Yeh and Inman (2007) called data reduction “a circular and an ongoing process that requires examination and reexamination on a multiple level of different points in time” (p.384). The goal of using the reduction of texts was to identify textual meanings. I carefully reviewed all the transcriptions for accurateness. According to Moustakas (1994) the phenomenological reduction leads to see experiences of the phenomenon at the conceptual understanding. In the reduction process, the first step I used was bracketing, which involved recognizing the key words or phrases of how the participants had experienced the phenomenon on democracy and democratic citizenship.

In the first cycle of coding, I maintained accuracy of the transcriptions by revising all transcriptions and making necessary corrections wherever it needed. This step focused on organizing data. I organized data reviewing the interview guide to identify and differentiate between the questions/topics I was trying to answer them. Coffey and Atkinson (2013) and Saldana (2013) called the first cycle method as provisional coding which will enable the researcher to identify meaningful data and set the stage for interpreting and drawing a conclusion. The initial coding of the raw data was used as “the mechanics of subtle process of having ideas and concepts of data” (Coffey & Atkinson

2013, p. 27). This progression of identifying a phenomenon of experiences helped me to construct recurring themes into respective categories of the research questions. Any overlapping meanings were disregarded while maintaining the central meaning. The coding process became fluid as I continually reviewed data making sure a higher level of analysis and interpretation. The emerging themes were labelled under each section of the four main categories of research questions.

The second step was finding, organizing of ideas, and concepts of the participants related to the research questions. I created four categories based on the questions with the main leading questions minimizing the potential bias, and prepared common themes. For further accuracy of transcriptions, I listened to each individual response, compared the transcription with the audio records of responses of the participants.

In the third step, I used the "horizontalization" process (Moustakas, 1994). I looked for every significant statement made in relation to the experiences of democracy and democratic citizenship was considered. Any irrelevant responses were sorted out into a separate sheet to determine later for use in the analysis process to discard them. I observed over-arching themes in the data.

The fourth step involved creating clusters of meanings out of the themes. For this process, Moustakas (1994) and Van Manen (1990) affirmed the removal of any unsupported statements from the main responses. I created textual descriptions which were developed from cluster of themes for each of the four sections of the research questions. I also revised all themes and the questions to ensure validity of data and interpretation the results.



Finally, I identified the entire big picture of how participants conceptualized democracy, developed ideas about democratic citizenship and integrated their ideas and experiences into their teaching.

### **Researcher's Lens**

Creswell (2007) has explained the significance of researcher to discuss own personal experiences, prior knowledge, and the views on the research topic on to be studied. He has suggested clarifying any personal and professional information that may affect the research process, including data collection and analysis (p. 32). Conveying experiences and interpretations of the researcher on the phenomena to be studied helped the researcher to stay unbiased during data collection and analysis stages. Hays & Singh (2011) highlighted the role of researcher for understanding of personal concepts. In the following paragraphs, I have provided my preconceptions and understanding about democracy and democratic citizenship during school and college levels.

I was born, raised, and educated in Nepal, a small landlocked country sharing borders with India on three sides (East, West and South), and China to the North. The country itself trails behind in almost all sectors of infrastructures and developmental activities. Furthermore, in the past, the country has undergone many political changes. The major revolution of November 1950 ended a 104 yearlong autocratic regime in the country. The Rana regime had seized power from the then king by reverting the existence of the king in Nepal. After the fall of Rana in February 1951, Nepal saw a dawn of democracy first (General Historical Information on Nepal, n.d.). Even after that, people were not fully satisfied with the change that had occurred in the country. As a result,

Nepal experienced a struggle for democracy in the 20th century, undergoing multiple agitations, and rallies have taken place against the existing government or systems.

I saw a public referendum held in 1979 for and against a singular party system in the country. In the referendum, the singular party system was defeated. The victory was considered as one of the biggest outcomes for the restoration of a democracy in the country. Speaking to my understanding of the referendum's purpose, I had a very limited knowledge of democracy and its benefits to the lives of people. For me, it was simply meant as a way of ensuring freedom of speech and gathering, which I used to hear as people chanted and displayed their slogans. I believed that the majority of the people might have a similar level of comprehension. Even today, I cannot judge whether the majority of people who were participating and living below the poverty line understood the meaning of democracy and the benefits of social welfare in a democratic system.

While remembering the upperclassmen at school, freedom of speech and peaceful gathering were the two principles of democracy guaranteed in the constitution. From the 1990s to 2008, the country was in civil strife. People fought against disparity and for human rights. As a result, a peace treaty was signed between the government for the election of the Constituent Assembly. Nepalese parliament voted to oust the monarchy in June 2008 declaring the country the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal (History of Nepal, n.d.).

As I started understanding the values of democracy, I felt that people's determination to fight for democracy was just a righteous act. Perhaps, my perception of democracy was influenced by my limited knowledge of democracy. In other words, I had

the influence of the news and media channels that were open to public during popular movements.

Elder people used to give us examples of developed and democratic countries like U.S.A. or Canada. The elders, as seniors and political leaders, if not all but few used to present examples of the government in those countries and the freedom to people. I sensed those examples and scenarios as the best people who could ever enjoy civil rights in their countries. My beliefs developed day by day and I started to think about democracy as the essence of people's freedom although it would not feed the hungry people. I started internalizing the concept of democracy as something that a citizen desires and the prosperity of a country depends on its citizens. Therefore, educating young citizens is key to preparing democratic citizenship. I reflected upon what my peers, elders, and teachers narrated about a fantasy of democracy.

As I remember, people consistently struggled to end the so-called supreme rule of the monarch, who could use the excessive power and was often considered above the constitution in terms of his constitutional power. However, people raised voices that no one could be above the constitution of the country and not to use excessive power to fulfill personal political will over the people. The people's movement in 1990 still reminds me of the collective effort of the people fighting against the autocratic rule of the king, Birendra. Finally, the movement was able to abolish the system of absolute monarchy in the country. It forced King Birendra to reinstate the constitutional monarchy ensuring democracy. The greatest impact, as I remember, was in the educational sector. It liberated educators from the customary education system of teaching for the head of the state as included in the school curriculum.

Democracy is the most popular form of representative government in the modern world and is usually characterized by a multi-party system. In Nepal, multi-party democracy was banned several times which caused revolts to ensure democracy. My understanding at time was that democracy represents the hopes and aspirations of the people, and ultimately, it was the desire of people to exercise democratic rights. Having a limited knowledge was certainly a matter of age, education, and social structure of the country, but my passion increased after I arrived in the United States.

My teaching and personal experiences helped me to engage more in the deliberate democratic process. I had started presenting rational argument in favor of the common interest of people and being able to link my personal opinions with others usually those who intended to diminish the democratic power of an individual. I was further inspired to learn more democracy in the United States (U.S.). Since high school, I pursued my interest in learning about democracy and I continued my interest in learning during college and university years. The process of seeking more answers to the social issues and practice of democratic values based on my limited understanding continued. I focused on how my perceived ideas related to democracy and the level of cognition it would reflect in society, and how democratic principles have been practiced during the popular movements of that time. People were deprived of freedom of speech and basic civil rights.

The political crisis in Nepal was not something new to the country. The movement appeared to be more parochial and lacking in creating mass awareness that was still needed to install a democratic culture I perceived. In general, I had a conception of democracy as freedom of opinion, mass gathering, protesting against the government

to rectify any unsatisfactory and unfavorable political actives in the country and for the country people.

After all, I happened to realize that educators could help prepare good citizens in the county, well-informed citizens. If people were well educated, they must not have waited many years to realize the deprivation of democratic rights and involved generations to fight for the restoration of democracy in the county. If schools are to educate for democracy, the manner in which teachers understand democracy, and what it might mean for their developing practice is a concern for educators. As a result, it was my conscience of deep interests in studying how teachers' conceptualize the meaning of a democracy, development ideas about democratic citizenship, and practice into teaching. For the people, the supremacy of the head of state forced to be a constitutional and declare a multi-party democracy system of government. The downfall of monarchy in 2005 was another historical victory for the people. The outcome of this disastrous reign was the downfall of a two hundred and forty-year-old monarchy.

To sum up, the single most reason for all those big changes, such as the public referendum, popular movement, and the constitutional monarchy were driven by a goal of the restoration of democracy and civil rights. The peoples and the supporters of educators around the country from 1979 to 2005 reminded me of the influence of the adults to encourage students to participate in democratic process.

The following sections, explain my substantial interest and the concept of my experience in democratic learning during high school and college years.

**High school level experience.** At around 15 years of age, I started participating in the political demonstration and paying attention to the voices of adults around me. The adults

were mainly fascinated by the political discourse such as the reasons for the popular movement. My interest in the popular movement increased decision making capacity, particularly sharing personal ideas with older and younger ones. I evaluate my senior years of high school were critical because high school students were given more responsibilities of leadership roles and I had started thinking of mentoring younger ones. Hence, I began understanding more about democracy and the possibilities of teachers in shaping thoughts processes improved. I increased my participation in the classroom questioning teachers to understand their voices about the ongoing movement. I still remember one of the teachers who described democracy that “change depends on you; how you respond to injustice, discriminations, and teach people about democratic rights”. I had a notion that teacher can be most influential to individuals and students to transform ideas about civic rights, develop democratic ideas to be well-informed.

I remembered a definition of democracy as “the government of the people for the people and by the people.” Although I had the basic understanding of democracy as a political system, I did not know how the government and people function and how that really meant for people. I was able to cite the definition of democracy, however, I did not fully understand the concept behind it, such as, democracy is the government of people, for the people and by the people. My understanding of democracy was: freedom to speech, right to peaceful gathering and right to justice. My level of understanding democracy did not reflect the book definition that I had internalized. The third-factor- “right to justice” was the most intriguing aspect to me because it was the main concern of the people they had experiences in all sectors of education, economics, social and politics.

**College level experience.** As a 19-year old college student, I quickly jumped into politics without the knowledge of why I was involved. I still recall those days of the movement and realize that the freedom that people have today is a result of the decision that people made that time. One of the very first things that comes to my mind about democracy during my college years' involvement in democratic protests was the power of decision-making. For me, democracy was just like the key of the main door of a house that could open the main door to enter the house. However, that was not the case for the moment since a handful people had grabbed power and used for their own interests by neglecting similar rights of benefits and democratic rights of the people. I questioned to myself and others that how can a person be so cruel by not thinking of the freedom and prosperity of others? If education is must, then citizens must have the rights to experience and exercise democratic rights in the country. In general, the value of education in the country was high and the roles of teachers were expected to develop moral values and focus on democratic citizens. Some questions that I had in mind were: How can we as teachers play roles to teach our children to protect their rights and why generations of the people in the country have been fighting for ages to experience the fundamental democratic rights? I used to ask to myself the questions like: Is there anything that teachers could change the future citizens in the country? Those were some of the questions going in my mind.

Most importantly, I perceived teachers as a medium of changes and prepare critical thinking democratic citizens and decided to be a teacher in the immediate future. After I appeared in the final year examination for an associate degree (Intermediate of Arts) in 1991, I joined a secondary level school as a social studies teacher. The popular

movement in the country was still going on for the restoration of democracy. The roles of teachers in the school, as we had the adverse condition and the educators were not supposed to do any political talks in school or the classroom, teachers waited for opportunities of educating students as well as other people around the environment. The motive of conversation was to invite them for further discourse and prepare for active participation in the movement. As a teacher, I shifted my interest in educating the young minds in school rather than participating in the protests and changing slogans. The internalization of information was a powerful key to my understanding.

Hence, I encouraged my students to participate in civic projects and share their experiences and their values about a democratic political process to identify social issues. At the time of such political turbulence in the country, I used to hear about other countries like Britain, Canada, and The United States of American as democratic nations in the world. It was quite interesting to me that Britain having a monarchy was also considered a democracy. On the other hand, Nepal being ruled by a similar type of system of monarchy was struggling to restore a democracy. Of course, I questioned to myself and other people around me for reasons that a handful of people seize the power of thousands of people in the country and how schools could be helpful in teaching students for such disparity in the country.

To my knowledge, people had to suppress their feelings and be careful to speak due to the system of the government and limited freedom to speech. As a result, my interest in exploring more about democracy increased ever before. I still recall people citing the quotes from a famous political leader, BP Koirala, who said, “People should adopt a democracy that will be suitable in the country based on climate and soil of the



country and the second he said, “man cannot live by bread alone.” The statement was quite a difficult concept to derive the meaning as the attributions of democracy were stated as suitable, climate, soil, adoption and so forth. I have never found a satisfactory answer to the statement above even today, which has still been a matter of reflection. For me, democracy was more than a power of a rich person. It was a fair deal to live, lead a life, and contribute to the welfare of the society. Rich and poor people are equal irrespective of different lifestyles and education. Those were some of the understanding of democracy during my schooling years. Largely, my college experience taught me to be more courageous, more engaging in the rallies and stay connected with democratically active people around me.

Understanding the goals of campaigns helped to be an informed citizen and engaged me to participate in similar locally organized activities for the restoration of democracy in the country. For me, participating in all these types of activities were enjoyable on one hand and the other hand I was gradually identifying reasons for waiting so many years to realize the necessity of revolution in fundamental democratic rights. Those experiences made me think about democracy and roles of teachers. A simple reason was that those who were in absolute power could easily hire teachers to educate their children and develop greater ideas about ruling the people. With the interested in knowing about democracy, my level of interest developed more in knowing the importance of teachers and democracy.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided the framework for research methodology. The rationale to the qualitative in an inquiry. The use of phenomenological research approach,

recruitment procedure, participants' selection, criteria, gaining access and ethics, data collection and data analysis, researcher's lens. The rationale to qualitative research inquiry. Qualitative inquiry is used to study the phenomena of experiences of people. Phenomenology was used to understand the experience of a group of individuals in the study. Scholars (Creswell, 2007; Denzin, 2005; Glesne, 2006; Marshall and Rossman, 2011; Weinberg, 2002) expounded on the essence of the use of qualitative research method to be an instrumental in exploring a phenomenon in depth. As the purpose of this study was to understand participants' conception of democracy and development of ideas about democratic citizenship, Patton, 2002; Descombe, 2003; Holloway, 2004 explained the use of phenomenological approach as a suitable choice of method.

In this study, participants were selected through the purposeful sampling. The snowball technique was applied to identify the potential participants who met the selection criteria. Data were collected using open-ended questionnaire interviews. McCracken (1988) and Glesne (2006) recommended building trust with the participants for the possibility of collecting rich data. According to the research ethics, I maintained a mutual trust with the participants by listening to them attentively, being non-judgmental to their expressions, and maintaining courtesy.

Raw data were sorted into manageable units utilizing the phenomenological reduction of data method by Moustakas, 1994. Furthermore, Atkinson (2013) and Saldana (2013) method of data coding was used to identifying phenomena of experiences and categorize themes into respective groups of the research questions. To increase the validity and remain unbiased of the data analysis, I presented my individual opinions on the conception of democracy, experiences, and understanding the phenomena of

experience. The process of expressing the personal thoughts on the issues studies on helped me to interpret data fairly.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Results**

Chapter four presents the results of the phenomenological study. The following section reviews the study, describes the composition of the study of participants, presents themes found in the research, and provides a summary of the findings of three major questions

#### **Overview of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to describe participants' conception of democracy, their development of ideas about democratic citizenship, and the ways they used their ideas and experiences to improve their teaching. The purposeful sampling to select six participants from grade 7-12 in Northwest Ohio. A general description of participants' demographic characteristics was reported in the Method chapter while a more comprehensive description of each participant is presented in this chapter for the convenience of the reader. Participants chose pseudonyms to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. This chapter provides an overview of findings and classifies them according to themes and sub-themes relative to the understanding of the research questions.

### Participants' Demographic Information

Participant	Nissan	Bob	Lori	Sam	Wood	Childers
Licensure Area/Level	Comprehensive social studies 7-12	Elementary 1-8	Integrated social studies 7-12	Integrated social studies 7-12	Elementary 1-8	Integrated social studies 7-12
Years teaching	27	21	20	7	5	5
Grade level	7-12	1-8	7-12	7-12	7-10	7-10
Area (Urban, Suburban, Rural)	Suburban	Suburban	Urban	Suburban	Suburban	Suburban
Courses taught	American history/ world history and American government	7th grade history 7th grade social studies	American/ world history/ contemp. history/ American govt./OG T prep and geography	American history, world history/ modern and sociology	American/ world history	U.S. history/ world history/ U.S. Govt. global economic and financial literacy
Highest Degree	Master's degree in education	Master's degree	Master's degree	Bachelor of science in education	Bachelor of science in education	Bachelor of science in education
Race/ Ethnicity	White American	White American	Chinese American	White American	Not provided	White American
Sex	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	Male

Table # 1: Teachers' Demographic Information

### **Textual Description of the Participants' Demography**

This section provides a brief account of the six participants regarding their teaching licensure area, politics/civics, professional development/study and travel, school location, and teaching experiences. Six participants shared their experiences regarding their conception of democracy and development of ideas about democratic citizenship. Five males and one female participated in the study. The participants identified as White Caucasians, African American, and German American in terms of race and ethnicity.

**Licensure area.** Three teachers had specialization in Integrated Social Studies grades 7-12, one was licensed in comprehensive social studies grades 7-12, and one participant had an elementary school, grades 1-8, license.

**Professional development.** Participants named a variety of professional development that engaged them and promoted their understanding of democracy and democratic citizenship. Some of the experiences that are relevant to this study included professional organizations, professional development, teaching training, and the implementation of the Ohio Department of Education New Learning Standards and assessment practice seminars.

More relevant to the current study, participants described their involvement that had a political/civic focus. For example, learning about the mock trial experience. Also, the majority of the participants were members of professional associations at state/regional, national, and international levels, ranging from supporting their local professional communities to engaging in state groups such as the Ohio Council for the Social Studies, Ohio American History group, and committees working under the department of education.

**School location.** All but one participant identified their school location as suburban. The sixth participant identified their school setting as urban. Additionally, two of the six participants stated they began their teaching careers in charter schools prior to their hire in the public school system in the region.

**Travel.** Two participants traveled internationally to regions in the Middle East, Europe, and Africa. They asserted that these experiences helped them develop knowledge about different political governments, witness cultural differences, and observe democratic practices in the country as well.

**Year of experience and course taught.** Participants' experience of teaching ranges from five to 27 years. During those years of teaching, the participants taught both traditional and non-traditional social studies courses. Required courses that have been the foundation of most US social studies education programs included American History, World History, American Government, and Modern or Contemporary History. Other courses that are electives, or not as conventional, were Sociology, Global Economics and Financial Literacy, and Ohio Graduation Test preparatory classes.

### **List of Themes**

The selected quotes were used to support themes and maintain the validity of the themes. Despite varied educational backgrounds, participants emphasized the significance of individual democratic experience. They stayed focused on providing relevant examples by including their prior or emerging experiences in developing democratic citizenship, integrating technology in teaching, using resources for enhancing teaching learning experiences, and including challenges in teaching for democratic citizenship. Section four has detailed the methods for identifying the themes.

Themes align with the following research questions:

1. How do teachers, who teach 7-12, social studies conceptualize democracy?
2. How do they develop ideas about democratic citizenship education?
3. In what ways do they implement their ideas and experiences into their teaching?

Themes were developed based on the three main research questions.

### **Research Question 1, Understanding the Conception of Democracy.**

This section presents a composite textual and structural description of the participants' conceptualization of democracy. Before analysis of themes, a brief description addresses the research question one the conceptualization democracy. The participants understood the concept of democracy from multiple perspectives. The conceptual understanding of democracy revealed democracy as a political system in which people possess power to make decisions, influence government, and the people have power to have their say. The participants often stressed the importance of democracy in the lives of citizens in making their decisions, using power as individuals or as a group for what matters most in their lives.

Considering the significance of the participation in democracy, Gutmann (1992) described, "A democratic society or a participatory democracy is one in which its members are empowered to make decisions and policies concerning themselves and their society " (p. 84). The experiences of the participants were influenced by the environment that they grew in. The development of ideas about were enriched by participation in various activities. Whitson and Stanley (1995) stated that, "ideas of the citizens are enriched through actions related to democratic citizenship." For a deeper explanation, the following paragraphs provide the underlying conceptual perception of democracy. The



participants' conception of democracy emerged from different perspectives such as involvement in community activities. Themes are described below.

**Democracy as action: Engaging in environment.** Participants shared their conception of democracy as actions of people in the engaging in environment. The environment was one of the factors to determine the type of experiences that participants expressed. Bob's conception of democracy is "fundamentally the idea that people will be in control of who governs them." Lori's illustrated similar conception of democracy as action where people and the government are part of each other and engage in activities to make changes. She stated, "People take part in the government to make a change or influence government". The individuals understanding of democracy was conceptualized as an action taken either by people or the government or vice-versa. Some of the examples that Lori presented were as citizens joining in the interest groups, voting, jury duty, writing letters to editors, and sightseeing signature from door to door with the purpose of making changes or influencing the government.

The majority of the participants underlined participatory democracy as a political system in which people are involved in various community activities. Participants expressed actions as results of ideas. Hence, the participants presented that generating concepts leads to various community or political activities. One of the major activity that the majority of the participants described was protecting oneself and protecting from government as well. Sam described that citizens' action is to "Protect one's rights from each other and from the government". Sense of protection was viewed as an important action and the main concept of democracy related to taking action for rights of citizens. The participants stated that the protection of civil rights is one of the concerns in

democracy where individuals or collective actions including government were supposed to initiate empowering mutually for common good of the people and society.

Bob conceptualized “democracy as a fundamental idea for action under which people will be in control of who governs them.” Lori, Sam, and Nissan stressed that citizens should participate in the government by voting, jury duty, and in overall participatory democracy. The majority of participants stressed citizens’ participation as one of the fundamental conceptions of understanding democracy. One aspect of citizens’ responsibility was participation in the government either to influence the government or change, decision-making and maintaining law and order in society.

Ritter (2013) noted that many scholars have expressed the values of democratic citizenship in learning. These values are perceived as important civic knowledge, skills, learned in schools (p. 4). These values of democratic citizenship will not be understood if we do not understand how teachers conceptualize democracy. As the participants have agreed about taking action in democracy is one of the main characteristics of democracy, their agreement suggest that it is through action through people learn their power and the public arena. Furthermore, the majority of participants believed and perceived action as an integrated component which plays pivotal role in fulfilling civic responsibilities in democratic society and the political system. Underlying the conception of democracy, citizens are charged with delivering democratically acceptable actions. Citizens’ participation in the decision-making processes in democracy was viewed and valued with the ability to take action that affects them. The participants mostly focused on democracy requiring action.

**Individual or group power to decide fate of the individuals or groups.** Most

of the participants also described their conception of democracy as people having power for decision-making process. Nissan stated:

Democracy is people having agency, people having, say, government, and people experiencing decision-making. Democracy is probably more easily implemented more at the local level, in today's world, city council, and mayor. To be honest, I think, people have lot more input on that and they are especially at the national level. I am somewhat sour on the conception of democracy in America now. I mean, I will think back and sometimes, I feel like a hypocrite telling kids what important they are individually in society.

The conception of democracy has some traits that does not generally dictate similar implementations at all levels. Subsequently, democracy can be practiced more at a local level, where people feel having more power than any higher level of the state.

For Sam, understanding the centrality of people's power in democracy was very similar to Nissan. Sam stated, "Democracy is people having authority over their lives, the power that people have, they can use in society to govern, create rules, and the systems of life that they would prefer best." The individual power or authority in creating rules and establishing a system in society were the key ideas for Sam. Ideas of Nissan and Sam also led to the supremacy of the individual rights of having voice as power of the people in democracy. Similarly, Wood and Childers conceptualized democracy as power in the people. According to Wood, "Democracy means the government for the people, by the people, of the people. Democracy has people who are engaged in a process." Childers stated:

Democracy is an open-ended form of government. My biggest conception of

democracy is that it's a fairly in people and people in the government in terms of right, voting, issues, public policy things such as that in. People can compare their rights; share their relationship with the government.

The participants advocated that power in a democracy lies fairly in people, as a group and decision making. The concept of democracy was interpreted as the individual right related to the government as well. The fundamental rights in democracy as understanding the concept of democracy, furthermore, rest in the individuals in making decisions. In other words, the participants viewed the conception of democracy as a powerhouse from which they can influence the government and strive forward as a group of citizens and power to decision making process in the lives of people in democracy.

**Taking part in the government and sharing ideas.** Taking part in the government and sharing ideas with each other was another specific action that participants perceived as part of democracy. The participants articulated participation in the community and government as important aspects of citizens to understand democracy and the process of democratic citizenship. Participants essentially summed up an idealistic thought of democracy that aimed at engaging citizens at local or state level of government. Bob perceived the conception of democracy as an integration of democratic ideas for good governance. He stated, "Democracy is fundamentally the idea that people will be in control of who governs them." His conception designated a practical aspect between citizens and the government who are complementary to each other in many ways in sharing the conceptions and ideas. In democracy, the concept of governing body and to be governed showed up fundamentally interactive all times. Lori also expressed that there are purposes of taking part in the government. One purpose is citizens' participation is to

influence the government to make changes for the general welfare or convey a positive meaning of creating a bond between people (citizens) and the government to occur good changes. She stated, “Participation also showed a relationship of citizens’ and government coloration”. The process of citizens making the relationship with the government, the citizens would remain engaged in an environment to influence the government to delineate more people related services as well.

**Civic participations and responsibilities.** Another important aspect of a democratic process that the participants believed was citizens’ participation. The participation or responsibilities of citizens was perceived as engaging in community level to the state level participation. The participants also described the key elements of democracy as such active involvement in the political decision-making process (Nissan), ensuring freedom for individual growth (Wood, Sam, Lori, and Childers) engaging in jury duty, voting, assigning projects about citizenship in the classroom. In the perspectives of civic participations, there appeared two level of citizens engaging environments, Government Directed Initiatives (GDI) and Citizen-Directed Initiatives (CDI).

***Citizens directed initiatives.*** The participants mentioned the citizens directed initiatives as part of understanding democracy. Some examples of citizen-directed initiatives included as interviewing the stakeholders (Nissan) the government, learning a political process (Nissan) and affiliating with various educational organizations. IDEI (n. d) argued how citizens in a democracy are considered for the growth of a community. The IDEI highlighted democratic values that are needed to learn by citizens. It stated democratic education infuses the learning process with these fundamental values of our

society. Democratic education sees young people not as passive recipients of knowledge, but rather as active co-creators of own learning. They are not the products of an education system, but rather valued participants in a vibrant learning community (p. 3). Similar to the explanation, the participants perceived and hinted citizens' collaborative community activities of the citizens for their welfare.

The participants expressed two types of actions made by citizens in a democratic process. One of them was the Citizens Directed Initiative (CDI) referred activities at the community level such as cleanup campaigns and casting votes. The participants also provided examples of how they participated in mail flyers and stamping on envelopes (Lori). Those various community activities to specific activities during the local election were reported as experiencing civic engagement. In broader sense, participants shared their engagement in meeting stakeholders and interviewing them, which provided the individual experience of gaining diverse opinions in the CDI as a political process (Lori). According to the participants, participation is a key factor for democracy. CDI was perceived as an investment in democracy for promoting democratic practices.

Siriannic (2009) has presented similar thoughts about the health of American democracy, which ultimately depends on the willingness and ability to work together as citizens. He stated, "Government policies often fail to promote collaboration. However, if designed properly, they can do much to strengthen civic engagement. However, he has warned of the government often putting obstacles in their way" (p. 1). Although, the participants did not state any obstacles created by the government for their active engagement and CDI, but the role of participation was considered as a part of the democratic obligation.

***Government directed initiatives.*** The government directed initiatives were described as a top-down approach in which the government controls people by a direct authority in a democracy. There were no specific examples and no further explanation about the meaning of government's direct initiatives. Moreover, participatory democracy is a process emphasizing the broad participation of constituents in the direction and operation of political systems. In the simplest terms, the participants described directed democracy as a form of democracy in which citizens assume a proactive role and are involved in elections.

**Creating rules/systems for protection.** Participants' response to the conception of democracy stressed the development of democratic values in themselves and students as well. Bob stated, "Creating system in a democracy is to impart the skills upon students by being informed citizens, and doing service learning projects" and Wood focused on the purpose of creating governmental rules and regulations from the government. Further, Wood elaborated the responsibilities educators needed to instill in students and focused democratic values. He stated

We, people, need to cultivate values. Cultivation of values is not just going to happen through education without especially focusing on that. Therefore, there is much pressure to focus on other things besides, maybe, our democratic values. I think that's a big mistake we are making.

The participants introduced was focusing on core democratic values, principles, and practices. One needed to be more vigilant about how and what to focus on democratically value-laden teachings. However, the participant did not explain the kinds of values and a process of cultivating such values in. Nissan and Wood urged their kids to join political

campaigns, rally, campus houses, and act in involve in establishing rules. Wood enlightened an emphasis on developing democratic values and the need of identifying them, refocus and put into those values into practice. Wood's ideas of the cultivation of democratic values as rules and system indicated the essence of knowing values of democracy. The participants highlighted that the process of creating rules and system are directly related to imparting education. In creating rules and system in democracy, the participants introduced the concept of a sense of protection, protecting self and from the government.

***Protecting self.*** The participants talked about protecting each other and protecting people from the government. This sense of protection was realized as a human right and to be informed citizens in a democratic society. Maiese (2004) associated the protection of human rights under the basic inalienable rights in which everyone is entitled to the right to live, liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and equal treatment before the law (p.1). Under this theme there two sub-themes were discovered as citizens' protecting each other and protecting themselves from the government.

***Protecting from the government.*** Protecting each other is referred to the action of caring for one other to secure fundamental rights. The participants presented the idea of people being fair in the Constitution and having advocacy groups for voices as a locus of democratic power within its system. Lori highlighted an example of people being protective in a democracy said, "We are fair inside of the Constitution having Advocacy groups, no matter what are issues. We are talking about the Nazi party coming to [our city]." Again, Lori stressed the inalienable rights of people in a democracy where protecting people who are not engaged in a group of people or do not support ideas of a



certain group of people was viewed as a concern of the government and a community to establish law and order in society.

Wood presented his conception of democracy as protecting people from the government whereas Lori believed that most of the times are spent on understanding what government is and how government runs. Although the participants did not elaborate about the processes of protecting people from the government, Sam argued the biggest threat to democracy was corruption in the government. Sam's example of corruption justified it being one of the most common abuses of power in the government. Protecting people from the government was considered a civil right of people. Lori extended her opinion that Hate Speech as a disturbance in maintaining social order. Therefore, we have the Constitution, we write up the summary to protest (Nissan). Childers and Nissan underlined the importance of rules of law and sometimes people spend a lot of time understanding the government. Similarly, Nissan stated, "I feel most of the time is spent understanding what government is and how government runs."

**Locus of power: People having authority.** For understanding the concept of democracy, participants recognized that the power of democracy resides in citizens. Nissan explained power comes through the Documents like the Constitution (Nissan) and the locus of power which referred to the authority. Nissan, he explained the locus of power of democracy residing in the people:

I tried to bring the idea of democracy and active participation. I always try to refer back to document to the constitution. I always to try to point out the power of an individual in a democracy and the power of individual to organize others in a democracy. Therefore, I take that process to be a backdrop or context everything

we do.

The people having authority over their lives in decision-making as an individual or a group are the opportunities for the wellbeing of the community and modeling collaboration in a democratic system. In other words, the participants adopted the people's ideas as a powerhouse of the decision-making process and that democratic power revolves around them.

Sam described, "I considered as a back drop of democracy or a process of democracy". For instance, Sam presented the argument that people having authority in the decision-making process are a way to exercise democratic freedom, and such a locus of power would affiliate with a center of activities in democracy.

**Trusting on your own fate in life/decision making for life.** Nissan elaborated his approach to students in the empowerment of democracy. He stated, "I always to try to point out the power of an individual in democracy and also the power of individuals to organize others in a democracy to understand democracy." Essentially, people have authority over their own lives... and use that power in society to govern and create rules. The significance of it is to enable an individual in making decisions in life. People having authority to decide what benefits them most for their progress.

**Forms of government.** The participants introduced the two forms of democratic systems in the government. Nissan, Wood, and Childers mentioned direct and representative system of democracy. There was not enough information presented by the participants to elaborate what actually direct and representative democracies meant for. However, the conception of democracy was perceived changing. The experiences concluded that democracy is based on faith, dignity and worth of every individual. The overall

conception was that democratic process aims at all round development of every individual's personality.

### **Summary on the Conception of Democracy**

Participants' understanding the concept of democracy revealed that democracy is perceived as a system of government. People have the rights to make decisions in their lives what are most favorable within the political and fundamental civil rights. The findings of the understanding the conception of democracy showed two things. First, the participants conceptualized the conception of democracy more leniently from the teacher's perspectives than a citizen in its first place. One participant reported that there was a disconnection in the content areas of social studies teaching for democracy, particularly teaching for the Government. The participants did not provide very specific information; however, the disconnection with teaching the content was reported causing some barrier in teaching.

In terms of protecting their rights as an individual or a group, citizens are united to exercise democratic rights and recognize the political environment. In a democracy, the roles of government appeared as a fundamental system responsible for the establishment of law and order in the country. Primary understanding of democracy led to the ideal ideas and principles of democracy and critical skills are needed in people. The understanding of democracy looked generally but it closely connected to political democracy that would derive a meaning of generally shallow understanding, lack of prior school and other related experiences.

Furthermore, cultivation of ideas about democracy or the conception of democracy would develop through personal experiences. One of the most common

points of interest among all participants was expressing their deep interest in discovering and disseminating democratic principles while understanding the conception of democracy. The shared experiences of the participants furthermore aligned with Westheimer and Kahne (2004) who have extensively underlined the three approaches to understanding democratic citizenship education. These three classifications include the development of personally responsible citizens, who are supposedly active in the community, second- participatory citizens, and the citizens who focus on promoting active engagement in various community affairs. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) argued the justice-oriented educators as effective democratic citizens who analyze and understand the interplay of social, economic, and political forces. They advocate matters of injustice and to the importance of pursuing social justice (p. 242). Similar to the explanation of (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), the participants mentioned about the dynamic roles of the government in democracy. Understanding the forms of democracy was also mentioned to understand as a conception of democracy.

The majority of the participants explained that they had little influence by their schooling in gaining the democratic experiences but the roles of adults in family members played major roles. Participants' conception of democracy conveyed the meaning of diversity of thoughts and actions for protecting freedom and personal growth. The necessary skills for building democracy do not automatically develop in children. Teaching democracy means preparing children to become citizens who will preserve and shape democracy in the future. Democracy is regarded as the interrelation of the conceptions and common experiences of individuals living together. The conception of democracy can be a dynamic, active, and changing process. From the personal

experiences of the participants, I concluded that democracy is based on faith, dignity and the worth of every single individual as a human being. The overall theme, the democratic process aims at all round development of every individual's personality.

Furthermore, cultivation of ideas about democracy or the conception of democracy would develop through personal experiences. One of the most common points of interest among all participants was expressing their deep interest in discovering and disseminating democratic principles while understanding the conception of democracy.

Lori stated:

I find a disconnection. I feel most of the time is spent is for understanding what is government and how government runs. I do not think a lot of emphases is put upon students on engaging in government. I think there is a disconnection. Most of my honors students are not engaged unless the election year.

The experience above showed a gap in the content area about democracy. There is a difference between democratic ideas and democratic realities as well. Additionally, all participants emphasized the importance of participation as a key to learning the democratic process. The experiences shared by the participants aligned with Westheimer and Kahne (2004) three approaches underlined to understand democratic citizenship. These three classifications include the development of personally responsible citizens, who are active in community, participatory in promoting active engagement in various community affairs and the third, they are justice-oriented citizens.

## **Research Question 2: Developing Ideas about Democratic Citizenship**

This section presents a composite textual and structural description of the participants concerning the research question two on how they developed ideas about democratic citizenship.

**Active participation (student vs. teacher perspectives).** Participants presented mixed responses about democratic participation. The responses described engaging students and their participation in democracy. In other words, active participation in democracy was perceived as a major process of developing ideas about democracy. Slev (2014) stated that citizens' participation is a basic feature in democracy (p. 32). As participation in democracy is the main feature, the participants shared their common ideas about involvement in democracy through by community services. Those community services could be anything from trash pickup, attending community meetings or interest group meeting and interacting with different people. The political activism was a political interest of the participants who motivated some of the participants to actively participate in political campaigns, meetings, and developing ideas about democratic citizenship. At schools, teachers engaged their students through hands on activities such as service learning projects, building ideas through questioning each other, listening to the voices of concerns of people, going to city council meetings, and interviewing parents' regarding their thoughts and concerns about social and political issues.

Participants expressed various methods of self-engagement and engaging their students in active civic participation from which they were able to develop their own ideas

about democracy and also taught students a process of developing democratic values as participation and sharing their ideas. The institutional engagement and affiliation of the participants with the NGO/INGO related to democracy also helped them to develop as well as promoting ideas about democratic citizenship. Participation in local organization such as Boys' Scout, clean-up campaign, and volunteering activities also enhanced individual experience as acts of citizenship, but more importantly, those involvements provided associational experience and the participants recognized of primacy of common characteristics of participation to develop ideas about democratic citizenship. Bob stated, "I have been fortunate enough to be involved in activities through university. I am still pretty heavily involved with the International Democratic Education Institute (IDEA) and Northwest Ohio." This informed that the involvement with an INGO and local organization were resources for the participants to develop ideas about democratic citizenship. In addition, most participants explained their political activism was helpful in forming ideas. They gained ideas by becoming active listeners to diverse opinions of other people, and having knowledge about democracy and democratic citizenship.

Apart from teachers' perspectives on the development of ideas about democratic citizenship, the participants presented examples of activities of their students contributing to shaping their ideas. Bob, Nissan, Sam, Wood and Childers engaged students on civic projects also helped them to get more ideas. For examples, Nissan described:

I am not shy about telling the kids about the things that I do outside of my life related to democratic participation and government. I've often been one school of thought that you are teacher, you should not tell students what where you stand on things. You should be neutral. I believe I teach something powerful or if they know

where I stand on something. I can see that I am open to other opinions.

Participants stated that sharing personal experiences, being open to opinions, and democratic participation significantly helped them to gain ideas about democratic citizenship and the development of ideas about democratic citizenship emerged from active participations themselves into community services and being politically active. More interestingly, engaging students in civic projects helped the participants to develop ideas about democratic citizenship.

**Locus of power as a political and institutional affiliation.** Locus of power referred to the individuals' affiliation with unions, political parties and institutional relationship. The political and instructional affiliations paved access to the growth of ideas and also underlined the understanding ideas about democratic citizenship. Social and political environment were related as a platform for shaping the thought processes of the participants. For example, Lori stated:

I get that (ideas) from net-working. I go to the Ohio Council of Social Studies Conferences and Northwest Ohio Regional Representative social studies meetings. I go to Ohio Department of Education, talked to people such as teachers of the district. Honestly, it is networking and hopefully they will get more sites or links or ideas of research. Then, I will bring it back to the classroom.

Using social networks, interacting with people, and attending various organizational meetings helped the participants develop ideas about democratic citizenship. Other participants such as participants Bob, Sam, Nissan, Childers and Wood also expressed the influence of social medias to develop ideas about democratic citizenship. According to Bob, using social medias such as Twitter and scribing a membership of organizations, for



examples, IDEI, Ohio Council on SSTO, and NCSS helped him to get involved with other people and participation was realized as power to get ideas in the related field. Furthermore, professional development training programs, Instructional networking, accessing various resources, and involvement with social medias played significant roles to promote democracy and the process of democratic citizenship.

The participants described their political connection as a locus of power to develop ideas on democracy. In addition, Nissan and Wood emphasized that sharing personal experiences, being open to others' opinions, participating in democratic activities, and internalizing the importance of information that manifested as a pivotal of empowering individuals in democracy. Nissan described the power of having command over content to stir up bigger ideas. Nissan stressed the familiarity with content and constitutional right are also related to advocate ideas. He believed:

You have to have familiarity with the contents. You have to know about the constitution, voting etc. Academic preparation of teaching is also a real life experience. In addition, Sam's ideas of democratic citizenship developed from multiple ways naming the political activism, interaction with stake-holders and sharing knowledge with other people as well. Childers's explained his perspectives of developing ideas through personal reflection and he perceive personal reflection of his work as a stepping stone to realizing the potential of ideas. Childers also stated the use of curriculum in most efficient way as power of teaching. I try to be as unbiased as possibly I can. I look my own work and always relate back to my personal educational experiences. I try to teach in the classroom by finding ways related to the past what practices I am using in my current teaching current

curriculum and how I can expand on those experiences in curriculum to show how students could be part of something as a term of democracy and to be active citizens.

Similarly, Nissan explained that developing ideas about democratic citizenship related to the curriculum delivery. Although his ideas of the use of curriculum delivery also found embedded with improving teaching for democratic citizenship education, he elaborated the process of building ideas on democratic citizenship by using the power of the Document to Constitution as locus of power.

I tried to bring in the idea of democracy and active citizenship participation...for instance; looking up some aspects of civil right movement will see the power of democracy. I always try to refer back to the Document to Constitution and always try to point out the power of an individual in a democracy and the power of individual to organize others in a democracy.

For Nissan, the Document to Constitution was another source that ideas and knowledge related to democracy and democratic citizenship are developed. Regarding a document, Doganay (2012) also mentioned that the certain documents that are established legal position of individuals on civil are significant and it is citizenship is a civic contract between the state and the individual and citizenship is also a social role. (p. 3).

Participants developed their ideas based on hands on experiences and their political affiliation. Sharing information with each other, political activism, reflecting on own activities, learning from participation were considered as the use of locus of power in democracy.

### **Curriculum Emphasis and Content Driven Teaching.**

Participants expressed concerns of lost autonomous power of designing a curriculum. The autonomous power of teachers in designing the curriculum was taken over by the state. Bob expressed this event as a loss of power of teachers in delivery of the curriculum. He advocated that teachers should be given rights to develop a curriculum which is not the case these days. He described curriculum as a tool to determine teaching content and assuring the selection of content. He described

It is difficult to speak for U.S. schools and a bit of difficult concept because we develop our curriculum in our own way. I was more likely teaching and also learn in ways that would be considered democratic teaching and democratic principles. I think that now more and more that has been removed from my control. I teach little bit less about that type of learning than I would like too. However, recently they removed some of the autonomy from what my curriculum was where I control a more of what I taught. When I taught it, the power, that be our curriculum people at district level or the state level or administration; I am not exactly sure of where it is coming from. I feel that I am losing that autonomy than back I had more autonomy.

Bob's concern described that teacher's autonomy is essential to control teaching contents on democracy and democratic citizenship. Choosing content in curriculum was a deciding factor for linking democratic principles in teaching and it was a teacher driven familiarity of democratic education. In developing ideas, Bob stated the importance of reflection on what is taught and how ideas are emerging. The knowledge about curriculum, revision of work to relate to the personal experiences were also believed to formulate ideas about democratic citizenship. In the process of enriching ideas about democratic citizenship, the

participants integrated technology to delivery curriculum. For examples, Bob used twitter and newsfeeds to share and gain ideas about democracy and democratic citizenship. The uses of social medias enabled him to filter and develop ideas about democratic citizenship education from various sources as well.

Next, Childers highlighted the advantages of working within a diverse classroom for formulating ideas. Working with the diverse classroom helped to acknowledge ideas of kids and expanded ideas as well. He discussed about cultures and provided reasons for learning about other cultures as an appreciation and respect for all. The following explanation presents a picture of his practice in developing ideas,

I have learned to take lot of my ideas about democracy and democratic citizenship. I really try to adopt the kids' ideas...adopt democratic citizenship education to the needs and the interest to the students...work actively within diverse classrooms. You know students' come from different backgrounds.

For example, one of the participant admitted that the concept of ideas is complex and considered of regional differences, cultural differences, and politically different ideas. Furthermore, the participant remarked:

That is a difficult question. How? It is just the idea of we want the rights of the people. However, how do you do that in a country where we have regional differences when we have cultural differences, or we have different parties and we have different ideas. How do you bring? We need to be fair with everybody although our rights and needs are differences.

Developing ideas is not a singular mode of thoughts. It is contextual and they are formed overtime of the continuous experiences of the themes that the majority of the participants

described as a common way to acquiring knowledge through hands on activities.

**Experiential learning.** Participants explained that experiential learning enabled them to create ideas about democratic citizenship. The experiential learning allowed them to engage in community activities. For instance, Lori stated that she had learned from senior leaders in the House of Representatives. She visited door to door during election campaign, took part in clean-up campaign, prepared envelopes and letters to mail out to people. Hence, ideas of democratic participation that the participant developed referred to hands on activities and working with a group of people as well. Furthermore, Lori described:

When I was in high school, I helped volunteering in campaign. It may make more sense to understand democratic process and the importance of democracy. We stamped on envelopes, helped write address, helped going door to door during election time, and walked in parade. I had my students on election day who helped out with registering voters and we talked about current affairs. We had CNN news students every day and we would tie studies what they see, and compare with other government comparing and contrasting so that students could understand and appreciate democratic citizenship.

Developing ideas about democratic citizenship are built experiences and comparing and contrasting ideas with each other. Hursh and Ross (2000) construction of ideas requires more than changing the structures and processes for decision making (p. 33). The conceptual understanding of the development of ideas emerged embedded activities and interactions. Sam recalled that his father was influential in installing ideas about democratic citizenship. His father consistently helped him to reinforce ideas relating to

liberty and freedom. Sam described, “My dad has deep passion about those things (liberty and freedom) and I was exposed to multiple angles but not just in school and there is also a lot of emphasis of my home about citizenship and liberty.” Sam’s statement described the role of his parent in shaping ideas in his life. In experiential learning, roles of adults were significantly affected by parental roles in constructing ideas were related with democratic values. Wood and Childers also related their parents influence in taking them to different programs where they were able to gain hand on experiences as well. Mostly, experiential learning took place during election campaign time and community services. Moreover, Bob described the process of building his thoughts by:

When I recall about democracy, the main way I remember learning is through boy’s scout. I was a member of the boys’ scout of America and we had required a merit badges that we had to do citizenship in the community, citizenship in the nation, and citizenship in the world.... I can remember doing various activities for all those involved, kind of hands on activities we had to go to a city council meeting or we had to interview somebody in a position of government or authority, and I think that a lot of what I learned was from that.... also in high school taking the government class. In high school, I learned some of the political processes, how to be, at least, on paper good citizen.

Bob’s experiential learning emphasized direct link to gaining experience through activities with political process and hands on activities with the city council meeting, interviewing the government authority, and participating with the Boy’s Scout and projects on democratic education. Having experiences really helped me to gain a lot of confidence in teaching in the classroom those types of democratic values, I think.

Bob stressed that experiences are mostly developed through experiences and they are experiential. Drawing the lines for the formation of ideas is a widely held belief among all the participants.

Lori added that taking part in a campaign during election was an opportunity to acquire ideas. She stated, “Giving real life examples, we can have you tube to show mini clips or mini interviews and it makes sense. And it sounds like we want a campaign for her because it is campaign hour (candid laughter) you can. So, I get real world things.”

In addition, Childers interpreted:

I focus on classroom practices by finding ways related to the past, what practices I am using in my current teaching, my current curriculum and how I can expand on those experiences in the curriculum to show how students like to be part of something as a term of democracy and to be active citizens.

In conclusion, participants expressed that experiential learning was the main practice of developing ideas about democratic citizenship. Hands on activities and active participation played vital roles for connecting ideas with democratic principles.

**Technological influence.** Technology was one of the common tools that all participants stressed using to acquire information and develop ideas in democratic citizenship education. It was perceived as a global advancement to collect information and newer ideas within few minutes. The participated incorporated technology to help students understand democracy and citizenship along with current world events. Nissan explained how he developed his ideas about democratic citizenship. His ideas expanded by using medias, knowing his political philosophy, listening to people’s diverse opinions and allowing others ideas without being bias. He stated:

I read and consume a lot of media and I know where my political sympathy lies. I listen to voices from other side, from people I don't agree with it. So I think, compared to an average citizen, I pay attention probably way lot more than some other people. I am always evaluative, think about many things. I allow new information in my head that conflicts what I already know. I try to bring different perspectives to my classroom without being biased.

Participants gained ideas about democratic citizenship by being non-judgmental to diverse opinions of others, allowing foreign ideas easily and sharing ideas with students.

Sam explained:

Technology has been one...technology has really allowed me to teach in a different way than me in my first couple of years.... I have all my students have laptops. I teach government too. So, this is just an incredible resource, vast potential...to incorporate technology to help students understand democracy and citizenship.

It seemed that the participants slightly misunderstood the question their struggle was indicative of complexity of presenting information easily. They focused answering about how they used technology in teaching rather than the impact of technology in developing ideas about citizenship. Wood explained:

Number one is technology to grab their attention when they come into their classroom...like a presentation. If you want to speak, grab their attention quickly asking something them to think about current event, what's going on in the news? Get their attention quickly get them engaged and you go from there current events: what's going on, write it up, talk about it so that they engage what's going



around the world, must kids don't watch.

To draw attention, Lori also explained of using technology. She stated:

Giving real life examples, we can have you tube to show mini clips or mini interviews and it makes sense. So, I get real world things. I guess I answered your questions. In addition, Wood added that “proving finding ways, provide background knowledge has been crucial... I remember, we saw that video we talked about that now they have, so that, they can link to think, ok we did! read the information, do something more engaging activity, later to help build upon what they have learned.

Wood believed that Integrating technology helps to go beyond what a text book and it encourages students to Identify problems in the community as well. The interpretation indicated that how they used technology for rather than how they developed ideas of democratic citizenship. Rheingold (2008) and Friedman (2008) stated that technologies such as the Internet and online gaming offer a means for heightened civic participation and access information.

**Professional development.** The participants affirmed that the professional development helped them in developing ideas about democratic citizenship. Attending various professional development trainings paved the way to interact with other people in the field. Institutional affiliation and taking part in other field led training program such as Citizenship World, going to city council meetings, interviewing somebody in the position of government or authority, and taking the government class helped Bob to develop about democracy and democratic citizenship. Attending meetings helped them in the development of ideas in many ways. Furthermore, Bod described:

I develop lot of lessons things like that.... I did gain a lot of confidence from the opportunities that I had from professional development, especially in democratic education because...the group I involved in and the opportunities I had specially working on projects I got to travel overseas. I worked in Ukraine and Morocco....specifically, on democratic education projects and having that experiences really helped me to gain a lot of confidence in teaching in the classroom those types of democratic values, I think.

Childers stated:

I do a lot collaboration with other teachers. I work with them to find a better way to teach democracy and democratic citizenship. I did gain a lot of confidence from the opportunities that I had for professional development, especially in democratic education. I had the opportunity especially working on projects overseas on democratic education projects. Having those experiences really helped me to gain confidence in teaching in the classroom and developing democratic values. So, I have a lot of opportunities, maybe other teachers don't have. I got many different ideas, use resources. I am on social media like Twitter like that and I feed lot of my news into good resources such as global learning and global citizenship democracy.

Sam described:

I participate in lots of professional development. Not necessary always focused on democratic citizenship but certainly. I am hoping to pursue my master degree in Ashland University they have a kind of combination of constitutions and American history. It's a kind of blend of government and history foundation. I

think that will really provide another level of depth and knowledge that I really love to have. But students are, teachers need to be students so that they can keep learning. So, if you don't stay sharp you are gonna get dull.

Learning opportunity from professional development and working with the projects on democracy and democratic citizenship. Affiliation to various organizations and social networking also helped the participants to gain knowledge and ideas about democracy and democratic citizenship. The organizations such as Twitter, Conferences were some of the sources outlined by the participants.

### **Summary of the Development of Ideas about Democratic Citizenship**

The participants expressed the fundamental importance of recognizing democratic values such as liberty, freedom, and human rights. Understanding conception of democracy was expressed as citizens' participatory in political system for the promotion of individual lives and community. The participants also interpreted power of citizens and the roles of educators as part of constructing social rules as system as well.

Democracy was perceived as a shared concept where individual exercise their power to regulate their own life and social life as well. Furthermore, democracy was viewed as a political system and socially constructed perceptions to achieve collective benefits. The majority of responses of the participants also expressed their conception of democracy connected with mixed forms of democratic forms such as liberal, participatory, and deliberative. The characteristics of deliberative democracy was identified by the expressions of citizens' participation, citizens enjoying their rights to make decisions, seeking opportunities to change or influence government, listening to voices of diverse opinions of people, and showing respect for those ideas.

The participants also highlighted shared visions of democracy. For examples, protecting self and protecting from the government, citizens collaborating with the government to work for common good of the people and create system in society and promote common values of democracy. The citizens were explained having the supremacy of power in decision making process

However, the majority of the participants explained that they had little influence by their schooling in gaining democratic experiences but the role of adults in their family members had played major roles and impacted in their lives for developing ideas of democracy and democratic citizenship. The participants' conceptions of democracy conveyed the meaning of diversity of thoughts and actions for protecting their liberty and freedom for personal growth. The participants explained that the necessary democratic values in building democracy do not develop automatically but they can be nurtured and learned through experiential learning and teaching as well.

The participants conceptualized democracy as a political and dynamic system due to its nature of the understanding of individuals and beliefs fostering from contextual environment. According to the participants, personal experiences of democracy helped them construct knowledge about democracy and faith, dignity underlined the central conception of democracy. The understanding of the concepts of democracy lead to the ideas and principles of democracy and critical skills necessary in civic life of people.

Furthermore, the conception of democracy led to the conception of fairness as well. Scholars such as Dahl, 2000., Kymlicka, 1990., & Rawls, 1999 presented the meaning of fairness in democracy. These meaning of fairness included a core fundamental beliefs in moral equality and they are understood as equal inherent and

intrinsic value and dignity. Similarly, the participants also expressed their conceptions of democratic values on the basis of moral and ethical grounds. The expressed conceptions of fairness of democratic were reflected as rights to voting, participation, expression of ideas, liberty, freedom, and diversity. In addition, the participants also highlighted that the basic notions of government and citizens' collaboration and their rights to define their own interests in their lives.

The participants linked democratic values to be developed from placing people on equal footing, providing equal opportunity to students and incorporating their ideas and beliefs into teaching. Treating people equally in democracy was perceived as a practice to be considered as sources of identifying the conceptual and practical aspects of sense of fairness in public life, local, national, and global levels as well. Similarly, the participants also stressed democracy as a fate to their lives in decision making and exercise voting rights as well.

### **Implementations of Ideas and Experiences into Improving Teaching**

Research question 3, In what ways do they implement their perspectives and experiences into teaching and nurturing students into becoming thriving democratic citizens?

This section explains a composite textual and structural description of the participants regarding the Integration of their ideas and experiences into improving classroom teaching. Research question: What ways do they implement/ practice their ideas and experiences into classroom teaching?

**Active participation: Activities and engagement.** Active participation as a theme emerged repeatedly. The participants expressed various activities and practices in improving their

teaching. The majority of the participants focused on active participation of democratic process in teaching. Such activity included a mock trial in which students engaged in debates related to social issues. The participants believed that the mock trial process helped students inspire to be critical and offered different perspectives to express themselves (Sam). Active participation of students was one of the themes that the participants practiced engaging students while teaching. Although there were various methods of instructional practices listed by the majority of the participants, one of the participants focused on the questing technique. Lori explained her practice of engaging students included that she posed questions to students. She stated:

I pose a question such as why democracy thrives in some countries and not others. We talk about how France tried to mimic the United States, our American revolution and how Americans were able to overthrow their king? We should be able to overthrow ours.

Lori's approach to teaching focused the importance of democratic values and place the role of teachers for shaping their thoughts process. A cross-question method was the one way of inviting students into a discussion. Similarly, Nissan stated process of action as direction for improving teaching. He described:

I tried to bring in the ideas of democracy and active citizenship participation. For instance, in a couple of days, we will be looking up some aspects of Civil Rights Movement. I will, kids will see power of democracy. I always try to refer back to documents like the constitution and Bill of Rights. I always try to point out the power of an individual in a democracy and also the power of individuals to organize others in a democracy.

According to Nissan, documents like the constitution and Bill of Rights were another sources for developing ideas and knowledge about democracy and democratic citizenship

in children. Regarding documents like the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, Doganay (2012) also mentioned that certain documents are written from legal stance to foster individuals and citizenship is a civic contract between the state and individuals (p. 3). According to Nissan, teaching democracy is a continuous process and it must be constantly cultivated and reworked quite often. Teaching for democracy involved a process of navigating students' knowledge what is necessary for them and preparing them to be "personally responsible, critical and participatory, and justice orientated citizens" (Zyngier, 2012, p. 16). All the methods that the participants stated such as direction instruction, graphic organizer, word webs, interactive teaching (Childers), hands on activities such as campaigns, volunteering, forming interest groups, comparing and contrasting, simulation, and mock trials, experiential learning (Lori, Nissan, Bob, Wood and Sam) described a multiple approach to teaching democratic citizenship. In common, all those teaching approaches to teaching for democratic citizenship focused to the central aspect of active engagement.

The action referred to student's engagement. In other words, the majority of the participants stated that active participation in democracy develops democratic ideology, democratic behavior, responsibility, and their teaching approaches to foster teaching for democratic citizenship. Wood had a very important approach to improving his teaching through the whole child concept. He described the picture of a whole child concept in his teaching as below:

I give my students the full picture. What I mean by that is, when I first started my student teaching, I had a fourth grade class. I did 4th and 5th grade social studies and science... at a charter school. Two fourth grade social studies classes were an honor

class and the other class was a regular social class. I got a chance to push one group a little bit more and the other one to see what they were, that shaped my thinking. I do more hands on classroom engagement works such as a mock trial and provide supplemental information.

Wood identified the level of students and categorized them into groups to facilitate students more efficiently and effectively. Next, Childers presented a different practice in his teaching. He described his teaching practice as below:

At certain issues that students are more actively interested/involved in, I hit hard in that issue. For examples, it may be health care, immigration, welfares or Social Security. I try to use those different issues so that students will have active, real world experiences. I tie those experiences into teaching.

The other participants also highlighted their roles for becoming facilitators to engage students in active environment. The majority of the participants also stressed on the active role of students to learn democracy and acquire high level of understanding as well.

**Understanding multiple perspectives: Cultural and regional differences.** As participants perceived the meaning of democracy in multiple ways, they also stressed the importance of understanding diverse perspectives of people in democracy. Lori stated:

It's just the idea of we want the rights of the people. But how do you do that in a country where we have regional differences, we have cultural differences, or we have different parties we have different ideas. Such as immigration. Now we have the Middle East. How do we deal with all of those issues? I guess...how have I changed ...I don't know how to answer. How do you bring and we be fair to everybody, their rights and



needs with so many differences?

Bob said:

I had a couple of major shifts what I have taught over the years. Now, curriculum has changed to more of a world history, especially like mediaeval world history things like that... that being more historical focus of what I teach as far as social studies. It is kind of having me a shift into more of teaching global citizenship instead of just citizenship in America. It has been a kind of interesting transition to look between being a global citizen and being American citizens.

The participants stressed on the understanding diversity, cultures, different opinions of people and the integration of kids' ideas into teaching.

**Covering overarching themes of the content.** The participants stated that social studies covers a wider array of contents and they have limited time to cover the social studies standards and prepare students for tests. In the venture of classroom teaching, identifying big ideas invites a challenge. (Dogan, 1985; and Ross, 2006) reported the same issue in social studies while this subject has emerged from various branches of humanities and social sciences. The authors stated that the subject of social studies is more open to pedagogical dissonance than many other content areas social sciences. (Darling Hammond & Bransford, 2005) have stated two reasons for this fold. One is the field of social studies is not as cohesive or linear as other fields such as mathematics or science. Another reason centers on social studies teachers having a wide range of content to cover. However, the participants stressed on focusing on big democratic ideas, immigration issues and public policy as topic to address and discuss.

**Understanding critical information (Civic literacy).** The majority of participants described how they gained experiences and believed to share with students and other in term of improving their teaching for democratic citizenship. They focused their teaching on the significance of understanding critical information for students where they also expressed some concerns about challenges of students not putting enough effort in processing critical information.

They acknowledged that the ability of citizens to examine information critically develops by teaching them in more engaging and fruitful way (Childers, Wood, Sam, and Lori). An underlying factor for the expansion of ideas in democracy was by presenting ideas and information about democracy in more interactive way. Nissan stated, “I want to see the wide array of perspectives and ideas about it. It really gets so many kids are such a clear black and white images in their heads and issue they once agree and realize how incredibly confusing and complex things are.” Although the participants underlined students lacking attitudes in critical thinking, they perceived students to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Although majority of the participants insisted in shaping the young minds of students, Childers described his practice of engaging students through drilling and presenting them information in very interactive way. He explained, “I use...technology... teach democracy in more engaging and fruitful way. I do not only drill them with the facts, more or less present them information in more interactive in eye opening way.”

Wood and Sam also highlighted the use of technology in teaching democracy. A practice of using technology came into play as a digital tool for interacting and helping out students become critical thinkers. Furthermore, the majority of the participants

learned and practiced developing ideas about democratic citizenship from their parents, community involvement, technology, networking for accessing various resources at a global context. In some cases, the participants expressed the brevity of time mainly focusing on covering teaching content and preparing students for tests. However, there was no detail experiences shared by the participants about how and what kids learned of democratic education or literacy level they had developed.

Making students choose social, political issues and analyze them from multiple perspectives (Nissan) (ii) Tailoring how students learn and what picks interest in them (Wood). They believed on the preparation of critical and informed citizens who can be very judgmental about things. According to Sam, students (citizens) are more prepared to be good consumers, critical consumers of the information that they are getting hope that they will then be better participants in democracy. Theme five: Engaging Students in Self-Exploratory Learning/Experiential Learning.

One of the remarkable note that the majority of participants expressed leads to the engagement of self-exploratory learning. The participants focused on more practice of self-exploratory learning to teach social studies, democracy and democratic citizenship. The believed that this instructional practice provides students more opportunities to experience learning about democracy. This process involved students taking to field study, campaigning, meeting stake-holder during election time, and going beyond what the textbooks offer (Wood). Wood also stressed on the “whole child concept” in teaching which meant a teacher to think about the developmental phases of the child.

### **Sharing understanding how ideas of democratic citizenship inner play in teaching.**

Sharing personal experience was one of the main aspect of integrating ideas and experiences into improving teaching. Lori insisted interaction with other people as part of sharing and understanding values of diverse opinions, whereas Wood urged on developing a habit of internalizing information for better understanding. Some of the big ideas included that the participants expressed were related to health care, Immigration, Social security (Childers), rights of the people (Lori), and Document to Constitution (Nissan). Understanding big ideas of democracy and democratic citizenship were to facilitate learners to develop the abilities to problem-solving and practice interactive modules which will basically help learners to engage in discourse. The participants also stressed on focus on confusing and complex issues to discuss in teaching. Wood stated that teaching should be able to project a whole concept. His practice of teaching outlined that:

I give my students a full picture. What I mean by that is, when I first started, I did my student teaching that I had a fourth grade class. And I did 4th and 5th grade social studies at a charter school. In my fourth grade honor class, I challenge them to think what we learned. So, I use that even today. For instance, the war in 1812, I do the same exercise that I do with 8th graders.

Childers further explained:

I have learned to take lot of my ideas about democracy and democratic citizenship and really try to adopt kids' ideas of it. You can teach...any content or curriculum in certain way. I try to introduce certain issues that students are more actively interested in, I hit hard in that issue. For examples, it may be health care,

immigration, warfare or social security. I try to use those different issues that students have active real world experiences and they can tie into their experiences and ideas and they can adopt ideas on the democratic citizenship and I get the kids to interview each other they believe in and ask them to share ideas with each other.

Childers believed that big ideas are developed through interaction and teacher's continuous efforts in emphasizing them in the classroom.

Similarly, Wood also presented how he considered and practiced in integrating big ideas into classroom teaching. Wood explained some difficulty in students who are not willingly ready to think. As he continued that "I told my kids that they have the biggest issues that they do not like to think (silence) and I put them in a situation where they have to think, solve problem or give reasons for why?"

In conclusion, improving teaching included the practice of various modules and giving emphasis on the shared values of personal experiences between the learners and the teachers.

**Academic preparation for teaching democratic citizenship.** The participants emphasized the significance of academic preparation as the main component of teaching. According to Bob, students are engaged in teaching with encouragement. He believed that encouragement would help students identify the problems in community and undertake projects related to community services.

In his words:

I encourage them to undertake projects as a service learning type of activity where they might try to identify the problems in the community. By doing research, they

would find out the ways to solve those problems. Community services may take different forms. That can be as simple as volunteerism where they just show up and do some work. Maybe, they will go to organize trash pickup campaign or something like that. Alternatively, they might pick up trash in the park themselves or figure out other ways of demonstrating their citizenship in a relatively simple way.

Academic preparation referred to be able to engage students in the community services and develop attitudes to volunteerism. In addition, Wood focused on the environment in which he considered family backgrounds as an influence to be aware of applying them. According to him, teaching strategies have changed in course of time.

He continued:

Initially, I would say it was more indoctrination, socialization and confirming students to be prepared almost like a cookie cutter like a factory process in building the same model. Nowadays, a little bit more kids think critically about the issues around the world and around them. As he stated, “I have been able to move the needle with the middle path or pack, that is my goal because I can keep them engaged. I have been able to getting them involved in introducing them a process of democracy.

Preparation of teaching helps the participants to identify ways to facilitate students who needed an additional support. On one hand, Wood explained motivation as a factor for engaging students and on the other hand, Childers stated his approach to enable his students to be more critical thinkers. Childers explained that interaction with them would develop students’ thought process better. He explained the following:

I discourage students to memorize the facts. Instead, he suggested engaging students and teachers into interactive teaching process, graphic organization, word webs, knowing a democratic process, state standards and presenting real world problems to students.

In academic preparation, Childers reflected interacting process and graphic organizer and the knowledge of using real world problems as a method of enhancing democratic teaching and part of academic preparation. Nissan introduced a problem of teachers, not all but some, who have good command over content but they are not quite able to delivery content effectively. He stated:

Have good command over contents but they are very poor in the instructional delivery. Therefore, Nissan presented this paradox as a fallacy of many good teachers not being effective at the instructional level. You have to have familiarity with the contents. You have to know about the constitution, voting etc. Academic preparation of teaching and also the real life experiences are equally important, material in the state standard is very helpful, especially, the new American History standards take a more...less breath and more depth. I feel fairly confident, content wise but I am not....one thing you learn about teacher really quickly is that you can be a world authority on a topic but you could be still a crappy teacher if you don't know how to get the kids engaged in some ways. So, just knowing is the first step.

The statement above represents a figurative meaning that teachers with good command over the subject matters also fail in engaging their students. Teaching democracy places different demands on teachers in relation to personal attitudes and engagement.

Sam introduced his preparation on the content focus as well. He stated, “One big focus on content you have to know what you are teaching and teaching needs to be very knowledgeable. But understanding the big idea how they inner play and how those pieces work together to make sense”. Similar practices were described by Wood. He presented the following:

Teachers should be prepared, be aware where they are going to teach and they have to be given more of a partnership model, giving a chance to see the classroom, types of students they are dealing with like what is gonna be like with children, and different areas of knowledge about democracy.

Wood placed importance of teacher’s roles for presenting and dealing with different types of students as well. The central focus academic preparation and the process of facilitating students accordingly.

In addition, Childers focused more on the practice of motivating students. He said that he quotes a character every day and asked his student the reason for explaining why students have to analyze as a quote from someone’s history and tell me what they feel to interpretation quote is. How it applies to learning about and how it applies to personal life. That’s would be very helpful to me and it could be life value.

Kahne and Westheimer (2006) have defined the purpose of good citizens in democracy. According to them, “good citizen as someone who has knowledge of democratic processes, who possesses skills for civic engagement, democratic values and respect for individual, group identities and concern for the greater good for society” (p.2). The bottom line is that the academic preparation to teach democracy fundamentally requires teacher’s readiness to deliver contents.



**Reflecting on own work: Critical thinking.** Among various techniques of teaching that the participants mentioned, one of the practices that the majority of the participants described was self-reflection of teaching. In order to improve teaching, the participants' immediate daily or weekly or semester and the yearly reflections took place. In course of reflective teaching practice, Childers, Bob, Nissan and Wood explained that he would relate past teaching with the present and find what worked very well and what did not. Childers explained his process of teaching as below:

I work actively within diverse classrooms...social studies teachers need to understand the importance of teaching does not essentially limit with our piece of curriculum and content that are going to our students. They need to understand the values first and they need to be very careful about how they learn other students, know students' backgrounds where they come from. Students maybe from different ethnic backgrounds and different countries like that. And once they find out and understand different backgrounds, they will help them teach about democracy and democratic citizenship in a better way because they can take what other students have from their backgrounds and tie into what democracy is.

The process of constructing knowledge depended upon prior knowledge. Reflective teaching was interpreted as a process to the formation of knowledge.

Wood and Sam also described reflection as a part of improving teaching. In fact, the majority of the participants expressed reflection and review of their teaching practices as a significant step in improving their teaching. In Wood's words:

I do reflect my teaching quite often... I am open book in terms of how I teach and how I care my daily and... done in daily basis. when I think back what I had

taught and what gone and how is it gonna happen. I look back and try to see where improvements and changes can be made.... lesson and instruction has gone very well. I either reflect my teaching on daily basis/after each day what needs to be changed and what went well. What students can write and why? .... those kinds of things, I think every teacher is essential that reflects. Take 20 minutes and reflect how the day went what changes need to be made what things

Reflection included knowing student's ability and pace of learning. The ability of teachers in identifying the level of students learning also look a vital process of reflection. Moreover, Sam elaborated how often he performed his reflective practices. He mentioned:

Sure, I would say I reflect in two ways: One-way is in the moment. Right? At the end of the week, Friday or some sort of pause where students are working on a project or they are taking a test. There are some data you... see reality... what happened. I also asked my students for feedback at the end of each quarter and a larger reflection happens over the summer when I have things coming slow down. I can actually look at what worked and what didn't work. I often leave notes, go back and look, work, use, and do a lot of revisions. I essentially never teach the same way twice. There is always some sort of tweaking .... difference from year to year. But certainly, if you don't reflect you can make the same mistakes.

He further added:

What I do actually is, I reflect what I taught and then I kind of survey in the end of the year to see what was the bigger part, what they didn't like, is there something I could have added or what can I have different to see where they stand

and probably take that information for those who truly answer the questions and I repeat and apply to my teaching.

Sam's procedures of revision of work was very periodic. He engaged in multiple steps to ensure of what he could do better. Moreover, reflection was interpreted to identify what worked better and what not. The participants were very sensitive and caring about diversity of students, their cultural background. Diversity of learners in school was also viewed as an important factor for teaching democracy since every ethnicity and students could understand and interpret different ways. The participants took teaching diverse classroom as a big perspective of analyzing things in an acceptable manner. Nissan explained:

I don't write any journal or anything reflecting but I do spend many waking hours of thinking how can do better or what I did wrong. And I don't know just what a part I am, referring trying to self-improvement, be a better person, better teacher and so on. I was reading, I am kind of never satisfied with what I have done which is, I think is a good think.

Nissan revealed the possibility of reflection through writing a journal which he did not practice that time. The goal of reflection was to help to oneself to raise the bar of teaching and realize the potential of improvement in every chance.

**Considering Democratic principles: Academic preparation for teaching.** The participants explained that they practiced teaching as a facilitator and sharing ideas with students. Some of the common principles of teaching that the participants highlighted knew democratic process, knowing the state standards in the content and subject areas, giving real world examples, sharing and exchanging information with students, thinking

beyond memorizing facts, being critical thinkers and knowing the legislature contents.

Sam urged that knowing content was a fundamental thing that every teacher was supposed to know.

In addition, Sam stated:

One big focus on content. You have to know what you are teaching. A teacher needs to be very knowledgeable but understanding big ideas about how they inner play or how these pieces' work is crucial. I would say finally resources is a really good challenge out there is to know what works and what worth the time and value is for you but also your students to learn. I can say go home and find a political cartoon and comment on discussion board or you have to take a picture of political bump sticker picture, describe what you are trying to tell you and best align with sort of things.

He highlighted a technique to engage students. Whereas Nissan expressed his concerns that there are teachers who teacher about election, voting and other important contents do not really understand or demonstrate the sufficient content as well as process knowledge about it. In conclusion, the participants highlighted their commonly used teaching practices in the classroom. The majority of the activities and teaching experiences focused on hands on activities and engaging students.

**Specific Democratic Values as Expressed by the Participants.** The participants expressed core values of democracy. The core democratic values included fundamental beliefs of democracy. The following paragraphs provide the overall conception of democratic values expressed by the participants. Fundamental rights referred to civic participation and community services, liberty and freedom. Locus power of the

individuals was another democratic value expressed by the participants which they perceived it as a political system to establish rules or system in the government.

Furthermore, core values of democracy such as decision making in as a fate of own life, protecting self-demonstrated democratic rights of people. As Saxe (1991) stated the goal of social studies was for the social welfare and social efficacy, the participants' expression aligned with the common good of society. Clean up campaign, volunteerism during election time, joining unions, listening to the voices of other and respecting diversity were some of the examples the participants described as virtues of democracy and democratic citizenship education. Ability to examine information critically was to become a better participant in democracy. As he, further, stated:

It is important for students to understand as citizens that they must be informed, learn how critically examine the information that they are getting, get prepared to be good consumers, critical consumers of the information that they are getting... hope that they will then be better participants in democracy. I have many opportunities, maybe other teachers had not have! I get many different ideas, use a lot of resources. I am on social media like Twitter and things like that and lot of my news feeds into good resources or global learning, global citizenship, democracy.

In preparing citizens, the participant expected that the students would be able to be critical consumers. The participants projected a long-term impact of teaching in students particularly get prepared to be critical consumers.

The participants expressed very similar practices and experiences as Tassoni, et al, explained the roles of teachers in teaching. The participants expressed the values of learning skills and knowledge about democracy and democratic citizenship as Carpenter

(2013) also stated democracy being or understood more than just the forms of government (as cited Dewey, 1966) but it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience (Dewey, 1916, p. 87). Teaching and telling students about the values of democracy is little hypocrisy. Each person would understand or derive the values of democracy in his or her own way. The judgement is up to the person how s/he makes decision.

In conclusion, the participants had various instructional strategies and actively engaged in improving their teaching. Understanding values and civic participation were the major aspects of teaching. Bradshaw (2009) argued, “Democracy takes a great deal of pressure off the individual teacher. Perhaps all that is required of teachers is that they respond to the needs expressed by their students (4).” There needs to be better ways to prepare our students with a broader understanding of what democracy usually entails and the roles of teachers needed to be much broader in understanding diversity and developing democratic values in them. Creating democratic learning community can be another very helpful process of teaching and teachers needed to focus more on how they teach rather than what they teach. The uses of resources and creating democratic learning community in the classrooms might impact learning for a long time. The participants practiced various instructional delivery methods and tried to engage students in meaningful way. They also expressed challenges that they felt were lot of positive ideas and emphasis in knowing the content and be academically prepared to teach effectively. The participants presented good way of engagement techniques and classroom management as well.

The results also presented that the participants believed teaching as a continuous

learning process. According to time and technology, their focus of teaching and addressing issues changed. They always focused their teaching with the primary goals of social studies to prepare democratic citizens. Ravitch (2001) has described that education could be consciously employed to shape society.

The roles of educators in shaping society is significant who can directly and indirectly influence their students in many ways. The participants such as Sam and Wood stated the roles of educators in preparing students and focused on the democratic values and practices that are not innate but they must be consciously and purposefully developed from someone. That someone is the teachers who can share with them or impact the students passed on from one generation to the next (Gutmann, 2001). Similarly, Parker (2001) observes that the citizen identity must be nurtured, as it does not suddenly emerge fully realized and that educators seek to steer it toward particular purposes that align with the norms and ideals of the overarching political community. Indeed, the debates throughout history about the purposes of education and about the desirable form and structure of the curriculum have been premised on the view that citizens can be prepared for the roles they will hold in society through the values and skills they are taught and exposed to during the process of schooling.

### **Chapter Summary**

The participants' approaches to teaching democratic citizenship involved various instructional methods such as mock trial, debates, graphic organizers, experiential learning, and hands on activities, simulation, and direction instruction. The ideas for improving teaching for democratic citizenship followed a student- centered approach where the participants reported that they usually tried to keep their students engaged. In

teaching, thought process of students and the process of internalization of information were the primary focus to develop democratic values in them. Similarly, the participating teachers highlighted challenges for teaching as well. The challenges indicated with the educators who teach for voting with a very limited knowledge. There was also the tendency of students not motivated in active engagement in the learning process. Teaching for democratic citizenship was not only the concept of political awareness but it was viewed as a way of seeking common good and commitment to be responsible, critical, and culturally responsive citizenship from local to global scale. Some participants argued that the social studies teachers are not only responsible for teaching and developing ideas about democratic citizenship. It is the people and other teachers who can also share the same vision and teach students about it.

The participants widely recognized the significance of teaching democratic citizenship. The main focus was on the instructional delivery practices in which the participants expressed confidence. All six participants presented very common instructional methods, where there appeared difference in few areas. The majority of the participants advocated for the student-centered teaching strategies where the participants incorporated the voices of students in teaching. According to Nissan, his philosophy of teaching was to bring the idea of democracy and active citizenship participation by focusing on the civil rights movement and to ask students to examine the source of document critically such as “Document to Constitution”. He stated:

I tried to bring in the idea of democracy and active citizenship participation possible...looking up some aspects of civil right movement. Kids will see the power of democracy. I always try to refer back to document to constitution, rates.



I always to try to point out the power of an individual in a democracy and the power of individual to organize others in a democracy. Therefore, I take that process... be a backdrop or context everything we do.

The process of teaching for Nissan was more readily to prepare students able to internalize the information and see the power of individuals in a democracy. Furthermore, his teaching perspective seemed to identifying locus of power residing in the people. The Individual's power in democracy was perceived as a backdrop of democracy. For him, improving teaching for democracy included experiential learning.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion**

The following sections discuss the conceptual framework, summary of the problem, limitation of the chapter, discussion of themes on the three main research questions (conception of democracy, development of ideas about democratic citizenship, and implementation of ideas and experiences into teaching), challenges in teaching, chapter summary, linking the development of knowledge with the theoretical framework of constructivism, implications for the study, and recommendations.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The purpose of the study was to understand participants' conception of democracy, development of ideas about democratic citizenship and the implementation of their ideas and experiences into improving teaching. Giroux provided an important framework for me in conceptualizing the study. Giroux (2004) noted:

Transformative intellectual in response to a series of educational reforms that effectively sidelined teachers casting them in the role of high-level technicians who lacked the ability to provide moral and intellectual leadership for the nation's youth. The term transformative intellectual was essentially a call to rethink the nature of teachers' work and to underscore the role of the teacher in producing and legitimating various political, economic and social interests through the pedagogies they endorse and utilize. (p.209)

Giroux focused attention on the roles of teachers in shaping democratic society through education. He called schools to be understood as "contested spheres that embody and express a struggle over what gets taught and how it gets taught, including types of

knowledge, forms of authority and versions of past and future” (Giroux, 2004, p. 210).

The findings resulted that the participants described their conceptions of democracy as common conceptions of democracy according to the understanding of it. The participants conceptualized the meaning of democracy from the political and social perspectives where the participation of citizens at local and state level, joining interest groups, having voices to themselves when needed and influencing the government for positive changes was cited. The conceptualization of democracy leaned towards a pluralistic stance, which can engage with political and cultural differences. The participants tried to stay focused on providing responses and relate examples with their experiences, to some extent; they presented their experiences through teachers’ perspectives and having two minds set. One, processing information to find the most relevant ideas, recalling the past almost forgotten and second continuously engaging to the interviewer. The concept of local to global democratic citizenship was very interesting. There appeared some shift in the process of it. The participants presented a narrow to broad perspectives involved in the conceptualization of defining democracy. In addition, the conception of democracy was perceived as a pluralistic stance on democracy, which can engage citizens with the political and cultural differences. Leicester, Modgi, and Modgi (2000) highlighted the reality of pluralism and developing educational models that prepare young people for the essential role it plays in the democratic system. The conception of democracy looked like a customary idea but there should be limits on what kind of political system can be discussed as a democracy. The participants such as Childers and Lori talked about different political system- communism, Nazi, and autocratic rules which make difficult in properly conceptualizing

the type of democracy. The results also suggested that there should be some sort of minimal definitional core for democracy, although the participants presented a concept of democracy based on their existing knowledge.

### **Summary of the Problem**

There is little evidence to the understanding of how teachers conceptualize democracy and develop ideas about democracy and implement their ideas and experience into teaching. Avery, 2004; Nelson, 2001; Stanley, 2001; and Vinson & Ross, 2011 (as cited in Ritter, 2013) have suggested that students can learn important civic knowledge, skills, and values in school and transformation of information are the key to learning democratic citizenship. According to the assessment of students' understanding of civic knowledge from grades 4-12, civic knowledge of 4th-grade students was found higher since 1998. However, the civic knowledge of grades 8 through 12 showed lower than 2006 with a score of 151 to 148 (NEAP, 2010, p. 3). Similarly, Edmundson, Martusewicz, and Lupinacci (2011) described how students understand the nature of democracy (p. 30). The study described the results that students had difficulty in understanding a democratic process. Having difficulty in understanding the process of democracy provided a rationale to understand about the conception of teachers.

Zarrillo (2011) emphasized students to become active inquirers about democracy through social studies education. He claimed that the knowledge children acquire as a part of social studies tends to be the highest priority for teachers since social studies must be a vehicle for children to become active citizens in our society” (p. 319). This argument conveyed the role of teachers in preparing students for democracy and teachers to be active inquirers about their own interest in teaching democracy. In developing ideas

about democracy in the future citizenships, studying how teachers conceptualized a democracy and how they developed ideas crucially significant to study how teachers define democracy, understand ideas about democratic citizenship, and put their ideas and experiences into teaching. Meier (2009) stated that the purpose of schooling is to prepare children and young adults for participation in the American democracy who can best analyze information, place it in context and draw a conclusion from it. These habits of mind are associated, for example, with the ability to weigh evidence, to consider alternative viewpoints, to identify cause and effect, to formulate counterfactual suppositions, and to judge the relevance of information (p. 47).

Meier (2009) explained the significance of developing habits of mind necessary to be powerful and well-informed citizens. Parker (2003) also argued about the type of citizens we want schools to cultivate depends upon the type of we want to develop. Zarrillo (2011) emphasized students to become active inquirers about democracy through social studies education. He claimed, “The knowledge children acquire as a part of social studies tends to be the highest priority for teachers since social studies must be a vehicle for children to become active citizens in our society” (p. 319). This argument conveyed the role of teachers in preparing students for democracy and teachers to be active inquirers about their own interest in teaching democracy.

### **Limitations in the Chapter**

There were a few limitations set for this study. Those limitations were that one participant described racial and ethnic inequalities, a part of the struggle for recognition. Some of the factors cited to account for this occurrence included, teachers having never experienced a democratic classroom, persons employed as teachers without requisite

educational certification, insufficient emphasis on these principles in teacher preparation programs, lack of consistent support to help teachers integrate these principles into their teaching practice.

The review of the literature showed some confusion of participants' conception of democracy. The participants also realized that the conception of democracy as a very complicated idea on its own. Framing the conception of democracy was not found or defined in any newer way. The shared conception of democracy resembled with the universally defined conception of democracy such as the rule of the government, by the people and for the people. The rulers and the ruled classes, the government and the people related with the political purposes. The power of democracy resides in people was the decision power either individually or a group.

The review of the literature revealed that the main purpose of social studies education has not been shifted and the goal of social studies education has focused on improving the lives of individuals (Ochoa-Becker, 2007), and teachers have been curricular-instructional gatekeepers (Thornton, 2005). As the participants conceptualized the meaning of a democracy and understood the process of the development of ideas about democratic citizenship, analysis of the participants' perspectives is important to us. The ideal situation for us is when we can think of education as critical citizenship and the "citizens are informed consumers" (Nissan), the essence of understanding a tendency to disengage citizens in democracy is crucial. In addition, the roles and the purposes of social studies as it began with the goal of preparing democratic citizenship, has not been changed but the results revealed that a new dimension of looking into democratic issues and cultural values have been slightly shifted. Hence, understanding teachers' conception

of democracy and ideas of democratic citizenship recognized the role of teachers and the function of schools in renewing the purpose of the subject and the practice of teaching in a way that is more powerful.

### **Discussion of the Themes**

Discussions of themes are categorized into the three major sections such as the conception of democracy, development of ideas about democratic citizenship, and the Integration of ideas and experiences into improving classroom teaching.

The study focused on seeking answers to the three research questions as below:

1. How do teachers, who teach 7-12 grades social studies, conceptualize the meaning of democracy?
2. How do they develop ideas and concept regarding democratic citizenship education?
3. In what ways do they implement their perspectives and experiences into teaching and nurturing students into becoming thriving democratic citizens?

### **Themes Discussion on the Conception of Democracy**

Research question 1: How do teachers, who teach 7-12 grades social studies, conceptualize the meaning of democracy?

There are five major themes and two sub-themes have emerged under the second main theme.

**Democracy as actions: Engaging in the environment.** Participants conceptualized democracy in many ways. Majority of the participants believed and expressed ideas to be generated through engaging in environment. The engaging in environment was an opportunity to acquire civic experiences. The process included emphasis on connecting

scenarios with the past topics or analysis of decisions making in the past, meeting people from different walks of life, listening to the voices of people and sharing ideas and experiences what people value most in society. Active participation was one of the main civic duties that the participants always stressed such as supporting the government or taking part in community services and engaging their students in similar types of civic projects in community and schools.

The main characteristics through the conception of democracy claimed that democracy is a political representation of the people. The people exercise their power for personal existence and want to be the fate or fortune of their lives through decision-making. Individual power of decision-making and the ability to voice to justice, taking part in civic activities revealed the main conception of the participants about democracy. Further, participants' conception about democracy conveys a strong sense of peoples' engagement in a democratic process, enrichment of personal experience. Staying informed as citizens about various social, political and other pertaining social issues in timely manner. Primarily, participants posited that developing ideas about democracy and democratic citizenship was contextual based, environmentally influenced, family values and at large, it was an experiential learning. The experiential learning occurred during schooling years and they gained substantively more experiences as they entered into the teaching field. Becoming a teacher paved access to understand about democracy while imparting the knowledge and skills to their students. The participants also concurred that the "Engaging in Environment" included voting, jury duty, writing a letter to the editor, volunteering for a cause. One example of citizens' paying attention was the issue of marijuana (Lori). Engaging in environment meant for citizens to improve the



existing environment such as sightseeing signature collection by going door-to-door to change or influence maintain your government.

**Local Initiatives: Citizens directed initiatives and government directed initiatives.** Participants described that they gained most of their experiences about democracy and democratic citizenship through civic engagement at local level.

*Citizens directed initiatives.* The participants viewed that they were more easily engaged in local environment than national level. Government is effective when the public is engaged in electing officials and holding them accountable. Beyond voting, civic engagement encompasses a wide array of activities that strengthen community including charitable giving, volunteerism and participating in community organizations. Nissan stated that ... democracy is probably more easily implemented more at local level. In today's world, I think, city council, mayor, to be honest, I think people have lot more input on that level. In summary, citizens are more engaging at local level of democratic collaborative activities than national level.

*Government directed initiatives.* Another type of democratic participants that the participants mentioned was the government directed initiative. According to the participant, the government directed initiative included attending in national and international level seminars, democratic projects and more. The process of conceptualizing ideas about democracy generally take place for representatives at national level. Those citizens included stakeholders, (Bob, Lori, Nissan, Sam, and Childers).

**People having power over life and deciding own fate.** The participants such as Bob, Nissan, Lori, Wood and Sam pointed out the power of democracy in people.

According to them, the conception about democracy and exercise of its power endowed to people manifested as people engaged in and being own master of fate in many ways as they could. This notion set a fundamental basis of people having power in democracy over life and enabling them to make decision over their lives as well. Joining groups of interest, voting, writing a letter to the editor, and understanding how to work within the system fall into the category of people having power (authority, Nissan & Sam) in democracy to decide one's own fate.

**Creating rules/systems for life.** Democracy is a way of thinking and acting as once feels responsible. It is defined by separation of powers, government, political system while it compliances with human rights and freedoms, majority rules and minority protection. Participation of citizens for their prosperity, community development, exercise human rights and be informed citizens were some of the commonly cited attributes of democracy. Subsequently, democracy was conceptualized for freedom, protection of rights, encouraging one another for self-reliance, building trust in the people, and establishing political system of life, protecting each other, and protecting from the government.

**Protecting each other and from the government.** Participants also stressed that having authority over individual life (Nissan), protecting each other and protecting from government was considered as the fundamental rights as the main aspiration of democracy. Defining a democracy was based on the understanding of the individuals. Each individual had some slightly different understanding of democracy in terms of its purposes. However, there were similarities in the essence of the meaning of democracy and the basic principles of democracy. Lori, Sam, Wood, Childers and Nissan, all talked

about people's participation in the government to ensure rights and responsibilities for the common good. Bob believed that democracy as ideas by which people will be in control of who governs them. Lori emphasized democracy a system in which the people engage in the environment to influence the government for change. Nissan perceived democracy as a process of improving the lives of people by being able to decide what they think good for themselves. Individuals have the locus of power in democracy to make decisions as masters of their own fate. Another perspective of democracy was that people as a community or as an individual work for community and strive forth to establish democracy in society.

The responses of the participants showed three types of democracy theories as they conceptualized democracy. Those three types of specific democratic theories as informed by the responses were liberal democracy, deliberative democracy, and Participatory democracy. These three types are explained below.

### **Specific Theories of Democracy as Identified**

#### **Liberal Democracy.**

(Bacon, 2006; Baumann, 2013; & Cunningham (1994) identified the main principle of liberal democracy of protecting individuals and democracy conceived as rule by the people for people. According to this description and the participants' understanding the concepts of democracy aligned with the protection of individuals and their ability to making decisions in their lives. Furthermore, Bacon (2003) explained:

The United States was founded on a concept of democracy that has its philosophical roots in the Euro-western classical liberal theory of Locke and Rousseau. The philosophy of liberal democracy is to protect individuals from

others, and otherwise to stay out of individuals' lives and allow them to live as they freely choose. The goal of liberalism is to secure opportunities for individuals to realize their full potentials. (p. 19)

The liberal democracy emphasizes the need to protecting rights of citizens and they are free to choose that are guaranteed by the "Documents like the Constitution and the Bill of Rights (Nissan). Similarly, the majority of the participants also responded their conceptions of democracy linking with the rule and the rulers and stressed citizens' participation as one of the core of the conceptions of democracy. In addition, Cunningham (1994) claimed the pure idea of democracy, "government of the whole people by the whole people" (p.30). With this ideas of Cunningham on liberal democracy, the participants' conceptions of democracy manifested similar characteristic of their understanding. All the participants' level of recognizing the underpinning definition of democracy was found repeated as freedom and autonomy, democracy as direct and representative forms of government, and conception of individuality "as something ready-made, already processed, and needing only the removal of certain legal restrictions to come into full play" (Dewey, 1935, p. 39). Most participants explained that they were influenced by their family members in shaping their conceptions of democracy as well. Wood, Childers and Sam exemplified their parents as role models while other participants expressed their influences by other adults. Therefore, the conceptual understanding of democracy reveled that every individual has a pre-conceived of theory of democracy as well.

## **Deliberative Democracy**

Deliberative theory was another form of the conception of democracy as expressed by the participants. Cunningham (as cited Cohen, 1997: that:

The notion of a deliberative democracy is rooted in the intuitive ideal of a democratic association in which the justification of the terms and conditions of association proceeds through public argument and reasoning among equal citizens. In describing deliberative democracy should contain a necessary condition for attaining legitimacy and rationality with regard of collective decision making. (p. 163)

According to the philosophical nature of deliberative democracy, citizens' need to be associated with some forms of group of interest. From the analysis of the responses of the participants, they explained themselves to be related with either political parties, ideologically or unions. Their affiliation to the unions or political parties informed the participants practiced and believed in deliberative democracy as well. They did not have just a single democratic theory as a conceptual understanding of democracy. In addition, the participants also talked about the consensus and the common good of people at a personal level and community level. At the individual level, interaction with other people such as stake holders, students, and people from social new medias were mentioned to stay informed citizens and promote the government initiative at local or national levels.

## **Participatory Democracy**

Participatory democracy was another democratically expressed theory that the most participants stated. According to the participants, the practice of participatory democracy was described as the essence of understanding of democracy. Glassman and

Patton (2014) regarded the important relationship between citizens and their “participation in democracy as a framework for sharing the human condition and a tool that allows citizens to flourish as democratic values play significant roles for creating individuals and community better” (p.1353). Some traits that participants gave examples included open discussion, debates on social issues in order to make themselves informed and take part in democratic process as well. In addition, the participants also described their self-engagements and involving their students in community services such as trash pick-up, civic project assignment, and election campaigns. These involvements were interpreted as acquiring information and personal liberty maintaining law and order in society, create rules and execution of civil responsibilities under the theoretical conceptual model of participatory democracy.

However, there is little evidence to the understanding of how teachers construct ideas about democracy and put into practice in teaching. Scholars such as Avery, 2004; Nelson, 2001; Stanley, 2001; and Vinson & Ross, 2011 (as cited in Ritter, 2013) have expressed the values of student learning in terms of democratic citizenship and “argued that students can learn important civic knowledge, skills, and values through the study and practice of democracy in the classroom” (p. 42). The essence of comprehending the practice of democracy will remain unexplored and unanswered unless we understand how teachers construct the ideas of democracy and put them into practice. The U.S. is a democracy. Schools are main proponents of teaching about democracy where teachers are agents for promoting democratic citizenship. Hence, this call for understanding how teachers construct ideas about democracy and engage in the art of creating democratic educational practices needs to be studied. While there is abundant literature on teaching

and democracy, few studies focus on how teachers develop their own conceptions of democracy. Although continuous efforts and reforms in social studies movements have occurred since the inception of the field, there exist no studies on how social studies teachers have constructed their ideas about democracy and how their phenomena of understanding impacts their teaching. Along with the reform movements and scholarly refinements in the field, scholars (Hertzberg, 1981, Seixas, 1993; & Saxe, 1991) have argued for and purposed the need of a much wider understanding and more information on how teachers' practice of democracy.

Hostetler (2013) explained the importance of social studies teachers in promoting democracy and democratic ideas in school. He described:

Social studies teachers' beliefs about (as part of conceptualization) democracy, and the ways they think those beliefs are related to their practice are important to understand if we are to address teaching for democratic living. One of these purposes has been accepted broadly as teaching skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for citizenship in a democratic society. (Hostetler, 2013, p.193)

Description by Hostetler (2013) referred a process of teachers' conceptualizing democracy through their practices and personal beliefs. Similarly, the participants of this study reflected the formation their democracy from theoretical knowledge and influence by their adults in family. Although, there appeared the two strong tenets of conceptualization of democracy, one having theoretical knowledge (text books and college courses) and the last one the family influence. In other words, the trend of

conceptualization of democracy, was founded on the personal level and the individual orientation of teaching practices.

Although, it was very difficult to identify a more dominate factor out of these three factors (Textbook knowledge and family adult influence, and reflection on their own work), participants' concept of democracy articulated the shared conception of democracy in the society and represented the concept as a person practices which would require deeper practice on their own reflections on teaching and thought process. While linking teachers' conceptions of democracy, the responses strongly conveyed a mixed thoughts process of conceptualization. The majority of the participants perceived reflected their perspectives of democracy embedded with the theoretical understanding of democracy rather their own reconstruction of metacognition. The participants understood the shared conception of democracy in the society rather than describing in-depth philosophical foundation democratic conceptions. Perhaps, exploring the concept of democracy is an abstract idea in its own.

### **Summary of the Conception of Democracy.**

The participants developed conception of democratic citizenship from various sources. Fundamentally, their conception of democracy was found developed from their experiential learning, college courses, networking, exchanging ideas and opinions with other people, being critical, joining professional development programs, and parental influence in the family. Participants explained the conception of democracy as a political system of government that holds power to govern people. The conceptual understanding of democracy described the meaning of sovereignty, democratic values, liberty, justice, freedom and to involve in any righteous activities. Democracy was perceived as a way of



ensuring fundamental rights within the framework of liberal democracy, deliberative democracy, and participatory democracy. In other words, individuals' sovereignty to life and decision making, having agency, protecting each other and from the government in case of need, having voices and devoting their time to the issues that they consider to be of interest and relevant to their life and need were emphasized.

As one participant indicated a shift in the ways of creating democratic learning community by mutual beneficial process, the key force of installing democratic conception greatly relied upon schoolteachers. The participants provided examples that attributed to the experiential learning. For instance, Bob mentioned about his wide array of knowledge development most through traveling and networking, Lori exemplified her method of constructing democratic ideas via experiential learning as well, and Nissan introduced his combination of knowledge though political engaged in the Union and political party. Similarly, Wood, Sam, and Childers were more receptive of the ideas democracy and democratic citizenship as their parents became role models. Meanwhile, the participant considered technology as a major invention to influence teaching and learning. Modern technological advancements are a driving force to integrate ideas and gain knowledge around the world for democracy and democratic citizenship. The participants defined the conception of democracy based on their theoretical knowledge and their personal experiences who had relatively similar conceptions about the meaning of democracy.

## **Developing Ideas about Democratic Citizenship**

Research question 2: How do you develop ideas about democratic citizenship?

This section describes six themes on the development of ideas about democratic citizenship. The themes address the research question 2.

Locus of power: Political and institutional affiliation for the development of ideas. For developing ideas about democratic citizenship, participants discussed their bases of the formation of ideas. They projected trajectory perspectives on it. The locus of power composed of the political affiliation such as unions or political party or professional organizations. People (citizens) were the ultimate power in decision-making level. Such locus of power vested in citizens was perceived as their fate of decision-making ability for their own good and the general welfare of the people. In other words, the participants stated that they adopted the kids' ideas at schools and incorporated those ideas into teaching and listened to other people for their diverse opinions. For example, Nissan stated that he was willing to listen different perspectives without arguing with them.

Furthermore, he stated:

I tried to bring in the idea of a democracy and active citizenship participation whenever possible. For instance, looking up some aspects of civil right movement. Kids will see the power of democracy. I always try to refer back to the document to constitution. I always try to point out the power of an individual in a democracy and the power of the individual to organize others in a democracy. Therefore, I take that process to be a backdrop or context everything we do. Similarly, Sam presented the argument that people having authority in the decision-making process are a way to exercise democratic freedom, and such

locus of power would affiliate with a center of activities in democracy. The leaning with the politics was another source of gaining locus of power. For example, Sam sated, “I am not a highly partisan person in political leaning. My political activism has been an example that I had an issue with a topic, so I have contacted my representatives. I have shown that what I have done”.

Nissan talked about the document to constitution as a source of power to the people in democracy. He narrated his practice of engaging students by bringing ideas of democracy and active citizenship participation whenever. An example included that he always talked about civil right movement so that kids would see the power of democracy.

Furthermore, he stated:

I always try to refer back to documents like the constitution and the Bill of Rights. I always to try to point out the power of an individual in a democracy and the power of individuals to organize others in a democracy. Therefore, I take that process as a backdrop or context everything we do.

Individual power in democracy is to important. It is protected by guaranteed by the documents like the constitution and the Bill of Rights. Hence, the locus of the individual power and a group power in democracy are significant to development ideas about civil rights.

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**Multiple sources used for acquiring ideas about democratic citizenship.** The Participants developed ideas about democracy from multiple sources such as taking part in different activities, interacting with people from different occupations, attending campaigns, picking trash, and involving political rallies. The majority of activities that the participants mentioned were related to hands on activities. The participants focused the roles of teachers in shaping the ideas and attitudes of students by becoming active citizens in a democratic society and formulated ideas about democratic citizenship through the political activism. The participants often cited the professional development training and the use of technology in acquiring knowledge. The professional training helped them to meet with people from different occupations, and exchanged their ideas. In addition, the participants acquired ideas about democracy from courses taken at college, university levels and taking membership with different subject related professional organizations.

Participants shared their experiences as a teacher and a citizen to highlight the active participation. As teachers, they engage in community services and become members of professional organizations to learn and contribute within their groups or the

community. Kahne and Westheimer (2006) defined a “good citizen as someone who has knowledge of democratic processes, who possesses skills for civic engagement, democratic values and respect for individual, group identities and concern for the greater good for society” (p.2). Similarly, Ochoa-Becker (2007) has stressed the purpose of social studies education for improving the lives of individuals as widely as possible. Furthermore, Ajiboye (2009) defined social studies as citizenship education as a subject for providing students with the knowledge, skills, values, dispositions and attitudes, which will enable them to actively participate in a democracy (p. 21). These terms are characteristics of good citizens, civic engagement, democratic values and knowledge skills for citizenship education have consistently been used in the field of social studies justifying its goal for democracy.

Lori stated her approach to providing students more opportunities to experience related to democracy outside such as campaign, Election Day, and volunteering or starting up own interest groups to get richer learning experiences. However, she expressed her concern about lacking enough opportunity to empower her students. Nissan’s Childers’, and Sam’s way of engaging students was through the using the direct instruction. They assigned students individual research issues and tried to resolve them. Similarly, the participants viewed that the integration of technology in teaching drastically helped them to draw attention of their students. In case of Wood, he succeeded much in teaching by engaging students in mock trial and discussion. In addition, he believed that providing supplementary information substantially engage students in critical thinking and inspired them very much.

Sam explained that he divides the work among his students in accessible way, which allows students online scenarios, and the he directs his students go home and find a political cartoon then comment on discussion board. This activity suggested that those ideas about democratic citizenship are developed through interaction and personal reflection on the subject. Furthermore, community services (Trash pickup campaign, nail filing, putting stamps on envelop, etc.) were tremendously helpful in the knowledge and skills development of the participant-self and their students. Two participants (Bob & Nissan) claimed, “Citizens of a democracy are not born with democratic values; they acquire these values through education, which should not be taken for granted.” In democracy, citizens are the essence who understands democracy, and their ideals and beliefs grow over time.

To sum up, the participants viewed and expressed their techniques to engage students through various hands on activities. The level of learning about developing ideas about democratic citizenship developed more by doing more community services and interacting with the learners.

**Curriculum emphasis: Content driven teaching.** The participants stressed the importance of autonomous power of teachers in designing a curriculum. However, over the past years, such freedom of designing a full curriculum power has been curtailed by some state or federal level. Bob expressed the concerns about the control of autonomy over teacher’s freedom in fully designing a curriculum because he believed that the control of power has affected the ability to decide the contents to teacher students. His argument was that a curriculum provides a structure for the content that determines what is effective for students to teach. Bob described that some difficulty that still exists in

preparing teachers to teach democracy. He stated:

It is difficult to speak for U.S. schools and a bit of difficult concept because we develop our curriculum in our own way. I was more likely teaching and learning in ways that would be considered democratic teaching and democratic principles. I think that now more and more that has been removed from my control. I would teach little bit less about that type of learning than I would like to. However, recently they removed some of the autonomy from what my curriculum was where I controlled more of what I taught. I am not sure exactly where it is coming from. I feel that I am losing that autonomy than back I had more autonomy.

Bob expected more autonomy to do better in teaching for democratic citizenship. He thought that the loss of power to curriculum was a factor for further consideration of restoring the autonomy of the teachers. He also explained the service-learning project that intended fostering citizenship skills and knowledge to students as part of the curriculum. He stated:

My focus in teaching what we call democracy in education, I have done for many years. What I call is my citizenship project. Essentially, it is a service-learning project. I have students actively participate in democracy- citizenship, right and responsibilities. The curriculum calls for us to teach citizenship right and responsibilities so we talk about what some of the things are that government does for the students. Then, we talk about their responsibilities as good citizens. As good citizens we eventually get the facts that it is important sometimes to give back that include things like community service.

Ideas and knowledge about democracy are cultivated through the active participation in



giving back to community. The concept of citizenship lies at the center of democratic education. The process of developing ideas seemed influenced by the institutional affiliation and curriculum focused. In addition, Bob continued that use of different resources such as social media-twitter, and news feed that enabled him to filter and formulate his ideas. Lori also observed some disconnect in the content area in curriculum. According her, "I find a dis-connection in teaching the American government and citizenship education. She stated:

I find a disconnection for teaching the American government and citizenship education. I feel that most of times is spent understanding what is a government and how the government runs. I do not think a lot of emphasis is put upon students on engaging in the government. I think there is a disconnection. Most of my honors students are not engaged unless the election year and what is being a good citizen.

Although Lori has presented challenges in teaching, particularly engaging students, she has mentioned an unbalanced curriculum content in teaching as well. Another aspect of the development of ideas was through the active participation and linking with the document to constitution by Nissan. As he stated:

I tried to bring in the idea of democracy and active citizenship participation...for instance; looking up some aspects of civil right movement will see the power of democracy. I always try to refer back to document to constitution and always try to point out the power of an individual in a democracy and the power of individual to organize others in a democracy.

According to Nissan, document to constitution was another source that ideas and

knowledge related to democracy and democratic citizenship are developed. Regarding a document, Doganay (2012) also mentioned that the certain documents that are established legal position of individuals on civil are significant and it is Citizenship is a civic contract between the state and the individual and citizenship is also a social role. (p. 3).

Next, Childers highlighted the advantages of working within a diverse classroom for formulating ideas. Working with the diverse classroom helped him to acknowledge kids' ideas and expand the ideas as well. He talked about the need to discuss about different cultures and provided a variety of reasons for learning about other cultures among them as appreciation of all people in the class. He presented a picture of his practice in developing ideas. I have learned to take lot of my ideas about democracy and democratic citizenship. I really try to adopt the kid's ideas, adopt democratic citizenship education to the needs and the interests of students. I work actively within diverse classrooms.

However, some participants struggled to explain it. For example, one of the participant admitted that the concept of ideas is complex and considered of regional differences, cultural differences, and politically different ideas. She remarked:

That is a difficult question. How...? It is just the idea of we want the rights of the people. However, how do you do that in a country where we have regional differences? We have cultural differences, different parties, and different ideas. How do you bring that and we be fair to everybody as their rights and needs are different?

She expressed her concern about how we understand diversity and be informed citizens about rights and readiness to teach democracy and democratic citizenship. Moreover, for enhancing teaching and ideas of democratic citizenship, Nissan suggested a teacher to be

a content driven teacher by facilitating democratic ideas knowing a democratic process, being academically prepared and focusing the state standards. He stated, “You have to have familiarity with the contents. You have to know about the constitution, voting, and giving real life experiences, etc. The American History standards take a more...less breath and more depth...Nissan presented his skepticism about some teachers not being able to know the voting procedure but teaching it. He argued, “It is equally important that a person teaching lead on all those things...I find it ironic that when I have known people in my career who were teaching about democratic citizenship who never know who vote and anything” real life experiences.

In conclusion, having familiarity with the content, knowing the state standards, presenting real life examples, mastering the contents, knowing the procedures and appropriate instructional delivery would increase the teaching learning experience and address the curriculum goals for developing ideas about democratic citizenship.

**Experiential learning.** Experiential learning was one of the dominating themes that the majority of the participants emphasized for acquiring knowledge about democracy and democratic citizenship. The conception of democracy as the participants perceived related with life-long learning process. Learning democracy by doing was the main goal of experiential learning. Lori described her lived experience as below:

Experiential learning...Marci Kaptur is the most senior female democrat in the House of Representatives. So, when I was in high school... I helped volunteer in her campaign...It may make more sense to understand democratic process and importance of democracy. We stamped on envelopes... helped write addresses...helped go to door to door...walked in a parade. We were with Marci Kaptur of congress. I had my students on election day

who helped out with registering voters and we talked about current affairs... We had CNN news students every day and we would tie studies what they see, and compare with other government ... comparing and contrasting that students understand ... appreciate democratic citizenship.

The experiential learning was one of the most effective ways of teaching students about democratic citizenship. Different types of community activities and interaction with other people and meeting with the CNN news reporters were some hands on activities to develop the knowledge about democratic citizenship.

In the development process of democratic citizens, Annette (2009) argued a trend that is going in the U.S. According to Annette, citizens would learn democracy by self-engagement in community services and academics are viewing service learning or community based learning as an important part of citizenship. Those activities included volunteering on community services.

The participants expressed examples of the ways their self-engaged activities in experiential learning. In addition, Kahne and Westheimer (2003) recommend a model of citizenship education based on the principles of social justice. According to the authors, the principles of citizenship education focus on the concepts of public work and students to move beyond individualistic conceptions of citizenship toward a democratic citizenship education (p. 16). The participants perceived experiential learning as a deliberative of democracy starting from home (Lori). Moreover, Sam voiced his father being an influential who consistently reinforced ideas about liberty and freedom. Liberty and freedom were the essential elements of democracy that the majority of the participants highlighted and had influenced by their parents. According to Sam, "My dad

has deep passion about those things and I was exposed to multiple angles but not just in school.” This participant’s statement described the role of a parent in life of a child to impact in shaping the perspectives of different things in life. In experiential learning, the roles of adults were significantly dominant. As the participants described a democracy as actions, the experiential learning was a plan-form for understanding the engagement of all people involved in learning and experiencing a democracy at first place. However, much of the experiential learning focused on the logistics nature of a collective organizing exercise, individual learning by doing exercise; and writing a paper (civic project work) and parental engagement in developing the conception of a democracy. There needed an elaborative reflection and information experiential learning was sole opportunity for learners and how effective it could be compared to most if not all their other courses for teaching democracy and democratic citizenship.

**Technological influence.** Participants stressed the integration of technology in facilitating teaching for democracy and democratic education. The participants stressed the technology as a need of promoting various activities in the classroom and quicker way of drawing attention of students in engaging them. One of the participants mentioned that:

Technology has been one...technology has really allowed me to teach in a different way than me in my first couple of years.... I have all my students have laptops. I teach government too. So, this is just an incredible resource, vast potential...to incorporate technology to help students understand democracy and citizenship.

In teaching, participants stressed the use of technology to enhance their teaching where modern technology has become instrumental in knowing about integrating various

activities in facilitating students in active learning process.

**Professional development and other activities.** Stating the importance of professional development, participants affirmed that the professional development had helped to develop ideas about democratic citizenship education. Institutional affiliation and taking part in other field led training program such as Citizenship World, going to city council meetings, interviewing somebody in the position of government or authority, and taking the government class helped Bob to develop about democracy and democratic citizenship.

In addition, participants accentuated that they attended professional development meetings. Bob stated, “I do a lot collaboration with other teachers I work with to find better way to teach democracy and democratic citizenship”. The participants also stated how their affiliation with various networking helped them to develop ideas about democratic citizenship education. Naming of the involvement included The Ohio Council of Social Studies, National Council for Social Studies, working with organizations, involving in promoting global education around Northwest Ohio and more. Despite their opportunities in developing ideas, some concerns about having similar access to many teachers expressed their concerns. However, having exposure to community participation and resources significantly helped participants to gain richer experiences about democracy. As Bob claimed:

I did gain a lot of confidence from the opportunities that I had for professional development, especially in democratic education because, you know the group I involved in and the opportunities. I had specially working on projects I got to travel overseas. I worked in Ukraine and Morocco... specifically on democratic education projects and

having those experiences really helped me to gain

confidence in teaching in the classroom and developing democratic values, I think. So, I have a lot of opportunities, maybe other teachers don't have. I got a lot of different ideas, use resources. I am on social media like Twitter like that and I feed lot of my news into good resources such as global learning, global citizenship democracy.

Bob's opportunities to gain experiences and involvement with various national and international involvements significantly contributed to shape his ideas about democracy and teaching in the classroom. Community involvement and opportunities to attending democratic educational projects also enriched his ideas further. In regards with the development of knowledge, involvement of the participants into various activities proved essential factors. Moreover, Scholars, Goodlad, Soder and McDaniel (2008) argued about the importance of guiding principles of democracy in order to maintain a good community life (p. 1). The authors claimed that democracy holds us together as a moral community that embraces our guiding principles-liberty, justice and good life.

### **Summary of the Development of Ideas about Democratic Citizenship**

The participants developed ideas about democratic citizenship over the years through experiential learning. Such experiential learning opportunities included travelling, professional development, courses at college levels, interaction with stakeholders, interacting with colleagues, making use of technology, listening to the diverse opinions of people, thinking out of box-looking, comparing and contrasting different issues and problems in the classroom, community services and parental influences. Although the participants listened the sources of the development of ideas about democratic

citizenship, majority of the participants had difficulty in stating and elaborating the process of the growth ideas about democratic citizenship. Some participants stuck to recall their experiences. For example, one participant realized and questioned to self that “how do I do it? It’s a difficult question” (Lori). The responses to the question, from time to time, showed participants’ a confusion of thoughts and they often switched to the ideas of teaching. In other words, a challenge existed in the course of identifying self as a citizen. Instead, the responses more readily related with teaching for democratic citizenship. Some participants mentioned insufficient emphasis and experiences of teachers who are not fully aware of the voting process but they are teaching in schools. That would create a challenge for students and teachers to fully identify and articulate ideas about democratic citizenship or democratic principles.

In section four (the first research question), the participants outlined the attributes of democratic schools and classrooms. These attributes implied certain characteristics of the teachers who would promote these ideals. Characteristics such as, being fair, just and equitable and fostering a deliberative outlook among their students so that they might contribute to the development of a more democratic society. The importance of valuing the child and placing performance of all students was a central concern. Engagement of teachers in their professional life i.e. identifying ways of giving teachers voice so that they might shape decisions relating to their professional lives. The role of the “teacher as professional” must be established as a means of valuing teachers’ work, giving them greater voice in their professional lives and emphasizing their function in shaping citizens to participate in wider society.

Educators cited teachers a lack of proportion of untrained teachers to teach democratic



citizenship who are not fully aware of voting processes and beyond. The inability of teaching professionals suggested that there are teacher educators who lacked the knowledge and the practices of understanding democratic process. As Marker and Mehlinger (1992) described that the field of social studies is bound together by the aim of democratic citizenship education. However, deep and persistent divisions exist over the exact meaning of this ideal, there is widespread agreement among social educators that preparing students to participate in democratic life provides the primary rationale for social studies in the modern school curriculum. The result also provided similar landscape of teacher participants who perceived some skeptical observation of teachers who needed to be more knowledgeable about theory and practices in developing ideas of democratic citizenship.

### **Implementation of Perspectives and Experiences into Improving Teaching**

There were eight themes emerged on the implementation of ideas and experiences into improving teaching. This section provides description of themes and a summary on it. There are eight themes in this section and these themes are described below.

**Engaging students in active participation.** Participants believed that integration of experience and knowledge concerning citizenship education were significant for creating better citizens and helping them to be constructive and critical citizens as well. Majority of the participants stated that active participation in democracy develops democratic ideology, democratic behavior and responsibility. Development of ideas of democracy, as participants defined their conception, stressed on active participation and the participants' also defined democracy and its principles in positive ways. Furthermore, the essence of democracy were citizens whose ideas, beliefs and participation would help to

foster democratic process. Active participation was one of the main strategies the participants described as a medium of improving teaching. The active participation meant involving students in various activities such as community project works and beyond. Active citizenship education in social studies seemed to be associated with teachers' perception of citizenship and their political views. Ersoy (2014) level of maturity of students, classroom environment and the social environment of the students had an effect on implementing citizenship education (p. 1). Although the maturity level of students varies based on several factors, the participants did not provide depth explanation of how they approached to make their students active. One of the general practices the majority of participants focused on is using various methods to engage actively students in learning process.

The participants stressed that democratic teaching improves when students actively participate in the classroom. For democratic activities to be effective and engaging students, the participating teachers perceived to know contents, to have ability to make adjustment teaching on the fly. Wood explained his ability to teaching students by adjusting his teaching on the fly. The primary purpose was to incorporate ideas of students and make connection with experience of student by giving real life examples. He believed that introducing one after another ideas or bringing multiple angles would help to improve teaching. He stated:

Let's try this idea, let's bring from this angle. I am really good at changing the angle, try to get them understand until they can find a way they can understand, for example, my kids were struggling, trying to make a connection between British and America...they were struggling to fight for control over the American colonies early on land. My kids

could not get what we were talking about the triangle I said. I gave them an example as it's like kids in block.

The participant manifested that identifying the problems of students learning was very important. Careful use of information, right approaches to teaching ideas such as recognizing the presence of diversity in the classroom, different issues in the classroom and multiple perspectives on things were some aspects for inviting students in improving teaching.

**Understanding multiple perspectives.** As participants perceived the meaning of democracy in multiple ways. They also expressed that importance of understanding different people's perspectives of democracy is essential. The participants pointed out the roles of individuals in democracy. They felt that students needed to know and understand that the world is interconnected and countries are dependent on one another for survival. They stressed that students needed to know about challenges that they would face in the world; they should be equipped with the necessary skills to be able to confront such challenges in a global world.

**Covering overarching themes of content.** As covering vast areas of teaching in social studies, a major concern of the participants revolved around identifying big ideas to cover content. (Dogan, 1985 & Ross, 2006) reported the same issue in social studies while this subject has emerged from various branches of humanities and social sciences. The authors stated that the subject of social studies is more open to pedagogical dissonance than many other content areas social sciences. (Darling Hammond & Bransford, 2005) have stated two reasons for this fold. One is the field of social studies is not as cohesive or linear as other fields such as mathematics or science. Another reason

centers on social studies teachers having a wide range of content to cover. However, the participants stressed on focusing on big democratic ideas of teaching. In covering overarching themes, two participants said that they would provide a big picture and engage students according to discussion topics. Reading was another way that the participants practiced to acquire knowledge in the field and share with students. Nissan explained:

I read a lot of media and I know where my political sympathy lies. I listen voices from other side, from people I don't agree with it. So, I think, compared to average citizens, I pay attention probably way lot more than some people. I am always evaluating and thinking about things. I allow new information in my head that conflicts what I already know. I try to bring that perspective to my classroom without being biased.

In summary, inclusive way of teaching was much practiced in the classroom and they participants were open to newer ideas and incorporating into their teaching.

**Understanding critical information about civic and media literacy.** The majority of participants described how they gained experiences and focused on the significance of understanding critical information as citizens. Participants acknowledged the citizens' ability to examine information critically would develop by teaching them in more engaging and fruitful way. An underlying factor for the expansion of ideas in democracy was by presenting ideas and information about democracy in more interactive way.

Nissan stated:

I want to see the wide array of perspectives and ideas about it. It really gets so many kids are such a clear black and white images in their heads and issue they once agree and

realize how incredibly confusing and complex things are.

Although the participants underlined students lacking attitudes in critical thinking, they perceived students to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. Although majority of the participants insisted in shaping the young minds of students, Childers described his practice of engaging students through drilling and presenting them information in very interactive way. Childers explained, “I use technology, I can teach democracy with the help of technology in more engaging and fruitful way. I do not only drill them with the facts, more or less I present information in more active/interactive ways, in an eye opening way”. His practice of teaching conveys a message of the use of various methods in teaching where the use of technology has been instrumental to engage students.

Wood and Sam also highlighted the use of technology in teaching democracy. A practice of using technology came into play as a digital tool for interacting and helping out students become critical thinkers. Furthermore, the majority of the participants learned and practiced developing ideas about democratic citizenship from their parents, community involvement, technology, networking for accessing various resources at a global context. In some cases, the participants expressed the brevity of time mainly focusing on covering teaching content and preparing students for tests. However, there was no detail experiences shared by the participants about how and what kids learned of democratic education or literacy level they had developed. As Portelli and Solomon (2001) argued that democratic, citizenship involves much more than simply lawful citizens. It demands becoming informed about issues that affect you and participating with others in determining how society would resolve those issues” (p. 12). In resolving

issues, citizens need to be critical and under critical information as well. Murimi (2014) argued:

A critical approach has been necessitated by the fact that people need to make valid and informed choices, communicate these choices, form independent opinions and respect the choices that others make. Critical thinking enables learners to critique the underlying aims of the principles that society has subjected its citizens to and to explore the validity of these principles. By so doing, people are able to make political decisions that are influenced by informed analyses, rather than by the prevailing societal norms. (p. 1)

The participants such as Lori explained her practice of giving opportunity to students to think critically. According to her, providing the students the opportunities to learn and experience different perspectives was critical. Ideas of stakeholders, involvement of different groups would play effective roles for developing critical minds. So, in developing critical citizens, careful practices were used by the participants. From this point of view, the participants were very much worried about teaching students' necessary skills for becoming critical citizens in a democratic society.

**Experiential learning.** One of the remarkable note that the majority of participants expressed leads to the engagement of self-exploratory learning by providing students more opportunities to experience democracy. The process involved was taking them outside campaigning, election and going beyond what the textbook offers (Wood). At the same time, underlying the theory of whole child concept as one of the participants mentioned was an inclusive teaching approach.

**Covering wider perspectives of democratic citizenship and stakeholders.** The

participants shared their conception of democracy and democratic citizenship that they had acquired over the years of their teaching experience. The opportunity of sharing experiences provided participants to review and reflect their own experiences about strengthening teaching democracy citizenship. Making students choose social, political issues and analyze them from multiple perspectives (Nissan) (ii) Tailoring how students learn and what picks interest in them (Wood). They believed on the preparation of critical and informed citizens who can be very judgmental about things. According to Sam, students (citizens) are more prepared to be good consumers, critical consumers of the information that they are getting hope that they will then be better participants in democracy. One way of helping students in active engagement is by assigning them tasks to choose from and let them experience and reflect on their decision-making. Sam stated that making students choose social or political issue and analyze them from multiple perspectives. Education for democracy focuses, in particular, on creating responsible and informed citizens and looking multiple perspectives of things. Democratic citizenship is more than a matter of established legal and formal rights and responsibilities. It also covers a wide range of possible relationships between individuals, groups, associations, organizations and communities.

In particular, the results illustrated those participants' phenomenological experiences in the development of democratic ideas and challenges for teaching social studies, particularly democratic citizenship education. Their experiences revealed the unique challenges they encountered during their teaching social studies and showed their background knowledge and methods of teaching students and various advancement of technological integration in teaching and acquiring knowledge for democratic education

as well. In addition, it provided an avenue to bridge a gap for paucity in reinforcing individuals' beliefs and experiential teaching. At the same time, the study also strongly suggested to explore of what is happening to democracy at home. Taking example of he involved in making unbiased opinions on different issues. He stated:

How I learned is just what was the most important of being in a democracy or system.... how to vote.... how to make unbiased opinions on different issues.... how to pay certain fund and taxes.... I mainly involved in having a voice for many who need to be heard.

Those practices suggested that the participants used very democratic behavior and were lawful as well. Thinking out of box, tailoring learners and helping them out to learn things based on their capacity, power of sharing personal experiences, understanding the big ideas about democracy and how they inner play in teaching, and helping theme to internalize the essence of it.

**Identifying the key ideas about democracy.** Understanding critical information about civic literacy and overarching themes: The participants characterized their unique technique of teaching. It was very intuitive to focus on the main ideas of teaching democracy and democratic citizenship education. Identifying big ideas of content teaching generally can be a big challenge for many. A lot of the thinking process and experiences needed to impart and ignite ideas of teaching and understanding critical information.

For example, Bob underlined the significant of understanding thought process of himself and students as well. The thought process was achieved through the practice of reflection on teaching and analyzing the feedback received from students. Further, knowledge



gained from interacting with colleagues and students were helpful steps to ease out the complex ideas of teaching democracy and democratic citizenship education. Practices of identifying key ideas of democracy presented a “deeper consideration of the meaning of democracy, particularly in relation to issues of diversity and social justice and culturally responsible pedagogies and planning global perspectives in the teaching-learning process” (Warring & Thomas, 2006, p. 38). Identification of the key ideas of democracy such as Health Care, immigration, social security (Childers), immigration issues (Lori), and document to constitution (Nissan) illustrated some of the exemplary content areas to focus on searching big ideas for teaching and implying ideas into teaching.

**Recognizing the presence of diversity in the classroom.** This study revealed that teaching for democratic citizenship showed less effective since many challenges such as apathy, students poor attitudes just passing attitudes were the given examples. The findings offer the participants were consistently moving forward for making adjustment in teaching and integrating technology to engage more students. Although the participants concerned about preparing students for their tests and covering contents within timeline of teaching, students lacked effective thinking and participation skills. Although several challenges that originated from teachers in a negative way, the commitment and conception of the participants were found. Most importantly, participants view their teaching for democracy as a political entity and perceived democracy as a complex body of knowledge. Learning for democracy and democratic citizenship was perceived through engaging students in various hands on activities rather than engaging them to develop dominant ideology of democratic principles. In addition, preparing students in processing info in a critical way, Cude (2012) quoted Schechter and

Voskresenskays (1998) ascertained the roles of teacher teachers as representatives of multiple perspectives of students. Similarly, the participants perceived and practiced considering diversity of learners and asserted their approach to inviting diverse thoughts in the classroom. One of the participants presented an incidence of tearing down the statue of Buddha in Budapest overnight and shared the same information to the students to start a discussion. The whole idea of presenting that story was to invite students for a discourse about democracy and democratic rights and pass information of a violent behavior of people during the protest and demolition of a statue.

Moreover, another participant clarified his approach to improving his teaching by adopting kids' ideas into teaching and being very careful while presenting ideas of different issues. By practicing the ability to listen to voices of people (citizens) and students, one critical aspect of processing information was important and was not to offend beliefs of others. This perspective and practice of the majority participating teachers was present. While the participants being aware of considering diversity of learners, they also enforced locus of power of people in democracy as a process of backdrop and power of sharing personal experiences to the ability to examine information critically. One method of improving their teaching skills for democracy was teaching students critical thinking and adopting others ideas as well the participants perceived teaching for democracy as a complex body of knowledge and careful delivery of information to others. In addition, teaching for democracy needed to be desirable behavior of social acts and representative of adequate consideration of the cultural complexities of interpretation as well as.

Participants practiced a multiple instructional strategy in improving their teaching

for democratic education. Both as a teacher and student needed to be actively engage in the learning process. However, the roles of teachers appeared considerably more critical than students' willingness of participate.

### **Summary of the Implementing Ideas and Experiences into Teaching.**

Patrick (2003) argued that the first essential element of a good education for democracy is a continual emphasis on teaching and learning of democracy and democratic society (p. 1). Thornton (2005) also argued the importance of teachers in developing critical democratic and responsible citizens, teachers play vital roles in the promotion of democratic attitudes and skills for the future citizens. According to Thornton, the role of the teacher is significant because he is the one who controls classroom curriculum and instructional activity as "curricular-instructional gate keeper" (p. 352). These statements led to a state of belief that teachers are a vehicle to transmit the knowledge and ideas about democratic citizenship. A good teaching in democracy has long-term impact for students learning. The section attempted to find out the participants' teaching experiences in improving democratic citizenship education.

Costa (n.d.) stated that teachers as continuous learners. We learn from experience and by reflecting on our experience (p. 8). As teaching and learning are correlated, the majority of the participants considered their roles impetus for shaping the future of democracy through teaching. However, participants also expressed their challenges in teaching social studies for democracy and democratic citizenship. The challenging in teaching are elaborated below.

## **Challenging in Teaching**

There were six themes emerged on teaching. This section consists of the description of themes and a summary as well. Participants experienced challenges in teaching democracy. Those challenges that the participants explained showed as long standing challenges in this field itself. One of the biggest challenges that one participant believed was the majority of Americans tending to take democracy for granted and was apathy.

**Apathy to the government and political system.** The participants mentioned that the young generation including general American people are apathetic to the government. They are not interest in actively taking part in studies and are not either motivated to learn about the politics. Bob stated a general mentality of the Americans who tent to take democracy for granted which would be averse to the aspiration of a democracy. He presented the following opinions:

I think the biggest challenge is that Americans tend to take democracy for granted. They forget that democratic attitudes need to be cultivated and they think that they are just going to happen through education without specially focusing on that. There is pressure to focus on other things...our democratic values...that's a big mistake we are making. I think people are not going to have the ability to participate in democracy... we are neglecting it. People look at events like Arab Spring.

The opinion of the participant was that there was lesser interest in taking part in democracy. This concern has raised a concern of the adverse effect it would have in democracy. Several other scholars have described the apathy of American towards democracy. Warren (2005) stated:

The concept of “apathy” is not an entirely accurate description. Rather, over the past several decades, people in the developed democracies have become disaffected from their political institutions. They are now less likely to trust their governments and more likely to judge them incompetent, untrustworthy, and even corrupt. (p. 681)

Hence, there is a concern of everyone to find out the reasons for being apathetic to the democracy and act accordingly to bring those people in the mainstream of democracy. One of concern is that the young generation is not fully willing to vote or has limited interest to do so. Looking at Nissan’s experience and example that a 16-year-old kid whose parents don’t vote, they don’t want to call a jury duty...try to convince that kid that someday. You are the important part of the society... your vote counts.

**People do not truly understand the value of democracy.** The participants expressed their concern about students not able to understand the value of democracy. The statement entails to the necessity of reframing the concept about democracy. The implication, if democratic attitudes are not reconstructed, there would be chances of people taking democracy for granted and roles of citizens in democracy would ultimately become feeble enough to a level of its jeopardy. Another participant expressed concern how a 16-year-old kid whose parents don’t vote, they did not want to want to report jury duty convinces the kid that someday you are the important part of the society... your vote counts. It is a tough shell, really it is! (Nissan). In addition, Lori and Wood expressed indifference attitudes of students in learning about democracy. Therefore, the political disengagement would have invited a question of sustainability of democracy in the country.

**Poor attitudes of learners.** Aptitude of student toward learning: This another challenge

that that data showed. Every individual in society is equally important to establish system. The second biggest concern that the study revealed was poor attitudes of the learners toward learning it. As Lori stated a test-passing attitude rather than learning about democracy, students' poor attitudes reveals to check ways to improve it. In having poor attitudes, a number of reasons were presented by some participants. Among them, the problem were students having short attentions span, students' black and white images in the minds about the conceptions of democracy and democratic citizenship. Students' lack of interest and poor aptitude to learning democracy also appeals to understand potential reasons for it. Dewey (1937) observed, "...we have taken democracy for granted...it has to be enacted anew in every generation, in every year and day, in the living relations of person to person in all social forms and institutions and identify the factors and reinvent to raise learners' attitudes". Lori stated that having students with short attention span, you have to overcome those things before you start building. You have to build the rapport and it is not until the end of the year where they find...we actually did learn. We did many students did work and encourage them they require to do any extra things on their own time but they did not seem much taking responsibilities. The learners with poor attitudes become a challenge and the role of teaching increases. Slev (2014) discusses about the learners' attitudes. She argues that democratic attitudes and actions vary from urban to rural area, but also from culture to culture and variety of factors involve (p.38). To support and analysis factors that played roles for students' poor attitudes, the participants did not provide reasons about it.

**Students do not take responsibilities (Lack of critical thinking).** One of the challenges was students lacking critical thinking. Various research has stated that that

critical thinking (Davis, 2007) is expected in citizens which is also view as a way of developing critical and interpersonal skills. Such an important skill that the participants observed lacking in the majority of their students. Some participants also argued that majority of students have black and white viewpoints (empty mind from comprehensive level). They really do not care except passing their exams or tests. In some cases, they looked just ready to pass tests but nothing else. It implies the ideas of less democratic participation and politically less desired society. Lack of interest and critical thinking suggested to review pedagogical practices and identify factors in teacher education and well as examine the effectiveness of curriculum and improve teaching and thoughtful classrooms.

**Roles of parents.** In developing ideas and values either in the individual lives or in society, the participants took examples of their parents. The majority of the participants explained that their parents inspired them to practice democratic values in the society. It showed that the establishment of a democracy in a society is achieved from the home environment where members learn responding and respecting each other. The participants also cautioned the teachers interpret a note that the young generation lacks engagement in the political process as the transformation of knowledge differently passed on by the student's parents at home (Wood) from their teachers in schools. In addition, Sam presented an example presented a concern for every democratic citizenship. He said, "Take a 16-year-old kid whose parents do not vote. They do not want to call a jury-duty...try to convince that the same kid is be told someday that you are the important part of the society, your vote counts. Therefore, parents need to play role model for their kids in order to shape attitudes and ideas together.

**Content is not relevant to student's immediate life.** Nissan condemned that our elections are nothing more than a rubber stamp is... It is a forgone decision and I do not feel that I had a very good experience with democracy in that case. Nebulous assumed that there is no uniformity in the primary goal of citizenship education and our elections are nothing more than a just like a rubber stamp. There is barely any serious opposition. The goal of social studies education has been just whatever the educational teacher wanted to be. According to Nissan, "Goal has become whatever the individual teacher wanted to be! I mean there is no uniformity in the way I think. The goal has been always somewhat squashy. The learners have lack of interest about government and they lack of role models." There was not any further explanation about how the content in the social studies are not relevant to students' immediate life. However, the participant expressed a concern about it.

### **Summary of the Challenges in Teaching.**

The participants expressed challenges in developing ideas and knowledge about democratic citizenship due to various reasons such as the participants found inaccurate interpretation of parents from their own understanding on the contents. The interpretation was viewed as a help to students but it rather helped them to correct the understanding of students in the classroom. Similarly, lack of critical thinking on behalf of students, less interest in learning, and irrelevant contents in curriculum further invited challenges in teaching as well.



## **Linking Participants' Development of Knowledge with the Theory of Constructivism.**

Schunk (2012) explained the process of the construction of knowledge. According to him, the central premise of constructivism is that learners construct new understanding by actively building upon prior knowledge and experiences. They are said to create meaning as internal representations based upon their experiences, rather than acquiring meaning directly from external sources (p.). The findings suggested that the development of the knowledge of ideas about democratic citizenship was a continuous and consistent practice of building knowledge through experiences. Dick, Carey and Carey (2005) argued learning as a unique product that is constructed as each individual learner combines new information with existing knowledge and experience. Individuals have learned when they have constructed new interpretation of the social, cultural, physical and intellectual environments in which they live and learning in the constructivist view is so entwined with one's experience, a primary role of the teacher is creating appropriate learning environment.

Constructivism requires that we reflect on all aspects of the teaching in which we engage, as educators, we are learners ourselves. We must examine our planning, our use of external standards, the materials we use, the environment in our classroom, our own attitudes and expectations, and especially, the needs of our students, whether they be children or teachers (Sparks, 1994). Engagement and deeper understanding of ideas in democracy reflected participants increased ownership of knowledge, sharing of experience from teacher participants to students or vice-versa extolled the reciprocal a process of constructing knowledge. The construction of knowledge and experience of the

participating teachers were not found much different even though their level of life experiences were contextual based. For example, one participant developed his ideas about democratic citizenship by much involvement with professional development, other participants gained similar experiences through networking, sharing ideas with each other, being active in political campaigns, being more analytical on issues, and knowing the subject matters.

### **Implications for the Study.**

The implications are targeted at social teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers primarily because they interplay major players in citizenship education in schools. The study will urge social studies teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers to recognize that citizenship education requires building interactive relationships across these levels.

#### **Implications for teachers.** There are four implications for teachers.

1. They will be able to identify more effective ways of integrating their conceptions of democracy in the classroom and emphasize more participatory into teaching since the participants conceptualized more than a singular theory of democracy as a way of understanding. These theories of democracy as identified from their responses were a liberal democracy, participatory democracy, and deliberative democracy.
2. Teachers will be able to create classroom environment as a platform for learning democratic processes, such as expressing diverse opinions and respecting them, encouraging students' level of participation in decision-making processes, and develop the values of shared experiences in democracy.
3. In-service and professional teachers can be benefited from knowing different sources

of developing democratic ideas and understanding how these ideas interplay to establish a democratic system in society.

4. Teachers will also be able to increase their own participation in professional training to get prepared better to improve instructional practices and go beyond the conventional curriculum to build a more relevant and engaging experience that connects to the lives of young people. A positive classroom climate can be promoted to enhance academic. For examples, community-based experiences, such as community services- trash pick-up, helping out people during election time, civic engagement.

Scholars such as Billing, Root, and Jesse, 2005., Torney-Purta, 2002., & NCSS, 2006 highlight the significance of community participation of students through teachers to develop civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Even within the classroom, activities such as debating, role-playing and mock trials can encourage an individual's active construction of knowledge through participation in activities that are meaningful to a democratic society (Torney-Purta, 2002). These activities are most successful in fostering citizenship education when teachers promote such activities in their classrooms.

**Implications for teacher educators.** Teacher educators can initiate and work more efficiently by doing the following things:

1. They can design more professional training directly aligned with the promotion of democracy and democratic citizenship education.
2. They will be able to identify more effective ways to developing ideas such as the emphasis on technology and inquiry base teaching and encourage teachers to integrate these ideas and skills into teaching. By knowing the framework, they may be able to revisit and refocus on developing in the area of citizenship to develop teachers who can

compete in the globally interconnected world.

3. They can focus on hands-on activities and training that can directly impact the understanding and instructional delivery processes of teachers in promoting democratic citizenship education in schools

4. Teacher educators need to better coordinate with teachers and policy makers to identify more effective ways of improving teaching and learning experiences in social studies.

**Implications for policy makers.** There are four implications for policy makers

Teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers are significantly important for improving the quality of education. Some of the participants' responses stressed disconnection of building ideas in grade levels and curriculum needed to be more rigorous. There are some particular implications for policy makers and I offer the following implications:

1. Policymakers need to consider the integration of more relevant real-world examples, and community services need to be the essence of learning democracy and democratic processes.

2. Teachers experiences are individual beliefs. The teacher educators, if change agents wish to succeed with professional or in-service teachers, they must take the time to explain and work with teachers in developing a rationale for their programs tied directly to the subject matter and the interests of teachers and students that the teachers deem most important.

3. Findings of the study informed us that democracy is better understood by experiential learning. Ideas related to democracy are developed interacting with people such as stake-holders, taking college courses, accessing internets, and engaging in

community and political activities. Therefore, it is imperative for policy makers to be informed about what is happening in schools. Knowing the information, policy makers can make informed decisions in content areas and work collaboratively with the social studies teachers, teacher educators, and students' interests.

### **Recommendations**

The findings emphasized the effective use of curriculum in promoting democratic citizenship education. Since the field of social studies is an integrated subject, “teachers endure increasing constraints on real participation in curriculum decisions” (Hurst and Ross, 2000, p. 28).

The first recommendation is related to the constraint of teachers in the development of curriculum. Teachers autonomy has been taken away from some level, maybe district or federal level, where it comes from? (Bob). Furthermore, some participants expressed similar situation of their curriculum developing autonomy has been taken away. Teachers felt their power deprived of curriculum development process and it has affected them for decision and policy making levels. In this case, policymakers need to revisit the curriculum development policy and shared responsibilities of teachers to enhance the curriculum practices. The policy makers need to see the extent whether the existing curriculum has incorporated adequate contents on democratic citizenship education. To find out impacts of teachers not given their autonomy in the curriculum design and development process and a future study on the impacts of social studies teachers on the curriculum design and development can be conducted.

Next, the majority of the participants expressed their concerns with teaching challenges. Policymakers need to identify whether existing challenges have any impacts

on the content delivery methods and the supports they can extend to teachers via any conducting training program or sharing experiences with them. Hursh and Ross (2000) present teaching social studies as challenging because of the nature of subject matter and it is complicated by the effects of professionalization with its rhetoric of neutrality in which teachers are supposed to remain neutral conveyors of information (p. 28). The challenge facing teachers is to help student critically analyze the evidence and arguments before them and we need to challenge our own selective knowledge.

Homana, Barber, and Torney-Purta (2006) describe that “Successful instruction requires a shared commitment to articulate the citizenship theme across the curriculum, across grade levels and more broadly across the school” (p. 11). To find out how the curriculum is practiced in school and all grade levels to teach social studies, particularly, democracy and democratic citizenship related contents, a study in this area is recommended. Furthermore, some of the participants mentioned disconnection in curriculum and grade levels alignment, policymakers need to review and link such area or content disconnected. A future study on identifying the major challenges in teaching social studies for democracy and democratic citizenship and find out any viable suggestions for it.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter presents findings of the study that focused on the participants’ conception of democracy and the development of ideas about democratic citizenship. When describing the conception of democracy, the majority of participants provided their perceptions and understanding of the fundamental principles of democracy and stressed the purpose of the general welfare of people. In other words, focus on the

participants' about having the conception of democracy, ideas developing about democratic citizenship and the teaching practices seemed primarily embedded with their own experiences and standardized tests oriented. Lori, Childers, Wood expressed having limited time to cover contents rather than going in depth over contents about democracy.

Besides, covering the contents and preparing students for tests, participants' expressed their challenges in teaching. One of the big challenges was indifferent of students in learning and critically engaged in the learning process. The participants focused on the importance of enhancing instructional practices. Those emphases on the instructional practices as given examples were the ways of looking wider perspectives of ideas, thinking outside of the box, using direct instruction, integrating technology, having mastery over the subject matter, understanding bigger ideas of democracy, and utilizing available resources in proper manner etc. The participants anticipated that enabling young people to participate fully in civic life would be possible through teaching. (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p.303). Although participants highlighted various characteristics of democracy, some participants expressed negative perceptions of democracy but without offering any alternative system. The conception of democracy was perceived as a complex body and a system for establishing rules, values and the individuals' decision making for their own fate.

The participants also were engaged in sharing their experiences as a citizen and as a professional teaching. Those two mindsets of the participants seemed very useful in recapping experiences and engaging in a discourse during the interviews. The skills that all the participants demonstrated were critically engaged in finding the answer from the perspectives of a teacher first and as a general standpoint of citizens. In addition, I also

observed of the participants having two mindsets at the time of expressing their views and experiences as well. One aspect of the mindset was that the participants engaged answering the researcher as a casual conversation and on the other hand, they were processing information in a professional manner. The participant's views on democracy described that democracy is a set of abstract principles and it is the perception of individuals to achieve experience accordingly. The participating teachers conceptualized democracy and democratic citizenship as personal identity, active participation, collective responsibility and self-reliance, and fortune for making the decision for their better lives.

The findings presented have also shown that the participating teachers' lived experiences and the acquisition of democratic ideas to be developed involving in community involvement and influenced by their parents. This study reveals the need for educators, teachers, and policy makers to collaborate to develop instructional practices, incorporate experiential learning experiences, and improve social studies curricula to promote student engagement.



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## Appendix A

### Teacher's Demographic Form

1. Licensure area:
2. Level of Licensure:
3. Number of years of teaching and grade level:
4. Where do they teach, Urban or suburban?
5. Courses that you have taught:
6. Education degree & name of the institution that you have earned degree from
7. Any professional development (relevant trainings)
8. Ethnic group
  - a. Race: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Gender:
    - i. Male: \_\_\_\_\_
    - ii. Female: \_\_\_\_\_
    - iii. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

9. For the masking purpose of your real name while analyzing data, please provide your Preferred pseudonym:

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Signature/name

Date: / /2015

Thank you very much

Sincerely,

Om Thapa

## Appendix B

### Recruitment Letter



Hello,

My name is Om Thapa, a doctoral student in curriculum and instruction at the University of Toledo in the Judith Herb College of Education and I am seeking your help. While a doctoral student I have been studying democratic citizenship and how this concept is enacted in schools in the United States. As a result of this interest, my dissertation will focus on how social studies teachers define democracy, understand ideas about democratic citizenship, and put their ideas into practice in their teaching.

Currently, I am seeking teachers who would be willing to participate in this study. In particular, I am seeking teachers who hold State of Ohio licensure to teach social studies at the 7-12 level; have been teaching social studies for a minimum of three years; and who have an expressed interest in democratic citizenship.

Participants will be asked to engage in two interviews each lasting 30-45 minutes and held in a private setting (e.g., office, library meeting room, etc.). Participants will be provided an opportunity to review and corroborate their statements. To assist with this, both interviews will be captured using audio only and transcribed. This study has UT institutional Review Board approval, under protocol # 200598 and will follow ethical guidelines for research, including obtaining Adult Consent, and maintaining confidentiality.

If you are interested in participating in this study, you may contact me, Om Thapa via email [om.thapa@rockets.utoledo.edu](mailto:om.thapa@rockets.utoledo.edu) or one of my dissertation advisors, Dr. Lynne Hamer, [lynne.hamer@utoledo.edu](mailto:lynne.hamer@utoledo.edu), or Dr. Victoria Stewart, [victoria.stewart@utoledo.edu](mailto:victoria.stewart@utoledo.edu). When you respond please provide your contact information, and your location for planning purposes. I am seeking to complete interviews during February and March 2015.

Regards,

Om Thapa

## Appendix C

### Adult Informed Consent

#### Educational Foundations & Leadership

Gillham Hall 5000, MS 921  
Toledo, Ohio 43606-3390  
419-530-4713  
419-530-8447



#### ADULT RESEARCH SUBJECT - INFORMED CONSENT FORM

*A Phenomenological Study of the Lived Experiences of Social Studies Teachers*

*Constructing Ideas about Democracy and Teaching*

Principal Investigator: Lynne Hamer, Ph.D., Professor, 419-530-7749

Victoria Stewart, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, 419-530-2204

Om Thapa, Ph.D. Candidate, 419-377-4465

Purpose: You are invited to participate in the research project entitled, *A*

*Phenomenological Study of the Lived Experiences of Social Studies Teachers*

*Constructing Ideas about Democracy and Teaching* which is being conducted at the

University of Toledo under the direction of Lynne Hamer and Om Thapa.

The purpose of this study is to describe how 7-12<sup>th</sup> grade social studies teachers understand their own experiences with democracy and democratic citizenship education, and how their experiences impact their teaching. The study of this problem is essential because teachers are at the front line of teaching and developing the core democratic

values of their students and thus play crucial roles for educating the future citizens in a democratic society. Unless we understand how teachers perceive the meaning of democratic citizenship, we cannot understand how teachers teach for democratic citizenship.

Description of Procedures: The research will take place in February-March 2015 in Northwest Ohio. This research study employs the phenomenological approach in qualitative research method. Approximately 10 licensed social studies teachers in Northwest Ohio will be asked to describe their own experiences with democratic citizenship and how they learned about it both in and out of academic settings, and to reflect upon how their own experiences with and beliefs about democratic citizenship impact their teaching. The participant is asked to participate in two interviews of approximately 30-45 minutes each. The interviews will be conducted in person at a place and time convenient for the participant. Both interviews will be audio-recorded to assure accuracy. All data will be transcribed and reported using pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

Permission to record: Will you permit the I to audio-record during this research procedure?

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	_____			Initial
	Here		Initial Here	



After you have completed your participation, the research team will debrief you about the data, theory and research area under study and answer any questions you may have about the research.

Potential Risks: There are minimal risks to participation in this study, including loss of confidentiality. If at any time in the research process you decide you do not want to be part of the research, you may withdraw your participation or ask the I to make accommodations that will make you feel more comfortable.

Potential Benefits: The only direct benefit to you if you participate in this research may be that you enjoy reflecting on your own experiences learning and teaching about democratic citizenship, and you may become aware of research that will be of interest in your own teaching. The indirect benefit is that you will be contributing to better understanding of how we practice social studies education, and it is hoped that this will influence how we prepare social studies teachers regarding the essential democratic core values in American democratic society.

Confidentiality: The researcher will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you provided this information, or what that information is. The consent forms with signatures will be kept separate from responses, which will not include names and which will be presented to others only when combined with other responses. Although we will make every effort to protect your confidentiality, there is a low risk that this might be breached. All field notes and interview data will be kept using pseudonyms for participants rather than the real names of the participants. Participants are given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym that will be used for them.

Voluntary Participation: Your refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled and will not affect your relationship with The University of Toledo, its faculty, or any other entities. In addition, you may discontinue participation at any time without any penalty.

Contact Information: Before you decide to accept this invitation to take part in this study, you may ask any questions that you might have. If you have any questions at any time before, during or after your participation, you should contact Dr. Lynne Hamer (you may find her phone number on top of this page), the principal research investigator for this study at The University of Toledo.

If you have questions beyond those answered by the research team or about your rights as a research subject or research-related injuries, the Chairperson of the SBE Institutional Review Board may be contacted through the Office of Research on the main campus at (419) 530-2844.

Before you sign this form, please ask any questions on any aspect of this study that is unclear to you. You may take as much time as necessary to think it over.

#### SIGNATURE SECTION – Please read carefully

You are making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above, you have had all your questions answered, and you have decided to take part in this research.

The date you sign this document to enroll in this study, that is, today's date must fall between the dates indicated at the bottom of the page.

Name of Subject (please print)	1. Signature	2. Date
3.	4. 5.	6. 7.
Name of Person Obtaining	8. Signature	9. Date
Consent		

This Adult Research Informed Consent document has been reviewed and approved by the University of

Toledo Social, Behavioral and Educational IRB for the period of time specified in the box below.

Approved Number of Subjects: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix D**

### **Interview Protocol**

Prior to beginning this interview, I want to thank you for your consent to participate in this study. I would like to remind you of some necessary information about the study.

The purpose of this study is to understand and describe the lived experiences of teachers of grades 7-12 regarding ideas about democracy and democratic citizenship and explain how you have developed these ideas and put them into practice through teaching. The study will be helpful toward understanding how democratic citizenship is learned and taught. I believe this can help us develop a more sustainable democratic American society.

I also want to remind you that the information you share in this interview will remain confidential. I will mask your real name with a pseudonym of your choice. Your pseudonym for the interview will be on the audiotapes and transcripts.

If you have any questions regarding this study, interview or any other query, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Om Thapa

## **Appendix E**

### **Research Protocol: Guideline Questions for Interviews**

#### **Section I: Understanding Ideas about Democracy and Democratic Citizenship**

1. The word democracy is used in many ways and it means different things to different people, and contexts.
2. What is your conception of democracy?
3. In social studies, citizenship education has been a primary goal.
  - a. What do you think social studies educators mean by citizenship education?
  - b. Do you think it is a primary goal? Has that changed over time?
4. What do you recall learning about democratic citizenship?
5. What do you think are your most democratic experiences?
6. What do you think of as your least democratic experience?

#### **Section II: Understanding Ideas about Democratic Citizenship**

1. What do you recall learning about democratic citizenship?
2. What do you think are your most democratic experiences?
3. What do you think of as your least democratic experience?

Or

What experiences have had that had the greatest impact on your understanding of democracy?

### Section III: Improving Teaching for Democratic Citizenship

1. Can you share with me how your ideas about teaching democracy and democratic citizenship education have developed over the years?
2. Can you describe your approaches to teaching for democracy and democratic citizenship?
3. What has influenced you in developing ideas about democratic citizenship?
4. How do you introduce your ideas of democratic citizenship into teaching?
5. How have your approaches to teaching essential ideas about democratic citizenship been effective in recent years?
6. What pedagogy of teaching do you think that social studies teachers should mostly emphasize to enrich ideas of democratic citizenship?
7. What areas of teaching have you changed over the years and have your changes helped you to deliver better instruction in teaching?
8. How do you develop and discover citizenship in your own work and link it with classroom teaching practices?

### Section IV: Curriculum for Citizenship and Democratic Education

1. Teachers are on the frontline of practicing a curriculum and facilitating idea about democracy and democratic citizenship education.
2. Do you think that how your understanding of social studies curriculum for democratic citizenship has helped you in creating ideas about democratic citizenship education?
3. How do social studies teachers should be prepared to teach democracy or democratic citizenship in diverse classroom in the U.S. schools?

4. Could you describe your teaching experiences that have been likely more effectively in recent years?
5. How did you feel when you had that experience?
6. Have you ever realized or thought of taking any courses or trainings to be more effective teacher for teaching democracy & democratic citizenship education?
7. Do you reflect about your teaching? If so, what have you found?
8. Have you ever experienced challenges in introducing your ideas about democratic citizenship?
9. Could you describe any challenges in teaching ideas about democratic citizenship?
10. Do you have any particular questions for me or would you like to add anything about your total interview experiences?

Thank you