TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN SOCIAL STUDIES 30-1

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Dedication

To my parents for instilling in me the value of dedication and hard work, for inspiring me to be a lifelong learner, and for making me believe that I can accomplish anything I set my mind to.

And to my amazing wife, Bryany Denning, whose unending love, support, and belief in me, made all of this possible.

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to gain a better understanding of the perspectives on and the treatment and assessment of citizenship education by Social Studies 30-1 teachers. A convergent parallel mixed methods approach was employed through a survey combining Likert scale questions, numerical response questions and open-ended questions, in which 21 teachers participated and follow-up interviews in which six of the original 21 participants took part in. The results of the show that there is a high degree of alignment between the construct of citizenship and what the vast majority of participants believe citizenship education is and what it should be. It also showed that there was a lack of alignment between citizenship and Social Studies Program of Studies and even greater lack of alignment with the diploma exam. One of the consequences of this lack of alignment combined with the large role the diploma exam plays in shaping teachers' practices is that citizenship education often becomes a secondary focus behind the diploma exam.

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INTRODUCTION

At some point in our academic and professional lives all of us have moments of hopelessness where we question what we are doing and why we are doing it. For some people these moments are minor inconveniences from which they quickly move on, for others, moments like this can lead to career changes or the abandonment of a particular line of research, and for fortunate individuals, myself included, these moments can lead to clarity and rejuvenation.

My moment came halfway through my 10th-year teaching, during what would have been the final semester of my master's degree had I opted to complete a capstone project rather than a thesis. I had a 12-page literature review on citizenship education which seemed to be going nowhere in front of me, a seemingly unending pile of marking on my desk and an imminent deadline to complete my report cards, all of which made me question every professional and academic decision I had ever made. That same day, I received an email from a former student that wanted to thank me for believing in him and inspiring his love for politics and to let me know that he had followed his passions into a career in television and film, through which he was working on addressing issues of inequality and radicalization of youth.

Aside from providing me with an immediate boost in confidence, this email, and the student that sent it to me, made me reevaluate not only my own teaching practice, but the overall purpose and treatment of social studies and its goal of citizenship education. Here was a student that barely passed Social Studies 30-1 and in fact failed the Social Studies 30-1 diploma exam, yet was passionate about politics, actively following his dreams, and was aware of and engaged in addressing world issues. In looking at the

Program of Studies there are some striking evidence that this student is the exact kind of student the writers of social studies curricula were envisioning as graduates when writing the curricula; the opening line of the K-12 Alberta Program of Studies states that "social studies provides opportunities for students to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge that will enable them to become engaged, active, informed and responsible citizens" (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 1). It further goes on to explain that the role of social studies is to develop the "key values and attitudes, knowledge and understanding, and skills and processes necessary for students to become active and responsible citizens, engaged in the democratic process and aware of their capacity to effect change in their communities, society, and world" (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 1).

From all indications, my former student is an engaged, active, informed and responsible citizen who is aware of his capacity to make change, yet he did not pass the diploma exam even though Alberta Education has stated that the diploma exam reflects the goals of responsible and engaged citizenship (Alberta Education, 2015). Something about this situation did not sit right with me.

Up until this point, much of my research on citizenship education revolved around helping myself to better understand what citizenship means and how to assess it so that I could improve my own practice, as opposed to looking at the broader scope of citizenship education. After this revelation I began to wonder just how much the diploma exam in social studies impacted the goal of citizenship education, and what the consequences of these impacts were. Were other social studies teachers explicitly addressing the construct of citizenship in their classes? Were they assessing citizenship? If not, what were the potential consequences for their students? Based on these personal ponderings, I came up

with my main research question: what are the perceptions and understandings of Social Studies 30-1 teachers on the instruction and assessment of citizenship? In attempting to answer my main research question I will also attempt to answer the following sub-questions: 1) what are teacher perceptions of the diploma exam? 2) what impact does the diploma exam have on the treatment of citizenship in Social Studies 30-1 classes? and 3) what factors influence teachers' decision-making regarding their focus on citizenship in their classes?

LITERATURE REVIEW

To fully understand and appreciate current interpretations of and issues with citizenship education in Canada, it is important to look at the history and development of citizenship education in a Canadian context. According to Osborne (2000), "from their very beginnings public schools in Canada … were expected to prepare the young for citizenship" (p. 8). He further goes on to explain that the very reason that we have compulsory education in Canada, and elsewhere, is to produce citizens (Osborne, 2000, p. 8). In many ways, education in Canada is still designed to produce citizens. What has changed though, is what kind of citizens public schools are trying to produce. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the purpose of education in Canada and elsewhere was to create *national* citizens. In the Canadian context, that meant creating citizens that were loyal to the British Empire. This meant two things: first, students would learn their national history, geography, values and language, and second, they would learn to fulfill their specific roles in society (Osborne, 2000). This type of education, which emphasized loyalty, responsibility, and learning one's place in society, served to produce patriotic Canadians and to help maintain the status quo as questioning the government or one's place in society was seen as disloyal. Another purpose of early Canadian public schools, and one that would become increasingly important as the franchise was extended to various groups within society, was to ensure that people could vote intelligently. To this point it was necessary that schools prepared students to, at the very least, be able to read, think about, understand, and appreciate the issues in order to make an informed decision on who to vote for (Osborne, 2000). Though this seems like a reasonable purpose for education, it does seem to suggest that those that previously had the franchise, mostly

wealthy, landowning, white men, were inherently more intelligent than groups, like women and immigrants, that gained the franchise later on.

This type of discriminatory thinking in educating for citizenship, can further be seen in Canada's assimilationist past. This was clearly evident when First Nations children were forcibly taken from their homes and communities and were forced to attend residential schools where they were forbidden to use their language or practice their cultural traditions in order to turn them into "good Canadian citizens." For First Nations and other minority groups, "citizenship meant assimilation into the dominant British (Canadian) culture" (Osborne, 2000, p. 14). This assimilative approach to citizenship education began to weaken "after First World War, and even more noticeably after the Second (World War)" (p. 16). With the adoption of official multiculturalism in 1971 by Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau and passing of the Official Multiculturalism Act in 1988 by Prime Minister Mulroney, the assimilative nature of Canadian citizenship education was replaced by an appreciation for and acceptance of diversity amongst cultures. This change is further evidenced by the closure of all Aboriginal Residential Schools by the mid-1990s and the inclusion of an acknowledgement of the negative impacts of Canada's assimilative past in various curricula such as Northern Studies 10 in the Northwest Territories and Social Studies 10-1 and 10-2 in Alberta.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, another major change has been occurring in education in Canada. According to Osborne (2000) despite public education being founded upon creating citizens and developing good citizenship, citizenship as a general goal of education has largely been abandoned in favour of preparing students for a global economy. Instead of schools focusing on helping "students make the most of their lives

and develop their individual talents, (and) to prepare students for citizenship" (p. 10), the focus of schools has increasingly been on preparing students to join the workforce. Along with this change in focus, citizenship education has also largely been relegated to the realm of discrete subject areas like social studies. Whether or not these changes have been positive or negative is debatable, and likely difficult to either prove or disprove. Regardless of whether it has been positive or not, over the last two decades there have been numerous calls for the reform of citizenship education in Canada and around the world (Sears, 2014).

Sears and Hyslop-Marginson (2006) found that one of the main reasons behind this increased emphasis on citizenship education is based on what they call "a sense of crisis regarding citizenship and democracy" (p. 15). This sense of crisis can be divided into three separate but related dimensions, each with specific causes for concern. The first dimension is the crisis of ignorance, where numerous studies, politicians, and policy makers from around the world have claimed that citizens, particularly young citizens, do not possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and values that are required to be a good citizen. The second dimension is the crisis of alienation, where it has been argued that an increasing number of young people are becoming alienated from participating in the political process. The third dimension is the crisis of agnosticism. It has been argued that youth today are not committed to core democratic values like open mindedness, respect, and tolerance. In each case, Sears and Hyslop-Marginson (2006) question the existence of the supposed crisis and suggest that current reform efforts based on this sense of crisis are not based on reliable evidence.

In their 2006 analysis of citizenship education in Canada, England, Australia, the European Community and the United States, Hughes and Sears found that there is international consensus in four specific areas regarding citizenship and citizenship education. The first is the belief that there is a democratic crisis afflicting the democratic world in which citizens are becoming less and less engaged in civic activity. Next is the belief that citizenship education is needed to combat this crisis of disengagement. The third area of consensus is regarding the belief that citizens should be participating in a way that goes beyond merely voting in elections. Finally, Hughes and Sears (2006) found that there is international consensus that best practice in citizenship education is constructivist in nature. This includes having students actively engaged in learning about authentic and important issues pertaining to citizenship, collaborating with one another, and constructing meaning through these processes. However, just because there is international consensus regarding what citizenship education should be, does not mean that the official definitions found in curricula, and the ways that citizenship is taught in the classroom, reflects this consensus.

What is Citizenship? What is Citizenship Education?

When looking at what citizenship or citizenship education is, there are three separate areas of study: 1) theoretical understandings of citizenship and citizenship education, as found in academic literature; 2) official understandings of citizenship and citizenship education, as found in programs of study and curricular documents; and 3) lived understandings of citizenship and citizenship education, as found in the classroom. Regarding the theoretical or scholarly conceptual understandings, there is both

considerable agreement of what citizenship education should be, and also considerable disagreement about what that actually means.

According to Westheimer and Kahne's theoretical framework there are three basic understandings of citizenship that inform democratic education programs: the personally responsible citizen, the participatory citizen, and the justice-oriented citizen. The personally responsible citizen "acts responsibly in his or her community by, for example, picking up litter, giving blood, recycling, obeying laws, and staying out of debt" (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 241). This type of citizen is reflective of more of a conservative understanding of citizenship. This type of understanding emphasizes a personal, individualistic approach to citizenship where a good citizen is someone that has good character, consisting of honesty, responsibility, and obeying the law. The participatory citizen is actively involved in "the civic affairs and the social life of the community at the local, state, or national level" (Westheimer & Kahne, p. 241). The participatory view of citizenship reflects more of a liberal understanding of citizenship where good citizens are those that are actively involved in the community and participate within established systems to help improve society. The justice-oriented citizen analyzes social, economic, and political issues, critiques the established societal structures and works to improve the human condition. Justice-oriented citizens often reflect feminist and socialist perspectives. These perspectives often call for the questioning and change of established systems or structures that are believed responsible for injustices. Of the three, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) claim that the justice-oriented citizen is the least emphasized type of citizen in democratic education programs. The idea that social justice is often lacking in current approaches to citizenship education is confirmed in Canadian

studies by Llewellyn, Cook, Westheimer, Girón and Suurtamm (2007) and Kennelly and Llewellyn (2011). In both of these works, the authors advocate for a social-justice oriented approach to citizenship education. This approach includes an emphasis on active involvement and a focus on working towards the betterment of the community and society as a whole, as opposed to focusing on responsibility. In this approach, students are seen as potential agents of change rather than more traditional conceptions of students as passive learners who need to be taught to be loyal and responsible citizens.

When considering what citizenship education should entail, current academic work suggests that it should consist of specific knowledge, skills, and values or dispositions. This can clearly be seen when looking at the work of Ghasempoor, Yarmohammadzadeh, and Pishkarmofrad (2012), which break down elements of citizenship education as follows:

1) Knowledge and understanding about topics such as: laws and rules, the democratic process, the media, human rights, diversity, money and the economy, sustainable development and the world as a global community; and concepts such as democracy, justice, equality, freedom, authority and the rule of law;
2) Skills and aptitudes: critical thinking, analyzing information, expressing opinions, taking part in discussion and debates, negotiating, conflict resolution and participating in community action;
3) Values and dispositions: respect for justice, democracy and the rule of law, openness (open-mindedness), tolerance, courage to defend a point of view, and willingness to listen to, work with and stand up for others. (p. 2)

Though there is not complete agreement that all of these traits are necessary elements of citizenship education, it can be said there is a general consensus that these, or similar traits, should be a part of citizenship education.

Sears (2014) focuses on critical competencies in citizenship education and how to measure them. Sears points out that there has long been agreement within the field of citizenship education, that citizenship should include civic competencies consisting of specific knowledge, skills, and values, and that there has also been great debate over exactly what these traits should be (p. 6). He also goes on to say, "one of the issues for measuring progress toward effective citizenship has been the lack of clear and measurable goals" (Sears, 2014, p. 8). The reason behind this, according to Sears, is that most jurisdictions have too many outcomes. His solution is to develop a limited set of key concepts that are central to citizenship in a democratic nation. Reducing the number of outcomes should allow students to develop deeper understandings of citizenship.

Sears also goes on to discuss ways in which progress in citizenship may be measured, specifically focusing on civic engagement. Recognizing that civic engagement can take many forms and look different for different people, Sears (2014) suggests "the development of civic engagement and knowledge profiles … as the way forward" (p. 19). Each profile would consist of four domains that could be used to measure student progress. The four domains are: formal politics, political advocacy, civil society, and grassroots/community action. Using this system would allow educators to measure a student's understanding of the knowledge needed in each domain and also to measure their actual involvement in each domain. This information could then be used to compare the two profiles. This can help to direct future learning and to help both educators and

students understand the complexities of civic engagement specifically, and citizenship education as a whole, and potentially offer a meaningful way to assess the effectiveness of citizenship education.

According to their analysis of different Canadian curricular documents and official policies, Sears and Hughes (1996) found that citizenship education in Canada is designed to teach students to become citizens that are "knowledgeable about contemporary society and the issues it faces; disposed to work hard toward the common good; supportive of pluralism; and skilled at taking action to make their communities, nation, and the world a better place for all people" (p. 129). For the most part, researchers do not seem to argue against the principle behind this purpose, but many academics have questioned its success and whether or not this focus completely encompasses what good citizenship is or should be, as well as questioning whether current citizenship education programs are actually designed to do this. Through a discourse analysis of three curricular documents (from Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario) in use in 2008 that focus on citizenship education, Kennelly and Llewellyn (2011) found that despite active citizenship being a clear goal, "'informed citizenship' and 'responsible citizenship' combine to far outweigh occurrences of 'active citizenship'" (p. 902). This suggests that to be a good citizen, it is more important to be responsible and aware of all sides of an issue than actually take action to address these issues and actively make the community or society a better place. This can further be seen with the fact that in all three curricular documents, "'action' is almost always tempered by adjectives that emphasize the importance of 'responsibility' and 'rationality'" (Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011, p. 902). In doing so, it could be argued that action or active citizenship, though clearly mentioned, is

being deemphasized. This suggests that in Canadian citizenship education, compliance and the status quo are privileged over activism, social justice, and progress.

Criticisms of Citizenship Education

One of the most common criticisms of citizenship education is that it does not address the inequities that exist in society today and that current understandings of citizenship can lead to inequities in citizenship and what it means to be a citizen.

According to Tupper (2009), citizenship education, particularly as represented in social studies curricula in Western Canada, presents a false universality of citizenship in which it is assumed that all citizens are treated equally. Using both historical and contemporary examples, Tupper points out that there are groups, like First Nations peoples, that have been and still are being treated as second-class citizens. As evidence of this, Tupper (2009) compares the seeming lack of concern for Indigenous communities that lack safe drinking water to the outrage expressed when non-Indigenous communities (Walkerton, Ontario) face the same struggle. She also points out the difference in how Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are treated by law enforcement officers by citing the case of Neil Stonechild, an Indigenous man in Saskatoon who froze to death after being driven out of the city and left on the side of the highway by police officers. These police officers later denied having anything to do with his death until a witness came forward and the public demanded an inquiry which concluded that the police officers were in fact responsible for his death (Tupper, 2009). She concludes that current citizenship education programs need to stop teaching that there is a universality in citizenship and begin focusing on the social inequities in society and have students clearly and thoughtfully examine the causes and impacts of inequity and privilege.

Kennelly and Llewellyn (2011) conducted a discourse analysis of curricula that focus specifically on citizenship, from Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario. According to their findings, all three curricula have been written under a veil of neo-liberalism. Specifically, they argue that active citizenship in these curricula is being presented in a manner that places increasing emphasis on the responsibility of individuals and the decreasing responsibility of the state. Active citizenship is tied to responsibilities and ethics and does not allow for protests, sit-ins, etc. In other words, being a good citizen, means fulfilling civic duties and working for the good of the country without challenging the government or the status quo. Kennelly and Llewellyn (2011) further explain that these curricula prioritize the public sphere over the private sphere meaning that those that have traditionally had easier and more access to the public sphere (white, middle class, straight men), are privileged over others. As such, active citizenship can be said to be restrictive. This idea of citizenship being restrictive is quite similar to Tupper's (2009) argument that citizenship education, in its current form, leads to inequities by reinforcing a false sense of universality in citizenship, when in reality, many groups (including Indigenous peoples) within Canada are treated as second class citizens.

Another common criticism found in literature on citizenship education is that teachers tend to place more emphasis on teaching about citizenship than on teaching students to actually be good citizens. This can be seen in Evans' (2006a) study of 33 specialty teachers of citizenship education from Ontario and England. In this study, all 33 teachers emphasized content specific, teacher directed practices when educating for citizenship while only a few used more student directed approaches. Furthermore, Evans found that students were often not encouraged to think critically about the underlying

causes of and implications arising from specific actions. In the study, “less than half of the teachers … reported using instructional practices used to encourage students to explore beliefs, values, and/or notions of social justice underpinning civic decisions and actions” (Evans, 2006a, p. 44). As critical thinking is generally thought to be an essential skill for responsible citizenship, this lack of emphasis on critical thinking is an indication that students are not being taught how to be good citizens.

One of the issues with the way in which citizenship education is being approached in Canada is that there is a disconnect between the theoretical approach of the various curricula that include citizenship education and the actual delivery of citizenship education. According to Chareka and Sears (2006), despite most citizenship education programs in Canada being rooted in constructivist theory, teachers do not attend to students’ prior knowledge and preconceptions of citizenship, which is a central element of constructivist thought. As a result, teachers may focus on lessons that are repetitive and redundant to some students, which can rob them of the opportunity to deepen their understanding of citizenship and potentially cause them to resent the subject area. As such, this disconnect, makes citizenship education in its current form inefficient at best, and ineffective at worst if bored students begin to tune out lessons and messages related to the development of good citizenship.

In their analysis of citizenship education internationally, Hughes and Sears (2006) found that one of the biggest issues in Canadian citizenship education is the lack of capacity building around citizenship education in Canada when compared to other countries. There are four specific areas in which Canada has yet to build capacity:

> the development of clear, consistent and widely accepted goals or outcomes for establishing directions and formulating standards; the provision and/or the development of curriculum materials to support both teaching and learning in citizenship education; the provision of substantive programs for teacher development at both pre and in-service levels; and the funding of research and development to support policy and program development as well as teaching learning in citizenship education. (p. 7)

Based on this lack of capacity building, it is no surprise that citizenship education in its current form in Canada is not meeting its stated goals.

Perceptions of Citizenship

Despite the prevailing view portrayed in Canadian and international media that youth are not aware of or engaged in political activities, there are surprisingly few studies on student perceptions of citizenship and citizenship education. One study that does look at student perceptions of citizenship is the study completed by Chareka and Sears in 2006. In this study, Chareka and Sears examine the views on voting of 20 youth (aged 16 to 24), 10 of whom were born and raised in Canada and 10 of whom were recent immigrants from Africa. All 20 participants spoke of the importance of civic participation and in particular voting. There was a clear understanding among the participants of the struggle that people went through historically to gain the right to vote and that voting is a privilege that many people in the world are not lucky enough to have. The majority of the youth questioned, said that voting is a basic duty for citizens in a democratic country. Despite this "more than half said they had not voted in the past and did not intend to vote in the future" (Chareka & Sears, 2006, p. 528). The reasons given for this lack of voting

were based on things like a lack of faith or trust in politicians, the belief that backbench MPs and MLAs had little power, and the belief that there was little real difference between the major political parties in Canada. According to Chareka and Sears (2006), in order to address these issues, changes to citizenship education will have to be made. Specifically, citizenship education needs to go beyond merely teaching students how and why to vote and needs to address the specific understandings and conceptions of voting that students already have.

Another study that looks at student perceptions of citizenship is the one completed by Tupper and Capello (2012) in Saskatchewan. In this study grade 10 students in two schools were asked to create visual collages of what they thought good citizenship looked like. From these collages and the ensuing conversations with the researchers, several common themes of good citizenship emerged. According to the participants, good citizens are nationalistic, support multiculturalism, are respectful, help others, are concerned about the environment, and treat others, as they would like to be treated. These responses closely reflect what the Saskatchewan curriculum says good citizenship is supposed to be. What these results do not tell us, however, is whether this understanding of citizenship is actually what the students believe good citizenship should be or if they are parroting what they have been taught.

The Civic Learning Report by Llewellyn et al. (2007) explores both student and teacher perceptions of citizenship and citizenship education in different schools in Ottawa, Ontario. Though the report largely focuses on civic literacy, the understanding of civic literacy that is presented is essentially the same as the construct of citizenship education as defined in this paper (see page 28 and Tables 1 and 2). In looking at the

responses of both students and teachers, there is evidence that the goals of citizenship education are not being met. One of the first areas of concern is that the students in the study "generally claimed to have minimal understanding of government procedures and national issues under current debate" (p. 12). This is concerning for two reasons: first, understanding of the democratic process is an important knowledge trait in citizenship education and second, being aware of the issues facing the nation is one of the overall goals of citizenship education.

Another area of concern is that according to most of the students surveyed "the top two elements of being a good citizen (are) … paying taxes and voting" (Llewellyn et al. 2007, p. 14). This suggests that active engagement and social justice are not deemed as being that important despite being goals of citizenship education. There is also evidence that, at least from a student perspective, citizenship education is not viewed as very important as most students "argued that the social sciences and humanities were not a priority in the education system" (p. 24). If the education system as a whole does not take citizenship education or the courses in which it is taught seriously, then how can we expect students to? Finally, "few students could envision how a greater youth voice or representation of youth issues in government could make a difference" (p. 16). This of course, speaks to potential disillusionment that could make students less likely to engage in the political process or attempt to affect change resulting, once again, in a failure to meet the goals of citizenship education.

Regarding teacher perceptions in the report, the teachers involved in the study "seemed to embrace the acquisition of political knowledge as a primary objective of schooling for the increased civic engagement of youth" (Llewellyn et al., 2007, p. 20).

The problem with this, is the assumption that simply acquiring knowledge about politics and the political process will automatically make students more engaged. It also minimizes the role of skills and dispositions in developing active and engaged citizens. Another issue that was apparent amongst teacher responses was the fear teachers seemed to have about discussing controversial subjects and their own political views or encouraging students to act on specific political issues. Though their fears may be justified if school policies dictate that they be impartial in their teaching, it robs the students of the opportunity to think critically about controversial issues and political viewpoints. It also represents a lost opportunity to encourage students to become more engaged and actively involved in issues that are important to them, which again, is one of the main goals of citizenship education.

In 2016, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) published the results from their survey of nearly 500 social studies teachers in Alberta. Though the survey was not specifically about citizenship education, the report does provide some useful information regarding the perceptions of social studies teachers in Alberta regarding citizenship education. The first important observation is the overwhelming support of social studies teachers for citizenship education as the focus of social studies curricula. In total, 93% agreed (53% strongly), that "the most important goal in social studies should be the development of active and engaged citizens of a democratic society" (ATA, 2016, p. 15). This is an important statement in support of citizenship education from those that are responsible for teaching citizenship on a daily basis.

However, the statement does leave a few questions unanswered. First, what do teachers believe "engaged and active citizens" look like? Second, what specific

knowledge, skills, and dispositions should be focused on in citizenship education? And finally, to what extent do teachers actually focus on citizenship education in their classes? The report does address the first and third questions to an extent, but further research is still needed. Regarding what "engaged and active citizens" should look like, according to the survey, 85% of respondents agreed on the importance of social studies teaching in "helping students to transform both themselves and their society" (ATA, 2016, p. 16). This suggests that the vast majority of social studies teachers in Alberta support an understanding of citizenship in which citizens are actively engaged in improving society. Again though, this does not shed any light on how students (or citizens) are supposed to transform society, only that it is important. Regarding the third question, the fact that teachers believe citizenship education is important does not necessarily mean that citizenship education is being emphasized in the classroom. This is clearly demonstrated in one teacher's response,

> keep the citizenship component! Too often teachers approach social studies as a history class or a geography class! I am a department head and I am constantly reminded by teacher's gradebooks how much history is taught and how little citizenship. (ATA, 2016, p. 29)

This seems to contradict the earlier stated belief in the importance of citizenship education and could be demonstrating that there is a disconnect between teachers' perceptions and actions regarding citizenship education. Thus, more research is needed. Is this an isolated incident where a single department in a single school is focusing more on history than on citizenship or is it a common practice for social studies teachers, despite their believed importance of citizenship education, to focus more on history or

geography than citizenship? Furthermore, if it is a widespread issue, what is causing teachers to go against what they believe to be the most important goal of social studies, "the development of active and engaged citizens of a democratic society" (ATA, 2016, p. 15)? As informative as the ATA report is, it leaves questions unanswered, and invites more research, particularly regarding citizenship education.

Assessing Citizenship and Citizenship Education

One area of citizenship education that has not seen a great detail of attention is the assessment of citizenship and citizenship education. Arguably, this is why there is little focus on education for active citizenship in schools; it is not the subject of high-stakes testing. This is particularly true when looking at assessment of citizenship education in Canada. As such, to get a true understanding of the research being done on assessment of citizenship education, it is necessary to look at both Canadian and international literature. One study that specifically looks at assessment of citizenship education is the analysis of citizenship education in England completed by Pike in 2012. In this study, Pike (2012) makes three important observations regarding the assessment of citizenship education.

First, Pike (2012) notes that the assessment of citizenship education in England does not seem to be a priority in research, policy, or practice (p. 202). This is similar to the situation in Canada where there is a paucity of research relating to the assessment of citizenship education. Second, is the suggestion that awarding lower grades to some students in citizenship education may actually go against the idea that all citizens are equal (p. 202). This does not necessarily mean that citizenship should not be assessed, but it does indicate that how students are being assessed and the purpose behind the assessments need to be carefully considered to ensure that the assessments do not counter

act the purpose of citizenship education. This leads to Pike's (2012) third observation regarding assessing citizenship where he suggests that a portfolio is a better approach to assessing citizenship than traditional pen and paper assessments (p. 202). Being able to include various pieces of evidence of learning, this approach would provide a fuller and deeper assessment than traditional pen and paper assessments, while also demonstrating a student's growth and development of citizenship over time.

The difficulty in assessing citizenship as pointed out by Pike is further exacerbated by the fact that there is no single, agreed upon definition of what citizenship is or should be. This is evident both in literature on citizenship education and as Sears (2014) points out, in curricular and policy documents as well (p. 18). Though this may be alarming to some, there seems to be enough of a consensus on what citizenship is or should be to allow for the development of a definition of citizenship. In creating this definition, it is important to note two things. The first is that there is a general understanding that citizenship education should be based on specific knowledge, skills, and values or dispositions. Second, since 1990, there has been an increasing trend in democratic nations to reform citizenship education towards a constructivist or civic republican understanding of citizenship that is based on active engagement and a commitment to the common good (Sears, 2014). Keeping these two points in mind, it should be possible to develop a clear definition of what citizenship is and what citizenship education should look like.

Standardized Tests and Citizenship Education

When looking at the impact that standardized tests in general, and the Alberta Social Studies diploma exam specifically, has on citizenship education, there are several

useful studies that either directly or indirectly address this issue. One such study is the dissertation by Loren Agrey in which he interviews four high school social studies teachers in an attempt to understand the different impacts that the Social Studies 30 diploma exams had on teachers and their teaching practice. In general, Agrey (2004) found that all of the interviewees teaching, and assessment practices were directly shaped by the diploma exam. Each teacher focused their classes on the specific outcomes they knew would be on the diploma exam and used assessments that reflected the specific types of assessments found on the diploma exam (p. 212). This emphasis on the diploma exam "marginalizes the knowledge, skills and attitudes required in the course but will not appear on the examination" (p. 212). Given the difficult nature of assessing citizenship, as discussed above, this suggests that the elements of citizenship may be pushed aside in favor of outcomes that are easier to assess on a standardized test, which can be seen to a degree, when Agrey discusses the topic of citizenship with his interviewees.

In that discussion there was no single view or consensus on the extent to which the diploma exam reflected the goals of citizenship or on the effectiveness in measuring the traits that make up citizenship. One interviewee, Bill, felt that the specific knowledge and skills the diploma exam focused on were important for students to have throughout their lives (p. 215), which suggests at least some level of preparing students to be good citizens, though it stops well short of claiming that the entirety of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make up citizenship are reflected in the diploma exam. Scott felt that though some skills were being measured on the diploma exam, the test did not measure the entirety of the skills needed for citizenship. He further explained, "it is possible to exit the final required social studies program without the prerequisite skills to

be an active and responsible citizen" (p. 215). The teacher most vocal in his criticism of the impact the diploma exam had on the goal of citizenship was Mike, who felt that citizenship was not being developed as much as it should be and that "citizenship skills are marginalized due to the emphasis on the knowledge base required for the examination" (p. 215). The suggestion that some or even all citizenship skills are not being taught, or assessed, is concerning, particularly as the goal of social studies was and still is responsible citizenship. What is even more concerning is the fact that none of the interviewees made any mention of the values or dispositions of citizenship. This suggests a major under representation of the traits that make up citizenship.

This issue of teaching for citizenship being seen as secondary to teaching students to do well on their standardized tests can further be seen in Tupper's (2007) study of five high school social studies teachers in Alberta. For two of these teachers, "citizenship became much more about the consumption of information…rather than a sustained questioning or critique of the traditions of knowledge in social studies" (p. 50). This suggests that social studies teachers, in the face of diploma exams, do not address the specific skills, processes, values and dispositions that, as discussed previously, are essential components of citizenship education. If this is in fact the case, then we need to examine the consequences of teachers not addressing the traits essential to citizenship education.

Despite the usefulness of these studies, the need for additional research is apparent for several reasons, not the least of which is a very significant change to the curricular and assessment landscapes in Alberta. Beginning in the 2006-2007 school year, Alberta began using a new social studies curriculum, and during the 2008-2009 school

year, the Social Studies 30 and 33 grade 12 curricula were replaced with Social Studies 30-1 and 30-2. These new curricula were based more on an inquiry model, and the placement of the skills outcomes in front of the knowledge outcomes in senior high school curricular documents can be seen to be emphasizing the specific skills over content or knowledge outcomes. In theory, this should help, at least somewhat, to address the issue of teachers focusing on knowledge as opposed to critical thinking skills that Tupper (2007) had reported.

The high stakes standardized testing environment that Agrey (2004) and Tupper (2007) discuss has also changed. Though the results of diploma exams are still published, there does seem to be somewhat of a change in the attitudes regarding standardized testing in the province. Despite calls from some people to increase the use of standardized tests (Staples, 2012), the creation of programs like the Masters of Education in Curriculum and Assessment at the University of Lethbridge, the continued success of the Alberta Assessment Consortium, and the challenging of standardized tests in academia seen in the work of Slomp (2016) show the potential for the beginning of a shift away from an educational environment focused heavily on standardized tests. This can further be seen by the fact that beginning in the 2015-2016 school year, diploma exams in Alberta, including those for Social Studies 30-1 and 30-2 were reduced in value from 50% of a student's final grade to 30%. As it appears that there is at least an attempt by some to shift the culture surrounding assessment, it is important to see if this shift has had an impact on the way in which social studies teachers approach their classes particularly around the topic of citizenship.

Assumptions

There are two major assumptions that underlie the majority of research done on citizenship education including the work mentioned above. The first assumption is that we should in fact be teaching citizenship and the specific traits that make up citizenship education. As pointed out by Osborne (2000), one of the main reasons Canada and other nations provide public education is so they can create a specific type of citizen to meet the perceived needs of the nation. Obviously, it is important for a nation to ensure its citizens are educated, particularly in a democratic society where citizens are directly responsible for electing their governments. However, in a system built on individual freedom and a belief in critical thinking, it is important to consider how far governments should be able to go in determining what their citizens will be like. Furthermore, it is important to consider whether or not in a liberal democracy like Canada, governments, and through extension the education system itself, have the right to tell/teach students how they should think and what they should or should not value. It could be argued that in teaching students from a very young age how to be a citizen, the education system is in fact indoctrinating the youth of Canada thus not allowing them the liberty to make their own choices, think for themselves, or choose what they value. It also could be said to rob students of the ability to focus on what they need, as the focus of citizenship education is on what the country needs, which again, goes against the very liberal values that democracies like Canada are built upon.

The second assumption is centered on how we should be teaching citizenship education. When looking at the vast majority of Canadian studies on citizenship education, it is apparent that the main approach to citizenship education in Canada is

through social studies or civics classes. It was also apparent through my review of the literature on citizenship education in Canada that there does not seem to be much, if any, consideration of teaching citizenship across curricula. There are some potential organizational and logistical reasons why it might be difficult to coordinate the teaching of citizenship education across various curricula, but that does not necessarily mean that it should not be tried. By teaching citizenship in courses like science, where students could have the opportunity to investigate the political, ethical, and economic impacts of modern science, students may be more likely to become engaged in citizenship education and become more active, engaged and responsible citizens, which according to jurisdictions like Alberta (Alberta Education, 2007) is what citizenship education is all about.

Despite the varying opinions of what makes a good citizen, overall there seems to be an increasing level of agreement in the literature on citizenship education about what citizenship education should be. The general understanding is that citizenship education should involve teaching students that citizenship is about much more than simply voting and following the law. It is a very active approach to citizenship which encourages participation and engagement at all levels of society. There does however seem to be a disconnect between what the literature says citizenship education should be and how it is treated in different curriculum documents across the country. The literature shows that there has been a limited amount of focus on providing educators with the skills, training, knowledge and opportunities needed, to develop the capacity to best approach citizenship education in their classes and schools. This can further be seen when looking at the rather alarming lack of attention in the literature, and potentially within classrooms as well, on

assessing citizenship. Finally, the use of standardized testing appears to have a negative impact on the teaching of citizenship education and as a result potentially on the development of "good" citizens as well.

FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for my research is based on two major assumptions. The first, is that citizenship is a construct, consisting of specific observable and measurable traits, meaning citizenship can be assessed. The second assumption is that the three main elements of assessment are: fairness, reliability and validity. Based on these assumptions and through my research I was able to define citizenship, establish the traits that make up citizenship and examine the alignment and relationship between the traits of citizenship, the Social Studies 30-1 Program of Studies, the Social Studies 30-1 Diploma Exam, and the three main elements of assessment.

Citizenship as a Construct

My research began with an analysis of Canadian literature on citizenship education in order to define what citizenship is and to determine what specific traits it consists of. Based on my analysis on the work of Sears and Hughes (1996), Sears and Hyslop-Margison (2007), Tupper (2007), Westheimer and Kahne (2004), Llewellyn et al. (2007) and Kennelly and Llewellyn (2011), and for the purpose of this research, I have generally defined citizenship as a way of being in which individuals are aware of and engaged in the democratic process, open-minded and respectful of others, aware of their capacity to affect change with a willingness to do so, while maintaining a level of care for themselves, others and the world. Measurement of citizenship will be based on three main elements or traits, as established by Ghasempoor et al. (2012), which are knowledge and understandings, skills and aptitudes, and values and dispositions (p. 2). The specific traits that make up the construct of citizenship can be seen in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Traits of Citizenship from Literature

Domain of Expertise	Instructional Foci	Ties to Scholarly Findings
Knowledge Traits	Political: laws and rules, the democratic process, the media; and concepts such as democracy, justice, equality, freedom, authority and the rule of law.	Ghasempoor, Yarmohammadzadeh, and Pishkarmofrad (2012); Sears (2014)
	Economic: money and the economy, sustainable development	Ghasempoor, Yarmohammadzadeh, and Pishkarmofrad (2012
	Social: human rights, diversity, and the world as a global community	Ghasempoor, Yarmohammadzadeh, and Pishkarmofrad (2012)
Skills Traits	Thinking skills: critical thinking, analyzing information	Ghasempoor, Yarmohammadzadeh, and Pishkarmofrad (2012); Tupper and Cappello (2012); Llewellyn, Cook and Molina (2010)
	Communication skills: expressing opinions, taking part in discussion and debates,	Ghasempoor, Yarmohammadzadeh, and Pishkarmofrad (2012); Sears (2014)
	Participatory skills: negotiating, conflict resolution and participating in community action	Ghasempoor, Yarmohammadzadeh, and Pishkarmofrad (2012); Westheimer and Kahne (2004); Chareka and Sears (2006); Hebert (1997)
Values Traits	Institutional values: respect for justice, democracy and the rule of law	Ghasempoor, Yarmohammadzadeh, and Pishkarmofrad (2012); Llewellyn, Cook and Molina (2010)
	Social values: openness (open-mindedness), tolerance, courage to defend a point of view, and willingness to: listen to, work with and stand up for others	Ghasempoor, Yarmohammadzadeh, and Pishkarmofrad (2012); Sears (2014); Hebert (1997)

Table 2

Additional Traits of Citizenship

Domain of Expertise	Instructional Foci
Knowledge Traits	History of Canada
Values Traits	Institutional values: loyalty, civic-mindedness Social values: generosity of spirit, compassion, willingness to compromise

Based on my experience as a high school social studies teacher, I would also add to the knowledge and understanding traits, the history of Canada, and to values and dispositions, generosity of spirit, compassion, loyalty, willingness to compromise, and civic-mindedness. I would add the history of Canada as in order to fully understand the issues we as a country are facing it is essential to understand the historic basis for those issues as well as understanding our past mistakes so as to not repeat them. Generosity of spirit and compassion are necessary to ensure that those that are in need of assistance are provided it regardless of their background. Willingness to compromise and civic-mindedness are needed to make sure that people can and do work together for the good for the good of the community, territory or province, and country. Finally, loyalty, though not blind loyalty, is needed to ensure that the beliefs and ideals that our democracy is founded upon, are remembered and protected.

After establishing what specific traits make up citizenship, I mapped those traits onto the Alberta Social Studies 30-1 Program of Studies in order to assess the alignment between citizenship and the program of studies (see Table 3). To do this I used a three-point scale where traits were given a score of ‘0’ if there was no connection between the trait and the program of studies, a score of ‘1’ if there was a moderate connection,

characterized by a potential, implicit and/or indirect connection, and a score of '2' if there was a strong connection, meaning that there was an explicit and/or direct connection. I took each trait and compared it to each outcome to see if there was a connection. For example, for the trait of Canadian History, I looked at all the specific knowledge outcomes to see how many focused on Canadian History. In my findings, none of the specific outcomes directly address Canadian History. Some address, other, broader elements of history like the Cold War (knowledge outcome 2.10), but none of the outcomes directly address Canadian history. There are however, four outcomes that indirectly address Canadian history or the case studies the program of studies mentions is or could be an example from Canadian history. These outcomes are

> 2.11 analyze perspectives on the imposition of the principles of liberalism (Aboriginal experiences, contemporary events), 2.12 analyze the extent to which modern liberalism is challenged by alternative thought (Aboriginal collective thought, environmentalism, religious perspectives, neo-conservatism, post modernism, extremism), 3.6 analyze the extent to which liberal democracies reflect illiberal thought and practice (Canada, contemporary examples), and 3.8 evaluate the extent to which governments should promote individual and collective rights (American Bill of Rights; Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms; First Nations, Metis and Inuit rights; language legislation; emergencies and security legislation. (Alberta Education, 2007, pp. 21-23)

Then, using my understanding of the Social Studies 30-1 diploma exam, combined with an analysis of the written component of the diploma exams from 2015 to 2018, and

diploma exam related documents, including *Administering diploma exams* and diploma exam information bulletins, from Alberta Education, I mapped out which traits of citizenship are specifically addressed on the diploma exam (see Table 4). I once again used a three-point scale, but for this one, traits were given a score of '0' if they were not addressed at all by the diploma exam, a score of '1' if the trait was potentially addressed by the diploma exam, and a score of '2' if the trait was directly addressed by the diploma exam. To be as specific as possible I mapped each trait onto both parts of the diploma exam.

For Part A of the exam I looked at both the January and June exams from 2015 to 2018. As an example, the following was the source students had to analyze in order to complete written assignment two on the January 2015 Social Studies 30-1 Diploma Exam: "Individuals are by nature, unique and unequal. Efforts by the state to interfere with the lives of individuals will result in a restrictive and inefficient society" (Alberta Education, 2015, p. 9). I took each of the knowledge traits of citizenship and rated them on my three- point scale based on the level of alignment they had to this source. Through my analysis of this essay source, I found that the source alone, and not any potential examples students may choose to use, indirectly connects to each of the following knowledge traits: authority, freedom, equality, democracy, money and the economy, diversity, and human rights, meaning each trait was given a score of 1. Based on my analysis, none of the knowledge traits had a direct connection to this particular source but those that did have direct connections to other sources in the exams I was able to analyze were awarded a score of '2' overall, even if they received a score of '0' or '1' for this source.

For Part B of the exam, I examined the diploma exam blueprint found in the Social Studies 30-1 Diploma Exam Bulletin (Alberta Education, 2018c), the 2014 released multiple choice questions and the school reports for the Social Studies 30-1 diploma exam for each sitting from January 2016 to June 2019 to see which specific outcomes were being assessed. To determine if the traits of citizenship are being assessed on the diploma exam, I first looked at which outcomes reflected the traits of citizenship (Table 3). For each outcome that reflected one of the traits of citizenship, I looked through the school reports to see if those outcomes were assessed on that year's diploma exam. For example, for the knowledge trait 'democratic processes,' three outcomes are directly connected to it. These outcomes are

> 3.3 explore the extent to which governments should reflect the will of the people, 3.4 explore the extent to which governments should encourage economic equality, and 3.5 analyze the extent to which the practice of political and economic systems reflect principles of liberalism (consensus decision making, direct and representative democracies, authoritarian political systems, traditional economics, free market economies, command economies, mixed economies). (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 23)

On the January 2016 diploma exam, specific outcome 3.3 was assessed on five questions, specific outcome 3.4 was not assessed at all, and specific outcome 3.5 was assessed on eight questions. As two of the three democratic processes outcomes were assessed on this diploma exam, democratic processes was given a score of '2' for its alignment with Part B of the diploma exam. For those traits that had an alignment of '1' with the program of studies, I performed the same analysis of school reports, and if the corresponding specific

outcomes were assessed, the traits were given a score of 1. As an example, the knowledge trait ‘sustainable development/global community’ had an alignment of ‘1’ with the three specific outcomes, 3.8, 4.8, and 4.9. On the January 2016 diploma exam, outcomes 3.8 and 4.8 were assessed on specific questions resulting in an overall score of ‘1’ for alignment between the trait ‘sustainable development/global community’ and Part B of the diploma exam. Though not the focus of this paper, it is interesting to note that some outcomes were not assessed at all in Part B of the January 2016 Social Studies 30-1 Diploma Exam, while outcome 3.5 “analyze the extent to which the practices of political and economic systems reflect principles of liberalism” (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 23) was assessed on eight separate questions. This is an example of the diploma exam privileging some outcomes over others. For those traits that scored a ‘0’ for their alignment with the program of studies, I analyzed the released diploma exam questions from 2014 to determine if any of the questions were potentially assessing those traits. What I found is that of the three traits that had a score of ‘0’, two, justice and the media, were directly mentioned in either a source or a question but in each case that they were used more as vocabulary words as part of the sentence rather than the concepts actually being assessed.

Table 3

Alignment Between Citizenship Traits and Social Studies 30-1

Traits	Alignment	Outcome(s)
Laws and Rules	0	
Democratic Processes	2	3.3, 3.4, 3.5
The Media	0	
Human Rights	2	1.7, 2.8, 3.8, 4.6, 4.7
Diversity	1	1.3, 1.4
Money and the economy	2	2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 3.4, 3.5
Sustainable development/ global community	1	3.8, 4.8, 4.9
Canadian history	1	2.11, 2.12, 3.6, 3.8
Democracy	2	2.4, 2.5, 2.12, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6
Justice	0	
Equality	2	1.4, 1.5, 1.8, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 3.4, 3.5
Freedom	2	1.4, 1.7, 2.5, 2.6, 3.5, 3.7, 3.8
Authority	1	2.9, 3.3, 3.5, 3.7, 3.9
Rule of Law	2	1.7
Critical thinking	2	S.1.1-S.1.9
Analyzing information	2	S.1.1, S.1.9, S.2.2, S.2.3, S.3.1
Expressing opinions	2	S.8.1, S.8.2
Taking part in discussions/debates	2	S.8.2, S.8.4, S.8.5
Negotiating	2	S.5.2
Conflict resolution	2	S.5.1, S.5.2
Participation in community action	1	S.6.1, 4.9
Open-mindedness	1	1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2
Civic mindedness	1	4.2, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7, 4.9,4.10
Respect	1	S.5.5
Willingness to compromise	1	S.5.2
Tolerance	1	S.5.5

Traits	Alignment	Outcome(s)
Compassion	0	
Generosity of spirit	0	
Loyalty	0	
Respect for justice	0	
Respect for democracy	1	4.6, 4.7
Respect for the rule of law	2	4.6, 4.7
Courage to defend a position	1	S.8.1, S.8.5, S.7.1, S.1.6
Willingness to listen	2	S.8.4
Willingness to work with others	1	S.5.6
Willingness to stand up for others	0	

Table 4

Alignment Between Citizenship Traits and the Diploma Exam

Traits	Part A Alignment	Part B Alignment
Laws and Rules	1	0
Democratic Processes	1	2
The Media	1	0
Human Rights	2	2
Diversity	1	1
Money and the economy	2	2
Sustainable development/global community	1	1
Canadian history	1	1
Democracy	2	2
Justice	1	0
Equality	2	2
Freedom	2	2
Authority	2	1
Rule of Law	2	2

Traits	Part A Alignment	Part B Alignment
Critical thinking	2	2
Analyzing information	2	2
Expressing opinions	2	0
Taking part in discussions/debates	0	0
Negotiating	0	0
Conflict resolution	0	0
Participation in community action	0	0
Open-mindedness	1	0
Civic mindedness	1	0
Respect	1	0
Willingness to compromise	1	0
Tolerance	1	0
Compassion	1	0
Generosity of spirit	0	0
Loyalty	0	0
Respect for justice	1	0
Respect for democracy	1	0
Respect for the rule of law	1	0
Courage to defend a position	1	0
Willingness to listen	0	0
Willingness to work with others	0	0
Willingness to stand up for others	1	0

Note. Part A is the written response section of the diploma exam consisting of two written assignments. Part B is the multiple-choice section of the diploma exam consisting of 60 questions-48 source based and 12 stand-alone questions.

Overall, I found that there is a moderate lack of alignment between the construct of citizenship and the Social Studies 30-1 Program of Studies, and an even greater lack of alignment between citizenship and the diploma exam. Both findings led me to want to investigate what impact this lack of alignment had on the approaches to and emphasis of citizenship education in high school social studies classes. Specifically, I wanted to

know: **what are the perceptions and understandings of Social Studies 30-1 teachers, on the instruction and assessment of citizenship?** In attempting to answer my main research question I will also attempt to answer the following sub-questions: 1) what are teacher perceptions of the diploma exam? 2) what impact does the diploma exam have on the treatment of citizenship in Social Studies 30-1 classes? and 3) what factors influence teachers' decision-making regarding their focus on citizenship in their classes?

Assessment

Grade 12 students in Alberta are required to take a province wide, standardized final exam, the diploma exam, at the completion of each of the core subjects, including Social Studies 30-1. In 2015, Alberta Education reduced the value of the diploma exam from 50% of students' final mark to 30%. The rationale, as explained in the online version of the Diploma Exam Overview (Alberta Education, 2019b), behind the reduction in weighting is as follows:

> Alberta's diploma exams assess many of the outcomes set out in the provincial programs of study, but they don't assess them all. The current 70/30 weighing puts more emphasis on course work and school-awarded marks. It better reflects the broad range of work students put in over the entire course (Alberta Education, 2019b, para. 15).

The fact that Alberta Education clearly states that the diploma exam does not assess all outcomes of program of studies suggests that there are some potential issues with the diploma exam. To further explore these potential issues, we need to consider three main elements of assessment: fairness, validity, and reliability.

Fairness

Despite fairness being a widely used term in many areas of life, what is or is not fair, and what fairness means, has long been debated. In their research into fairness in assessment, Nisbet and Shaw (2019), using a linguistic scan, identified four senses of fair. The first sense, the formal sense, is based on the proper or correct application of rules or designs. The second sense, the implied contractual sense, is based on whether or not an outcome meets legitimate expectations. The third sense, the relational sense, is based on whether or not similar cases or situations are treated the same. The fourth sense, the retributive sense, is based on the appropriateness of consequences of actions or events (pp. 613-614). According to Nisbet and Shaw (2019), "the notions of legitimate expectations (*implied contractual sense*) and treating like cases alike (*relational sense*) resonate in many discussions about the unfairness of exams (p. 614)." This suggests that exams like the diploma exam could be considered unfair if the exam fails to meet the reasonable expectations of those impacted by the exam or if differences in achievement on the exam are based on irrelevant factors, like race or gender. Nesbit and Shaw (2019) further stated that there is a "developing consensus … that fairness in assessment is an absence of construct-irrelevant variance bias" (p. 619). Therefore, in order for exams like the diploma exam to be considered fair, they would also need to be free from construct-irrelevant variance. That is, the exam would need to be free from any extraneous variables that might make the exam easier or more difficult for individual students.

According to Alberta Education's website, Administering Diploma Exams, the "(g)overnment's goal is to ensure fairness for all students, no matter when they write a diploma exam" (Alberta Education, 2019a). To achieve this goal, the government has

been using a system of equating since 2013 to ensure that the standard on the multiple-choice portions of diploma exams are consistent year over year. To do this, each exam has a certain proportion of questions, called anchor questions that are the same as on the previous exam. This allows the government to assess how a cohort of students does on the anchor questions as well as the rest of the exam and compare those results to the previous cohort to ensure that the non-anchor questions are of similar difficulty. If they are not the same level of difficulty, the government can adjust student scores on the multiple-choice portions of exams to ensure consistency in the difficulty level of exams year over year (Alberta Education, 2019a). This brings up two important questions to consider. First, does this process of equating actually ensure fairness and second, is fairness really even the goal?

As discussed by Nisbet and Shaw (2019), one aspect of fairness in assessment is the lack of bias against specific groups in society (pp. 613-614). Technically speaking, you could argue that each year's cohort of grade 12 students makes up a group in society, thus making the government's attempts to ensure the level of difficulty year over year is the same, is ensuring the fairness of the diploma exam. There are however numerous issues with this line of thinking. First, when looking at fairness of an assessment like the diploma exam, to truly be fair, the assessment would need to be free of bias against any specific groups that took part in that exact assessment. Second, the process of equating does not change the exam in any way to ensure it is fair, rather it adjusts some student scores to make the results "fair" from year to year. Third, using equating as a mechanism to ensure fairness can mask real and significant issues with the diploma exam in whole or

in part including poor construction of test items and actual bias against specific groups of students.

Part of the rationale provided for equating results is to make sure "a mark of 80% on one diploma exam means the same as a mark of 80% on another diploma exam in the same subject" (Alberta Education, 2019a). This is a laudable goal, but should it not be just as important that an 80% by one student on a multiple-choice exam means the same as an 80% by another student on the exact same multiple-choice exam? This brings up Nisbet and Shaw's (2019) second aspect of fairness. Given the importance of the diploma exam, it is reasonable for students to expect that if another student scored the same mark as them, they earned that mark based on their actual performance and not due to some statistical analysis of test questions. Unfortunately, due to the equating process, this may not be the case. On the January 2018 Social Studies 30-1 Diploma Exam, I had four students that were given an equated score of 49/60 (82%) on the multiple-choice section. When examining their raw scores on that section, I found that two students scored 47/60 (78%) and the other two students scored 48/60. In this case, 80% actually meant 82%, as did 78%. A similar situation occurred in January of 2017 where three of my students were awarded an equated score of 52/60 (87%). One actually earned the 87%, while the other two students scored a 51/60 (85%). On that same exam two students were awarded an equated score of 42/60 (70%). When looking at their raw scores though, one actually scored a 40/60 (67%) while the other scored a 41/60 (68%). The specifics behind these examples and what the actual statistical process of equating is, is unclear as there is very little information on the actual statistical process of equating which leads to many questions about how the process actually works and what factors determine which

students get equated and by how much. This can further be seen in looking at the results from Social Studies 30-1 class that wrote the January 2019 exam. I had 27 students write the exam, of which 17 were given an extra point out of 60, seven were given two extra points, and three were not given any extra points. The ranges for determining how many extra points were awarded in my class were as follows: 20/60 or less received no extra points, 23/60 to 34/60 received one extra point, 35/60 to 45/60 received two extra points, and 48/60 to 58/60 received one extra point. Based on the explanation of the equating process discussed above, the students that were awarded extra points were awarded them because their mark on the non-anchor questions was deemed too low given their performance on the anchor questions.

So, is the diploma exam fair? I would say probably not, but I would also say that I do not believe that fairness is actually a goal of the government, at least not based on the understanding of fairness discussed by Nesbitt and Shaw (2019). Alberta Education's desire "to ensure fairness for all students, no matter when they write a diploma exam" (Alberta Education, 2019a, para, 13) seems to be more concerned with reliability than fairness. As such, it is likely that reliability is a more important goal of the government than fairness. Regardless of the goal, it is difficult to fully determine the fairness of the diploma exam, as the government tends not to report results of exams based on individual groups in society outside of the entire cohort who writes a specific sitting of the exam. One piece of information that is available in some reports is the breakdown of marks based on gender (see Table 5).

Table 5

Diploma Exam Results Social Studies 30-1

In Class Mark (%)		Diploma Exam (%)		In Class Mark (%)		Diploma Exam (%)	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
January 2016				June 2016			
73.7	75.5	64.3	62.3	74.4	75.8	66.3	64.3
January 2017				June 2017			
74.1	75.8	65.1	64.0	74.3	75.9	66.6	64.3
January 2018				June 2018			
74.5	76.4	66.4	65.4	75.0	76.2	67.0	64.3
January 2019				June 2019			
74.9	76.9	66.3	65.3	75.0	76.4	66.4	64.5

It is interesting to note that in each of the past eight Social Studies 30-1 diploma exam sittings, on average, females scored worse than males on the diploma exam despite having a higher average class awarded mark going into each exam. Though there is no clear explanation as to why this is the case, it does suggest the possibility that the Social Studies 30-1 diploma exam is biased against female students and in favour of male students. More information and analysis would be needed to determine if there is indeed an inherent bias in the diploma exam but if there is, it would confirm what Christison (1997) found regarding the Social Studies 30 diploma exam which was based on the previous Alberta Social Studies Curriculum. In this study, Christison looked at the diploma exam results of four subgroups of students: mature females (adult female students not enrolled in a regular class), regular females, mature males (adult male students not enrolled in a regular class), and regular males, from 1990 to 1995. Christison

found that despite regular male students and regular female students having very similar class awarded marks, regular male students outperformed regular female students on every exam, particularly on the multiple-choice section. The same was true with mature male students outperforming mature female students. Furthermore, in several instances, mature male students, despite not being enrolled in regular classes, outperformed regular female students. There is one significant difference between Christison's findings and the results of recent diploma exams, and that is that in recent years, female students have performed better than their male counterparts regarding their in-class marks. Seeing as the differences in class awarded marks in recent Social Studies 30-1 classes are significantly higher for female students than male students, it is important to consider that current differences in class awarded marks between male and female students may be due to a bias of Social Studies 30-1 teachers in favour of female students.

Reliability

According to the American Psychological Association (2019), reliability is "the degree to which a test or other measurement instrument is free from of random error, yielding the same results across multiple applications to the same sample." In other words, results from a test must by replicable. Therefore, for the diploma exam to be considered reliable, the results would need to produce a high degree of replication.

According to Parkes (2007), under traditional reliability methodology, replication is typically determined "by counting the pieces of the assessment structure. Thus, two multiple-choice items constitute a replication, as do two raters, two tasks, two occasions, two dimensions on a rubric, etc." (p. 4). Using this methodology, we can see the amount of replication possible with the diploma exam, thus giving us a clearer picture of whether

the diploma exam is reliable. The diploma exam is a one-time exam for students, so the fact that they do not take the exam on multiple occasions could lead to questioning the replicability of the exam. However, as many of the multiple-choice questions are used on multiple occasions, it could be argued that that represents a replication. The argument in support of the reliability of the diploma exam is further strengthened by the structure of the diploma exam, which consisting of two distinct parts, one written and one multiple choice, requires students to complete multiple tasks.

In order to fully determine the reliability of the Social Studies 30-1 diploma exam, it is important to look at both Part A and Part B. One potential issue related to reliability regarding Part A is the fact that teachers are responsible for marking the two written assignments that make up Part A. As the assessment of written work can often be subjective and dependent on who is assessing the work, there is a potential issue with reliability in part A of the diploma exam. It is conceivable that two different teachers could have very different interpretations of the value of a written answer thus making the marks associated with those valuations less reliable. Fortunately, Alberta Education has attempted to address this potential reliability issue in the way in which diploma exams are marked. First, they start with a specific and detailed rubric for each of the two written assignments. Then they bring experienced social studies teachers with significant experience in marking diploma exams to comb through the written responses from across the province (and the Northwest Territories) and set the standard for each written assignment. They look for what they call “mid-basket” examples of excellent responses, proficient responses, satisfactory responses, limited responses and poor responses. These “mid-basket” responses would fall in the middle of the category. They then hire other

Social Studies 30-1 teachers to help mark all of the diploma exams over approximately a period of one week. These teachers are then trained, using the standards that have been set, to mark the written response section of the diploma exam. Each written assignment is then marked by two different markers and averaged between the two in order to ensure the scores that students receive on their written assignments are reliable. The use of two markers satisfies the two-rater component of replication discussed by Parkes and is thus an indication of reliability, but Alberta Learning takes this one step further. If the two markers grade any category on the rubric with a difference of more than one level or if the final grade for the assignment has a difference of 20% or more, then a third marker is brought in to mark the assignment to ensure the resulting grade is reliable. In order to make sure that the markers are consistent in the standards they are assessing the written responses with, they participate in daily reliability reviews where they mark test papers that have already been marked by the standard setters and then discuss with a group of other markers what they would have marked the assignment as and then compare that to the mark that the standard setters gave the assignment. This level of effort into ensuring inter-rater reliability is not surprising as for "many large-scale writing assessment programs, making them (marker perspectives) more alike is very important, leading to extensive rater training and calibrating" (Parkes, 2007, p. 4).

As Part B, the multiple-choice section of the diploma exam, is a one-time exam where students do not get that chance to take the same test twice, it can be difficult to determine the reliability of that portion of the diploma exam. Furthermore, the fact that if students were able to take the exact same multiple choice portion of the test again, it would not be under the same conditions as they would have seen all of the questions and

sources before, thus changing the conditions, increases the difficulty in determining Part B's reliability. However, as multiple-choice tests do not require subjective evaluations to be made, they are generally more reliable than written responses or other methods of assessment that require human judgment. To further ensure the reliability of the multiple-choice section, Alberta Education goes through an extensive writing and piloting or field-testing program before using any multiple-choice questions (Alberta Education, 2018a). They hire experienced teachers to act as test writers where they write questions to assess specific outcomes from the program of studies and then other social studies teachers pilot these new questions with their classes, submitting the results back to Alberta Education so they can analyze and compare results for the different tests and then choose which questions will be included on future diploma exams (Alberta Education, 2020).

Validity

Validity "refers to the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of interpretations and actions based on test scores" (Messick, 1989, p. 5). In other words, validity refers to the degree to which the results of a test tell you what you want them to and the appropriateness of any interpretations of the results and actions taken based upon them. When looking at whether an assessment is valid or not, there are four elements of validity: content, criterion, construct, and consequences (Messick, 1989). Based solely on content validity, for the diploma exam to be valid, it needs to measure what is being taught in the class and the specific outcomes of the program of studies (which should be the same thing). Based on the results of both the survey and the interviews, as well as my own analysis, the diploma exam does assess some specific outcomes in the program of studies and so there

is an argument to be made that the diploma exam is in fact a valid assessment. This argument is problematic though for multiple reasons, the first of which being that the diploma exam does not assess all outcomes in the program of studies, thus calling into question the validity of the diploma exam. A second issue with arguing that the diploma exam is a valid assessment because there is at least some evidence of the content validity of the exam, is that content validity alone may not be enough to determine an assessment's validity. According to Messick (1989) neither content validity, nor criterion validity is sufficient to determine the validity of an assessment. Instead, he proposes the use of construct validity as a better method of measuring validity. In following Messick's perspective on validity, I also began to look at the validity of the diploma exam though the lens of construct validity. Based on my own observations and on discussions with fellow social studies teachers, it is apparent that the multiple-choice section of the diploma exam may actually be assessing students' reading abilities rather than their understanding of curricular outcomes, thus calling into question the construct validity of the diploma exam. A potential example of this can be seen by looking at a question from the 2016 released items document (Alberta Education, 2016e). Source I for question 1 says,

> In Alberta, beginning in the early 1900s, many people campaigned for the passage of legislation that would require mental-health testing before the provision of marriage licenses. Influenced by the international eugenics[1] movement, backed by genetic theory at the time, promoted by influential citizens, and fueled by racist sentiments, these initial calls for mental-health testing soon became demands for sterilization. In March 1928, Alberta's Sexual Sterilization Act was passed. By

> 1929, the Eugenics Board of Alberta began determining which Alberta citizens should be prevented from procreating. The only other Canadian province to pass legislation authorizing involuntary sterilization was British Columbia. British Columbia, however, appears to have had a much less aggressive program than Alberta's. Between 1929 and 1972, over 2,800 Albertans were sterilized, many without their knowledge or consent. (p. 2)

The first question based on this source was, "In context, which of the following phrases from Source I would be most troubling to a supporter of individual rights?" (p. 5). Though the question seems rather straight forward, there are numerous terms or concepts that are both potentially troubling for many students and also ones that could prevent students from being able to answer the question if they do not know what the word means. This includes terms like 'sterilized', 'consent', 'procreating', 'sterilization' and 'involuntary', none of which are actually part of the program of studies, yet not understanding them, could prevent students from being able to answer the question regardless of how much they know about individual rights.

If the diploma exam is in fact a reading comprehension test, then there is an issue of construct irrelevant variance, which as defined by Messick (1989) occurs if "the test contains excess reliable variance, making items or tasks easier or harder for some respondents in a manner irrelevant to the interpreted construct" (p. 7), with the diploma exam where students' understanding of curricular outcomes is not fully being assessed as their level of understanding is being clouded by their reading ability. Another important validity concern has to do with consequential validity. Consequential validity refers to the potential social consequences that come as a result of a test, particularly when there are

construct validity issues with the test (Messick, 1989). If these consequences are negative, then this further calls into question the validity of the diploma exam. Based on the results from both the survey and the follow-up interviews, there are numerous potential negative consequences from the diploma exam, suggesting that there is a consequential validity issue with the diploma exam.

Overall, despite the efforts of Alberta Education, there appear to be some serious questions about the quality of the diploma exam, particularly in the areas of fairness and validity. These issues have the potential to have serious consequences for students, teachers, and potentially even society as a whole and as such, they need further investigation. One important area to investigate is the perceptions of Social Studies 30-1 teachers and how the diploma exam impacts them and their students. As noted above, there seems to be a disconnect between the diploma exam and the construct of citizenship, which further increases the need to understand the impact of the diploma exam on Social Studies 30-1 teachers, their pedagogical and assessment practices, and their students.

METHODOLOGY

In order to answer my research questions, I used a mixed methods approach, which "involves combining or integration of qualitative and quantitative research and data in a research study" (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). Specifically, I used a convergent parallel mixed methods approach, where I collected my qualitative and quantitative data at the same time and then merged and interpreted the data together (Creswell, 2014). I did this by performing a thematic analysis of my qualitative data and comparing these results with my quantitative data in order to triangulate my data to look for relationships and emergent themes. For my thematic analysis I used a thematic network analysis approach similar to that outlined by Attride-Stirling (2001). This approach, which is centered on the creation of web-like visual representations of thematic networks, uses a six-step approach. The six steps are coding material, identifying themes, constructing thematic networks, describing and exploring thematic networks, summarizing thematic networks and interpreting patterns (p. 391).

One of the most important reasons that I chose to use this mixed methods approach is to try to get a broader sense of the perceptions of social studies teachers across Alberta, in order to assess how prevalent specific beliefs and practices regarding citizenship are and what may influence these beliefs and practices. In their studies, Agrey (2005) and Tupper (2007) were only able to look at the perceptions of a very small number of teachers, four and five respectively. The benefits of qualitative studies like Agrey's and Tupper's are that they are able to produce deep, detailed, and nuanced descriptions of people's experiences, perspectives, thoughts, and feelings while gaining an understanding and appreciation of their context and how it shapes those perspectives

and experiences (Rahman, 2017, p. 103). One of the main disadvantages of qualitative studies is that the smaller sample size limits the potential to generalize the results to the larger population (Rahman, 2017; Thomson, 2011). Due to the small number of participants, neither study was able to make any generalizations of how common it is for social studies teachers to place a greater emphasis on the diploma exam than on teaching citizenship. Through my investigation, my intention was to be able to both gain a deep, rich understanding of teachers' experiences and also to attempt to explain how common it is for teachers to place greater emphasis on the diploma exam, as well what factors lead teachers to this and other decisions regarding citizenship education. Through my research I was able examine the perspectives of 21 diverse Social Studies 30-1 teachers regarding the instruction and assessment of citizenship, as well as the impact of the diploma exam on that instruction and assessment.

The main tool I used in my research was a survey that contained basic demographic questions, Likert scale questions, numerical ranking questions, and a few open-ended questions. More specific information about the types and numbers of questions can be seen in the survey blueprint (Table 6) and in the survey itself (Appendix A). The choice to use a survey was based on the ease with which a survey can be disseminated to numerous participants in a very short period of time, which in theory should have helped to increase participation and provide more data. I also included space for participants to add a brief explanation regarding their responses on the Likert scale questions and the numerical rankings section allowing participants to explain their responses or provide additional information if they desired. This allowed me to gather specific numerical data from numerous teachers across Alberta, while also providing

some explanations and rationales behind some of the Likert and numerical response questions. Though not the main focus of my research, the demographic questions provided some interesting information regarding the level of teaching experience of participants, their educational backgrounds and their experiences with the diploma exam process. This allowed me to make some comparisons among responses, though due to the number of participants, I was unable to make any generalizations from those comparisons.

Table 6

Survey Question Blueprint

Question Topics	Question Types	Number of Questions
Demographics	Short Answer	12
Knowledge Traits	Likert	13
Skill Traits	Likert	7
Disposition Traits	Likert	15
Diploma Exam	Likert, Open Ended	9
Assessing Citizenship	Likert, Open Ended	5*
Understandings of Citizenship	Likert, Open Ended	2
Instruction	Ranking, Open Ended	3*

Note.*One open ended question asked about instruction and assessment of citizenship.

In the first part of my survey (Appendix A), I focused on teacher perceptions of what citizenship education is or should be. I began by asking participants to explain what makes a good or responsible student. I then asked a series of Likert questions asking to what extent participants agree that the traits of citizenship education that I have identified, should be taught as a part of citizenship education. This section was separated into a knowledge and understandings section, a skills and processes section, and a values

and dispositions section. After each question, space was provided for participants to explain their responses if they wanted to. The choice to use Likert questions in this part of the survey was due to the ease in which it is to measure respondents' attitudes and perceptions based on their level of agreement with specific statements. However, as Likert questions cannot explain why respondents feel the way they do, I decided to also allow space for participants to explain their responses.

The second part of my survey focused on teacher perceptions of assessing citizenship and of the diploma exam. Within this section, the first part included a series of Likert questions focusing on topics like the alignment between the diploma exam and the Program of Studies and the traits of citizenship, and the extent to which teachers should and actually do assess citizenship. The second half of this section consisted of two numerical ranking questions where participants were asked to rank the importance of different elements of a grade 12 social studies classroom in order to gain an understanding of what drives the pedagogy of social studies teachers. Once again, space was provided after each question in both parts of this section for respondents to explain their answers if they wanted to. The choice to include numerical ranking questions was made to shorten the length of the survey, as it would require many more Likert questions to get the same information as from the two numerical ranking questions. The use of numerical ranking questions also allowed me to gather richer evidence regarding teacher perceptions, as participants had to rank the level of importance of specific items as opposed to simply stating that they agree or disagree with each item.

The final section of the survey consisted of three more open-ended questions, which provided participants an opportunity to explain in their own words what shapes

their instruction and assessment practices. The first question was: to what extent does the goal of citizenship shape your instruction and assessment practice? The second question was: to what extent does the diploma exam shape your instruction and assessment practice? The final question was simply to provide space for participants to add any additional comments they had. My decision to include open-ended questions was based on a desire to allow participants more freedom in which to explain their perceptions on citizenship education, instruction, and assessment, and the extent to which their practice is influenced by the diploma exam. The freedom allowed in open-ended questions also provided some deeper and richer responses including how teachers feel about citizenship education and to a degree, helped to explain the motivations behind their approach to citizenship education. The same would be true of interviews, but interviewing a large number of teachers would be prohibitively time consuming and so I asked for those participants who would be interested in potentially participating in a follow up interview to include their email address on the final page of the survey, separate from their previous responses. After only managing to get 21 teachers to complete the survey, I made the decision to proceed with the follow up interviews (Appendix B) and of the eight teachers that had originally said they would be willing to participate in a follow up interview, six agreed to be interviewed when contacted.

In my data analysis (see Appendix C), the independent variables were personal context, professional context, and personal beliefs and values. The mediating variables were the Social Studies 30-1 Program of Studies and the Social Studies 30-1 Diploma Exam, while the outcome was the treatment and assessment of citizenship. For my analysis, I began with the Likert scale questions and calculated the raw number of

participants that very strongly agreed, strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed, and very strongly disagreed with the inclusion of the knowledge, skills, and disposition traits of citizenship education that I included in my explanation of the construct of citizenship. I then calculated general percentages of the number of participants that agreed or disagreed as well as calculated the specific percentages for each option (very strongly agreed, very strongly disagreed, etc.). Next I calculated a weighted average based on a six-point system with a response of 'very strongly agreeing' equaling six points, 'strongly agreeing' equaling five points and so on down to 'very strongly disagreeing' equaling one point. Finally, I calculated the standard deviation. I then followed the same process with the remaining Likert scale questions. Similarly, for the numerical ranking questions I calculated how many participants felt that each response was the most important, second most important, third most important and so on until completed, and then used those numbers to calculate the percentages as well. I then performed a thematic analysis on my open-ended questions and my interviews in order to look for recurring themes. I also attempted to find relationships between the demographic data that I collected and both the quantitative and qualitative data I collected. The final step in my analysis was to merge the quantitative data from the Likert and numerical response questions with the qualitative data from the open-ended questions and the interviews. In merging these two sets of data, I was attempting to uncover first, how Social Studies 30-1 teachers treat and assess citizenship in the face of the Program of Studies and the Diploma Exam, and second, what variables influence the treatment and assessment of citizenship.

In my research, I surveyed high school teachers in Alberta that either had taught Social Studies 30-1 within the past two years or were currently teaching Social Studies 30-1. In order to gain a more complete understanding of teacher perceptions and treatment of citizenship education in Alberta and to reflect the diversity of districts across Alberta, I chose not to approach a single jurisdiction in the province, but rather approached teachers teaching in both large and small schools, in rural and urban areas, and in small towns, medium sized cities, and large cities. In order to recruit participants, I used snowball sampling. I began by recruiting social studies teachers in my personal network and asked them to then share the survey with social studies teachers in their networks and so on.

Limitations

One of the major limitations of my study is that it relies very heavily on self-reporting by teachers. Self-reporting, as has been pointed out in numerous studies including Maderick, Zhang, Hartley, and Marchand (2015) and Kruger and Dunning (1999), can be, to varying degrees, unreliable. This is more likely to be the case in situations where individuals, in this case teachers, are asked to evaluate their own knowledge or abilities. As a result, some responses in the survey may not be as reliable as one would hope. This would be more likely in questions regarding the participants' level of understanding of citizenship and the extent to which they assess citizenship. Other questions, like the Likert scale questions about which traits should be a part of citizenship education, are less likely to lack reliability with self-reporting due to them simply being based on opinion rather than self-evaluation. As a result, though there may be the

potential to question the accuracy of some responses, the results from the survey and the follow up interviews are quite informative.

Another potential limitation is the varying levels of understanding of assessment as there seems to be various different levels of understanding of what assessment is, and as such responses concerning whether or not teachers assess citizenship or should assess citizenship may not be as reliable as hoped. For example, if a teacher were to understand assessment to only be evaluative and summative in nature, as appears to be the case in some of the responses, then due to the difficulty in assessing citizenship through traditional pen and paper tests, a teacher may feel that citizenship cannot or should not be assessed based on their understanding of assessment rather than their beliefs on assessment. Furthermore, those same teachers may be assessing citizenship through discussions and other more informal and formative approaches, but not realize that they are in fact assessing citizenship to a degree. Therefore, responses to questions about assessing citizenship may not necessarily tell us what we think they are saying.

A final limitation is the relatively small number of participants. As only 21 teachers participated in at least part of the survey, I do not have enough data to suggest any trends amongst Social Studies 30-1 teachers in regard to citizenship education. As a result, I cannot make any definitive statements regarding the instruction and assessment of citizenship. Part of the reason for this was the sheer size of my survey and the length of time it took to complete it. This, when combined with the use of snowball sampling, which relied on participants to share the survey with their contacts after completing it themselves, led to fewer participants than I had hoped. Despite the relative lack of participants, the number of questions asked in the survey itself combined with the

responses from the six follow up interviews provided an ample amount of rich and useful data. Though I was not able to determine any specific trends, the data I gathered allowed me to gain a more nuanced understanding of how some teachers treat citizenship in their Social Studies 30-1 classes, while also unearthing some potential issues surrounding the treatment of citizenship by grade 12 teachers and the impact on citizenship education by the diploma exam.

Participants

Twenty-one Social Studies 30-1 teachers completed part or all of the survey. Of the 21 participants, four identified as being female while 17 identified as being male. The youngest participant was 27 years old and the oldest was 57 years old, with the average age being 43 years old. The level of teaching experience of participants ranged from three years to 34 years, with the average length of teaching experience being just under 17 years. Combined, the participants had 348 years of teaching experience. Regarding experience in teaching Social Studies 30-1, three teachers have only taught the course for one year while nine of the 21 participants have taught Social Studies 30-1 every year since its introduction in 2009. Five of the participants have not participated in the diploma exam process in any form other than teaching Social Studies 30-1, while 15 have marked diploma exams, seven have participated in piloting or field testing of exam questions, five have been question writers, and two have been group leaders during diploma exam marking sessions. Fifteen of the 21 participants completed their pre-service teaching specializing in social studies, while six specialized in other areas including English Literature, Arts and Science, French, and Physical Education. The schools that the participants teach at ranged in size from 100 students up to 2,600

students, with the average size being 907 students. Of the 21 participants to take my survey, six also completed a follow up interview that expanded on the overall results of the survey rather than their own specific answers to the survey. Specific information, including a pseudonym, for each of the six participants that were interviewed is included in Table 7.

Table 7

Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Major	School Size	Years Taught	Diploma Exam Involvement	Years Taught SS 30-1
Connor	52	Male	History, Social Studies	150	25	- 25 years - marking - piloting - test writing	10 years (15 years SS 30)
Leon	36	Male	Social Studies	1450	13	- 5 years - marking - piloting	1 year
Paul	50	Male	Social Studies	500	21	- 18 years - marking - field testing	10 years (8 years SS 30)
Wayne	49	Male	English Literature	600	25	- 3 years - marking - piloting	5 years
Jenna	40	Female	General Major Arts and Science	500	12	- 2 years - marking	1 year
Hayley	33	Female	Physical Education	500	7	- none	7 years

Note. Hayley taught in an alternative program, in a module-based class using Alberta Distance Learning packages.

The participants in both the survey and the follow up interviews represent a wide range of backgrounds, experience levels and teaching contexts. This variety amongst participants was useful in providing multiple perspectives and helped to ensure a wider range of experiences. As a result, the data provided gave a deeper and more representative understanding of teacher perceptions of citizenship education in Social Studies 30-1 classes.

RESULTS

Through the combination of the written survey and the follow up interviews, I was provided with a considerable amount of quantitative and qualitative data. Through my analysis of this data, five main themes emerged: 1) understandings of citizenship; 2) perspectives on the diploma exam; 3) classroom culture; 4) disconnects; and 5) assessing citizenship.

Understandings of Citizenship

One of the most common references concerning citizenship education is the desire to develop responsible citizens. Whether it is in curricular documents, academic research, conversations with educators, the media, or in political discourse, the idea of responsible citizenship has become a bit of a hot button topic and as a result there seems to be a wide range of opinions on what it means to be a responsible citizen. One only needs to look at the extreme differences in how Greta Thunberg's visit to Alberta was received to understand the wide range of perspectives on what responsible citizenship looks like. Some people openly cheered her courage and willingness to stand up for global environmental concerns and dubbed her a champion of the environment, while others attacked her for interfering with Albertan and Canadian interests and tried to vilify her as an uneducated and spoiled child.

This was also true to a degree in my research, where, despite common ground between many responses, there was a wide range in perspectives on what it means to be a responsible citizen. From these responses, two general themes emerged regarding teacher perspectives of citizenship. The first theme is based on what it means to be a responsible citizen and the second theme looks at the specific traits that should be part of citizenship

education. Regarding the specific traits that should be part of citizenship education, the results can be found in Table 8 (Knowledge Traits), Table 9 (Value Traits), and Table 10 (Skill Traits).

Table 8

Knowledge Traits of Citizenship

Traits	VSD	SD	Disagree	Agree	SA	VSA	Total	Mean	St. Dev.
Laws and Rules	1	1	0	8	8	2	20	4.35	1.152
Democratic Process	2	0	0	2	6	10	20	5	1.483
The Media	1	1	0	1	10	7	20	4.95	1.293
Human Rights	2	0	0	1	4	13	20	5.2	1.503
Diversity	2	0	0	1	4	10	20	4.9	1.513
Money/ Economy	2	0	1	4	4	5	20	4.35	1.424
Global Community	2	0	0	2	5	10	20	4.9	1.546
Canadian History	1	1	0	6	8	4	20	4.55	1.244
Democracy	1	1	0	3	7	8	20	4.9	1.338
Justice	2	0	0	4	9	5	20	4.65	1.388
Freedom	2	0	0	2	9	7	20	4.85	1.424
Authority	1	1	1	6	5	6	20	4.55	1.359
Rule of Law	1	1	0	2	9	7	20	4.9	1.3

Note. Global community refers to economic sustainability in a global community

Table 9

Value Traits of Citizenship

Traits	VSD	SD	Disagree	Agree	SA	VSA	Total	Avg.	St. Dev.
Open-mindedness	1	0	0	1	8	9	19	5.21	1.151
Civic-mindedness	0	1	0	2	10	6	19	5.05	0.944
Respect	1	0	0	2	8	8	19	5.11	1.165
Willingness to compromise	0	1	0	5	7	6	19	4.89	1.021
Tolerance	1	0	0	2	7	9	19	5.16	1.182
Compassion	1	0	0	2	8	8	19	5.11	1.165
Generosity of Spirit	0	1	1	1	10	6	19	5	1.053
Loyalty	2	1	4	7	2	3	19	3.79	1.436
Respect for justice	1	0	0	7	5	6	19	4.74	1.207
Respect for Democracy	1	0	0	5	8	5	19	4.79	1.151
Respect for Rule of Law	0	1	0	4	9	5	19	4.89	0.968
Courage to defend a position	0	1	0	0	11	7	19	5.21	0.893
Willingness to listen	0	1	0	1	6	10	19	5.33	1
Willingness to work with others	1	1	2	2	9	5	19	4.79	1.104
Willingness to stand up for others	2	0	0	2	7	9	19	5.16	1.182

Table 10

Skill Traits of Citizenship

Traits	VSD	SD	Disagree	Agree	SA	VSA	Total	Avg.	St. Dev.
Critical Thinking	1	0	0	0	3	15	19	5.58	1.139
Analyzing Info	1	0	0	1	4	13	19	5.42	1.184
Expressing Opinions	1	0	1	0	10	7	19	5.05	1.191
Discussions/ Debates	1	0	0	2	10	6	19	5	1.124
Negotiating	0	1	0	8	6	4	19	4.63	0.985
Conflict Resolution	1	0	1	4	7	6	19	4.79	1.239
Participation in Community Action	1	0	0	2	9	7	19	5.05	1.146

In order to gain a further understanding of teacher perceptions of citizenship, survey participants were asked what kind of citizen they wanted their students to be, and the first question asked in the follow up interviews was, “what does responsible citizenship mean to you?” Unsurprisingly, there was no single understanding of what a good citizen is or what responsible citizenship is or should be. One interviewee talked about the need to exercise one’s rights and work hard every day, while another interviewee focused more on taking pride in one’s community and helping those in that community, while a third interviewee talked more about the need to develop a sense of a moral compass or social conscience. These three perspectives reflect the three understandings of citizenship that Westhiemer and Kahne (2004) describe: the personally responsible citizen, the participatory citizen, and the justice-oriented citizen respectively.

Despite these differences in responses, there were five key themes that came up in many of the surveys and in most, if not all of the six interviews: 1) critical thinking, 2) being informed/aware, 3) participation/engagement, 4) giving back, and 5) kindness and empathy.

Critical Thinking as a Part of Citizenship

Of these five themes, the one that came up most frequently throughout the interviews and in the surveys was critical thinking. Four of the six interviews explicitly stated that critical thinking is an important element of responsible citizenship. These respondents talked about the need for students to think for themselves, to not just accept what they are being told without first thinking about it, and to understand the biases behind the information they are being provided, regardless of the medium they are receiving the information through. The increased access to information through technological advancements and innovation has made the need to think critically even more important. This can be seen in the responses of three of the interviewees, Connor, Leon, and Wayne, who each specifically used the example of media to explain the importance of critical thinking. Connor discussed the need for students to think critically about all of the information they are being bombarded with and think about different ideas and perspectives: "(*S)ome kids are so quick to discredit different opinions and perspectives just because they don't agree with them. This culture has developed where people discredit these ideas without giving any thought about it*." This unwillingness to look at and consider differing perspectives can make students susceptible to "actual fake news," increase the belief in harmful stereotypes and lead to increased polarization in society. To combat this, it is vital for students to be taught how to navigate through the

various sources of media they are accessing, and how to corroborate the information that they are coming across. In this way, students will be given the skills needed for them to make well-reasoned and informed decisions. As Leon said, "*It's not our job to teach kids* what *to think, but how to think. As long as they come to their viewpoints through critical thinking, what they think doesn't matter*."

Being Informed/Aware as Part of Citizenship

Four of the six interviewees discussed the importance of students being informed and/or aware of what is going on in the locally, nationally and/or globally, and what issues we are facing. As Jenna suggests, "*You can't be aware of everything that is going on in the world but it is important to have a general understanding of what is going on so you can then choose those issues that are the most important to you and then try to help address those issues whatever way you can.*" This also connects back to the importance of critical thinking, as in order to fully understand the issues and be aware of what is actually going on, you need to look at various sources and points of view and form your own opinions based on actual evidence. If people are not aware of the issues facing the world, regardless of what level the issue is at, then nothing can be done to address it. Furthermore, if people are trying to address an issue and they do not truly understand that issue, then in their attempts to address the issue they may actually do more harm than good and can unintentionally make matters worse.

Participation and Engagement as Part of Citizenship

Based on responses in both the survey and the interviews, it is apparent that it is incredibly important for students to be aware of and understand their role in society and their ability to effect change. This understanding should help encourage students to

become active and engaged participants in their communities. Five of six interviewees stated that it was important for students to be engaged in or actively participate in society. Three of the survey participants directly mentioned the importance of voting, though one interviewee, Leon, said voting is *"the minimal amount of participation that should be expected"* and implied that students should actively become involved in the specific issues or causes that are of interest to them, whether it be political, environmental, or some other cause. This sentiment was echoed by Jenna, who said that it is important for students to "*be engaged and participating in their community on various levels. It's unrealistic to be engaged in everything but for those things that matter to you, it means that you seek out to become informed and seek out opportunities to help and participate and connect with other people that are also passionate about whatever issue you feel is important or impacts you and want to make a difference with."*

Together, these two positions suggest that there is not a single specific way in which students should be engaging and participating in society, but rather that it is important to find your own path to that engagement as it is the act of participation that is important, rather than the specific issue in which you are engaged. Another response related to this topic, provided by Paul was that a responsible citizen is "*Somebody who goes to work every day and can say that they make somebody's life better as a result*."

Giving Back as a Part of Citizenship

Four of the six interviewees discussed the importance of giving back as a part of responsible citizenship. Of the responses, three directly mentioned the importance of volunteering. Connor, while discussing the importance of volunteering as a component of responsible citizenship, lamented over the lack of volunteering done by adults and

students alike: "*There is a lacking piece in society of wanting to give back, it's not just taking for yourself, but also wanting to give back."* This missing desire to give back, according to him, is caused by people's desire to only do work in which they are directly rewarded (paid) for doing. This is concerning, as citizenship, as defined in this paper, is based on a deeper sense of caring for others and actually wanting to give back and help those in need. The fourth interviewee, Hayley, addressed the topic of giving back specifically, stating that being a responsible citizen means, "*Looking after others, (and) sharing what we have if we can*."

Kindness and empathy as part of citizenship. The final of the five main themes that came up in relation to responsible citizenship is the idea of kindness and empathy. Three of the participants directly stated the importance of empathy or kindness in being a responsible citizen. Jenna believes this involves "*adopting behaviours, attitudes, and language that reflect respect and kindness*." Connor went a step further in stating what some of those necessary attitudes and behaviours should be, which include, "*being open-minded, willing to talk and be willing to listen to others regardless of their perspectives and attempting to relate and empathize with others*."

Despite a considerable amount of agreement on what traits should be part of citizenship education, there does seem to be a fair amount of differences in the understanding of what citizenship is as a whole. Some participants focused on more of what Westheimer and Kahne would consider to be a conservative approach, while others focused on more of a liberal approach, while still others support a more social justice approach. There also appears to be some variance in the depth of which some of the

participants understand both citizenship as a construct and what the specific traits of citizenship actually mean.

Perspectives on the Diploma Exam

Positive Perspectives on the Diploma Exam

The second major topic that came up in my research centered around perspectives on the diploma exam. These perspectives can be grouped into four related themes: thoughts on the diploma exam in general, alignment between the diploma exam and the program of studies, pressures caused by the diploma exam, and the reduction in value of the diploma exam from 50% to 30%. In general, for each of the four themes, there were two types of perspectives: those that spoke positively about the diploma exam and those that spoke negatively about the diploma exam. Interestingly, regarding the interviews, no one participant was entirely positive about the diploma exam, nor was any one entirely negative about it. This was not the case in the survey, however, as several participants were quite negative in their views towards the diploma exam. Those results can be seen in Table 11 and Table 12.

Table 11

Perspectives and the Diploma Exam

Perspective	VSD	SD	Disagree	Agree	SA	VSA	Total	Mean	St Dev
Diploma reflects SLOs of curriculum	3	0	2	11	2	1	19	3.63	1.306
Diploma clearly assesses traits of citizenship	5	1	8	5	0	0	19	2.68	1.126
Diploma assesses knowledge needed for GC	2	2	5	9	0	1	19	3.32	1.172
Diploma assesses skills needed for GC	4	1	6	7	0	1	19	3.05	1.317
Diploma assesses values needed for GC	5	0	9	4	0	1	19	2.84	1.308
Diploma results reflect my abilities as a teacher	1	3	5	7	2	1	19	3.47	1.186

Note. GC refers to good citizenship.

Table 12

Impact of the Reduction in Weighting of the Diploma Exam

Impact	VSD	SD	Disagree	Agree	SA	VSA	Total	Mean	St. Dev.
Had a positive impact on students	3	0	1	7	4	3	18	4	1.563
Had a positive impact on my teaching	2	0	6	7	1	2	18	3.61	1.297
Allowed me to focus on citizenship	3	0	9	3	2	0	17	3.06	1.162

Diploma exam as a standard setter. Starting with the positive perspectives regarding the diploma exam in general, three subthemes or ideas emerged. The first subtheme regarding support for the diploma exam is that it creates a standard, which three of the interviewees said can be beneficial. Wayne said that "*Creating a standard through the diploma exam allows for a comparison amongst the entire cohort of students in a given year which can be useful for students to compare themselves to their peers and for post-secondary institutions regarding entrance and scholarship opportunities*."

Hayley felt that the standard created by the diploma exam makes for a fairer assessment for university entrance than other forms of standardized tests, like the American SATs, as the diploma exam is connected to a specific course and students are being assessed on what they have learned in that course. It is also fairer for the students as they should have a clear understanding of what they will be tested on.

She went on to say that the diploma exam prevents grade inflation on at least the diploma exam portion of a student's mark. This does seem to be more of a commentary on the goals of the diploma exam rather than on the actual quality of it.

Level of rigor in creation of diploma exam. Another positive subtheme regarding the diploma exam revolves around the amount of time, effort and teacher involvement that goes into the creation and assessment of the diploma exam. Three of the interviewees discussed how the amount of work put into the development of the diploma exam helps to make it a good exam. Jenna explained how the amount of time and effort put into "*field testing multiple choice questions, standard setting for each diploma exam marking session, and the effort put into marking the written component of the diploma exam ensure that the diploma exam is as good of a standardized exam as there likely can be*." Connor agreed with this, particularly with the amount of input that teachers have in the writing of questions and in the marking process. Neither one was completely in support of the diploma exam, but they both agreed that it was better than any other alternative standardized tests and the amount of teacher involvement and the sheer amount of time invested into the diploma exam makes it a good exam. Both responses were based on the experiences each participant had in the diploma exam process rather than specific information on other standardized tests.

Strength of written section of the diploma exam. The final subtheme that presented itself in support of the diploma exam was the quality of the written response section where both Paul and Connor directly addressed the benefits of the written response section. Paul was particularly in favour of written assignment one on the diploma exam, which is the source interpretation question. Connor, on the other hand,

was supportive of the entire written response section (Part A) of the diploma exam due to its ability to assess a wide range of topics and skills, and to do so at varying levels of complexity. He specifically stated that he liked the written response section because "*It really tries to get at critical thinking. It assesses student knowledge and ability to synthesize a position and make arguments to defend that position."*

Negative Perspectives on the Diploma Exam

The structure of the diploma exam. In regard to the negative feelings towards the diploma exam, three subthemes also emerged but with a wider array and larger number of examples. The first and most common concern was over the actual structure of the diploma exam with five of the six interviewees expressing concern over the structure of the exam. The first concern was that the diploma exam tests students' ability to take a test rather than what they have actually learned in the class. According to Jenna, "*Students that are good test writers tend to do well on the diploma exam regardless of how well they do in the class and those that are not good test writers tend to do relatively worse on the diploma exam even if they perform better in class*." Connor offered a similar sentiment, though he focused just on the multiple-choice section of diploma exam which he feels is "*largely a reading comprehension test as opposed to an assessment of the specific knowledge outcomes of the program of studies*." One of the participants in the survey offered a similar perspective but went even further in expressing their disdain for the multiple-choice section. "*The multiple-choice exam is largely a reading comprehension test. The multiple- choice exam is a very poor assessment of what students take away from my course. I am certain of this because of year end interviews I*

conduct with my students. When students are able to express their understandings in more complex ways, many (who do poorly on the exam) excel."

This is an example of construct irrelevant variance. Leon also took issue with the multiple-choice questions. It is his belief that the use of the "*source-based questions was supposed to have prevented the use of rote testing, where students can simply memorize facts without actually understanding the concepts, but in his experience this often has not been the case*." Leon is suggesting that rather than source-based questions requiring students to apply their knowledge of social studies concepts and use skills of critical thinking to analyze sources and answer questions about them, students are able to merely memorize key ideas and concepts that will allow them to do well on the exam, even if they do not have a comprehensive understanding of curricular themes and outcomes.

Regarding the written response component of the diploma exam, there were two specific concerns. The first, as identified by Paul, is what he considers to be "*the recent trend where the sources for written assignment two, the persuasive essay, have become too specific*." He referenced the essay source from the June 2018 diploma exam, which addresses Neo-conservatism, which is, according to him, "*a very small part of the curriculum*." He went on to say, "*Sources that are this specific do not allow students to express their full understanding of the course as a whole*." Though he did not mention this directly, having a source that is that specific could also have a negative impact on the success of students that may not have fully understood that one specific concept, particularly considering the persuasive essay is worth 30% of the diploma exam. Another concern regarding the written response component was the standard for excellence. Jenna expressed concern that the standard may be too rigorous and too limiting in nature: "*I*

have often questioned how many teachers, myself included, could achieve an excellent in all categories in the time provided on the diploma exam." She also expressed concern over the fact that as the standards are set at each exam marking period teachers, students, parents, etc. "*don't know if the standard is the same year to year*." This could mean the diploma exam is lacking fairness from year to year.

Lack of alignment with the diploma exam. The second major theme regarding the diploma exam is the degree of alignment between the diploma exam and the Program of Studies. Based solely on the number of participants that felt the diploma exam reflects the program of studies, 14/19 or 74%, it appears that according to most of the participants in the survey, there is a high degree of alignment between the diploma exam and the program of studies. In looking at the weighted average of the responses though, which was only a 3.6 of a possible 6, it suggests that the degree of alignment is not as high as it appears at first glance. These results reflect those of the interviews where all six respondents agreed that to a degree the diploma exam does in fact reflect the program of studies. However, only one of the six participants, Wayne, was overly positive in their praise for the diploma exam arguing that it "*both reflects the specific outcomes of the program of studies and also how the course was intended to be taught including the emphasis on critical thinking*." Each of the five other participants had specific concerns regarding the nature in which the diploma exam reflects the program of studies. The main theme of these concerns was that although the diploma exam technically reflects the program of studies, it does not reflect the entirety of the program of studies.

Paul explained this issue as the diploma exam "*reflecting the word of the program of studies, not the spirit. The spirit is the general theme of ideology, but we are kind of*

corralled into using the same specific examples" (from the textbook). Teachers want their students to do well on the exam and so they tend to focus on the specific examples that are most likely to appear on the exam. He went on to discuss how this same thinking "*has led many teachers to simply ignore the front matter of the program of studies and only focus on the specific outcomes that are likely to be on the diploma exam*," which further supports the notion that the diploma exam does not reflect the spirit of the program of studies. Connor made a similar observation, stating, "*The diploma exam goes against the purpose of the program of studies. The overall approach is supposed to be an inquiry and issues-based approach. I don't know how it is even possible for a standardized provincial exam to reflect inquiry learning*."

He went on to suggest that this is particularly difficult to do on the multiple-choice section. Both Paul and Jenna also questioned whether or not the multiple-choice section clearly and fairly reflects the program of studies. Paul has observed that "*Sometimes there have been multiple-choice questions from the previous curriculum that have been used on recent diploma exams despite the fact that they were written for a different curriculum*. He also brought up the point that *some of the concepts that students are tested on, like glasnost and perestroika are not technically in the program of studies, yet they often appear on the diploma exam*." The use of concepts like these that are not technically part of the program of studies is an example of irrelevant variance which means there are validity issues with the diploma exam. These issues are compounded by the suggestion made by Jenna that "*The diploma exam does not reflect the diploma exam in its entirety. Moreover, it's a narrow and prescribed way of responding (written) which limits how you are able to assess students*. "This underrepresentation suggests that the

diploma exam does not provide a fair reflection of the program of studies and, thus, could be argued to lack validity.

Pressure caused by the diploma exam. The next theme that emerged was that of the pressure caused by the diploma exam. The two main sources of pressure described by participants were from either parents or school administrators. A total of three participants said that they had experienced direct pressure to achieve certain levels on the diploma exam. Two participants in the survey stated that they had experienced pressure from parents. The first participant simply stated they felt pressure from parents but the second one explained that at their school "*there is a great deal of pressure from parents to ensure high levels of achievement needed for university*." During the interviews, Wayne explained that he has experienced pressure from both parents and students "*to beat the provincial average, as due to the student having success in school up until grade 12, expect that they will be able to do better than everyone else in the class, school, and potentially the province*." He feels this pressure almost always has a negative impact on the students: "*It doesn't inspire them to do better, it just puts unrealistic expectations and pressures on them. It causes them to get too focused on marks rather than the actual learning and skill development*." From an education standpoint this is concerning. The goal of education is to teach students, specifically to teach students specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions. If students are focusing more on the marks they receive on the diploma exam and how their marks compare to others, then they may not actually learn the specific traits they are supposed to. If this is the case, then someone or something has failed these students.

This is potentially more concerning in cases where teachers have also felt pressure from school administrators to exceed the provincial average. This was the case for three different survey participants who each stated that they had directly felt pressure to meet or exceed the provincial average from their administrators. The same was true for Wayne, but only "*under the previous admin team when we were using the old curriculum. Those that did not meet or exceed the provincial average were at risk of having their diploma exam courses taken from them*." He has not experienced pressure from his administrators since he has started teaching the current curriculum. None of the other interview participants said they had experienced pressure to exceed the provincial average. Connor however, explained the pressure he has experienced and how unfair it can be: "*I have experienced pressure to keep a close gap (from the provincial average). When that doesn't happen or results are poor, it's often just the grade 12 teacher that gets the negative focus. This is unfair. Success and failure are the result of all teachers the student has had, not just the grade 12 teacher*."

Though neither have experienced pressure to meet, exceed, or stay close to the provincial average, Hayley and Jenna both know teachers that have faced that pressure and discussed some of their concerns regarding those pressures. Hayley was concerned that "*when teachers face that pressure then many of them would likely end up focusing on the exam alone and the result would be a lack of focus on the development of responsible citizens*." Jenna offered similar sentiments saying that pressure like that "*would lead one to focus more on content then on other parts of the curriculum like the front matter. It would be all about content and how to write the specific diploma exam questions which would not be in the spirit of the overall program*."

As mentioned above, the social studies program of studies is supposed to be an issues based and inquiry focused approach to the various disciplines that make up social studies with the ultimate goal to encourage active, engaged and responsible citizenship. If teachers are overly focused on specific content and how to answer specific diploma exam questions, then they would be going against the spirit and purpose of the entire program.

Reduction of the Weighting of the Diploma Exam

Drawbacks of reduction of weight. The final theme connected to the diploma exam is based on teacher perceptions of the reduction of the value of the diploma exam from 50% to 30%. Of the six interviewees, only Connor felt that the reduction was actually negative, though both Paul and Jenna saw potential drawbacks that went along with the benefits. The biggest negative impact that came from the reduction of weighting of the diploma exam according to Connor was that it led teachers to begin taking the exam less seriously. He explained that since the exam was no longer worth 50%: "*Some teachers don't think it is as important and they don't give it as much credence which can lead to poorer results. If teachers have no passion or commitment to it their students won't either. Just like citizenship, we have to demonstrate that we are willing to give more, otherwise students will look at it as a why should I then?"*

If neither teachers nor students are taking the exam seriously, then the results of the exam begin to lose their credibility and value, which, combined with the other assessment issues related to the diploma exam, calls into question whether or not they should even still be used.

Despite both agreeing that the reduction of weighting overall was positive, both Paul and Jenna brought up potential issues. Paul, not unlike Wayne, has noticed that

"*some students may be taking the diploma exam less seriously since the reduction in weight and as a result are studying less and putting less effort into doing their best on the exam*." He went on to say that he noticed this "in his own classes and with his own children." Jenna brought up a completely different potential problem for some students, which is, "*Without being able to rely on 50% of their overall grade coming from the diploma exam, students often have a difficult time in actually improving their grade by doing well on the diploma exam. This means that students that for whatever reason, may have an in-class mark that is lower than they are capable of or would like, will have a much more difficult time improving their grade via the diploma exam*."

It is important to note though, that neither of these potential issues was enough to outweigh the benefits that Paul and Jenna saw from the decreased weight of the diploma exam.

Benefits of Reduction of Weight

Benefits for students. When looking at the positive impacts of the reduction of weight of the diploma exam, three subthemes emerged: 1) benefits for students, 2) benefits for teachers, and 3) an increased value placed on the curriculum or course as a whole. Regarding the benefits for students, five of the six interviewees said that the reduction in weighting had at least some benefit for students. The overall message from the interviews was that with the weighting being changed from 50% to 30% of a student's final grade, the benefits of having a diploma exam, like having a standard to compare students with each other for university entrance and scholarship purposes and preparing students for post-secondary, are still present, but many of the potential issues with the diploma exam have been addressed. The most common benefit to students that

was brought up in the interviews was the reduction in stress and anxiety surrounding the diploma exam. As there is less stress and anxiety being caused by the exam, Paul suggested that this should "*allow students to take more risks in their learning and possibly encourage more intrinsic learning*." The final benefit, as explained by both Leon and Wayne, is the fact that students will no longer be punished to the same degree for having a bad day and, as a result, should not fail the course or lose their pre-admission into university because they did poorly on a single test.

Benefits for teachers. The same five interviewees that felt that the reduction in weighting benefitted students, also felt that the reduction benefitted teachers as well and for similar reasons. Jenna feels that since the reduction has been put in place "*there has been less stress and anxiety for teachers*." The decreased level of stress and anxiety should then improve teaching as well. This brings us to the two main benefits for teachers: more freedom to teach and more time to focus on things other than the diploma exam. Leon said that the reduction in weight gave him "more freedom to teach the way that is most beneficial for the students, as it (the diploma exam) is not half their grade now." So rather than focusing so much on preparing for the diploma exam, he is now able to better tailor his instruction to the learning of his individual students and classes. Jenna noted that this increased freedom "*will also allow for teachers to take more risks which will both encourage students to take more risks in their learning and by extension, increase their learning*." The other main benefit for teachers is that they now have more time to focus on other things in their classes. This was particularly evident when talking to Paul who said that rather than focusing so much on content he now spends "*a little more time on areas that would be beneficial for students in developing their world view,*

view of community and country, understanding political parties and having them explore who they are and what their political views are."

These are all important parts of the social studies program, and though not mentioned by name, they are also part of citizenship education, and so we can infer that the reduction in weighting of the diploma exam has to some extent allowed him to focus more on citizenship education.

Increased value on daily in-class work. The final benefit from the reduction of weighting of the diploma exam is the increased value being placed on what happens on a daily basis in the classroom and on the curriculum as a whole. This should ensure that the marks that students finish the course with are a more accurate reflection of how well they have met all of the outcomes in the program of studies rather than just the ones that are able to be assessed on the diploma exam. Jenna clearly articulated this when she said, "*It puts more emphasis on what happens day to day in the class which addresses all outcomes and doesn't allow a student to do nothing in class or very little, but then do really well on the exam because they are good test takers. It puts more value on the rest of the curriculum, like citizenship, which is best measured in a social environment, so it should be emphasized more*."

This also means that teachers have more influence over a student's final grade. As 70% of a student's final grade is now based on a student's in class work, teachers have a much greater role in determining what that mark will be. According to Wayne, "*The teacher has more influence on the success of the student and can potentially increase or decrease their mark. But I'm okay with that, I believe in the professionalism of teachers*." When asked to expand on this he explained that: "*Teachers work with their students on a*

day to day basis and are consistently assessing their knowledge and skill development and so if something in a student's grade does not reflect what the students actually know or can do, teachers have the ability to fix this by having students re-do a specific assignment or test, have a conversation with a student to assess whether they really understand the concepts that they were tested on but scored poorly on their test, or even exempt marks that the teacher knows are not an accurate reflection of what that student knows."

For this to work though, two things are necessary, first we have to assume that all teachers are well versed enough in assessment to make these decisions, and second, that there is enough trust placed within the profession that class awarded marks are viewed as just as or even more accurate than those on diploma exams. Unfortunately, not everybody in the public realm has as much faith in the professionalism of teachers as Wayne does.

Wayne's belief in and support for the professionalism of teachers, while fully supporting the diploma exam, is a great example of the complex and sometimes paradoxical relationship between teaching citizenship education and the diploma exam. As seen above, many high school social studies teachers both support and criticize the use of the diploma exam. It is interesting to note though that the criticisms directed towards the diploma exam tend to be based on the actual structure of the diploma exam, while much of the support for the diploma exam is based on the ideology of testing. As a result of this, despite their feelings surrounding the structure of the diploma exam, it appears as though many support the use of standardized tests. This support helps to create a culture where tests and testing are often seen as more important than citizenship education.

Classroom Culture

The third major theme to present itself was that of classroom culture. During the survey, participants were asked to complete two numerical ranking questions regarding what drives their instruction in Social Studies 30-1. The first question was, what is the most important thing in Social Studies 30-1? On its own, this question could provide an almost limitless array of answers, which though useful and important, may not help me to understand the impact of the diploma exam and its relationship with citizenship education in Social Studies 30-1 classes. As a result, participants were asked to answer the question by ranking three specific choices: a) doing well on the diploma exam, b) citizenship, and c) having the class awarded marks and diploma exam marks matching. The highest weighted average would be a 3.0, which would indicate that that choice was the most important for all respondents. Conversely, the lowest possible weighted average would be 1.0, meaning that that choice was the least important for all respondents. The results can be seen in the following Table 13.

Table 13

Most Important Things in Social Studies 30-1

	1st	2nd	3rd	Total	Mean	St. Dev.
Doing well on the diploma exam	3	8	7	18	1.78	0.711
Citizenship	13	3	2	18	2.61	0.678
In class and diploma exam marks matching	2	6	9	17	1.59	0.691

Based on the weighted average, the most important thing to respondents was citizenship with a weighted average of 2.61. In fact, 72% of respondents said that

citizenship was the most important thing in their Social Studies 30-1 classes. 28% of respondents said that the most important thing in their Social Studies 30-1 class was either doing well on the diploma exam or having the diploma exam marks match the class awarded mark, which suggests that the diploma exam may be playing a very large role in how some teachers are teaching Social Studies 30-1, and this may come at the expense of other elements of the course like citizenship.

The second numerical ranking question asked participants what drives their teaching. Participants had to the rank the following four options: a) focusing on skills that are most relevant to the diploma exam, b) focusing on all curricular outcomes equally, c) focusing on the development of responsible citizens, and d) focusing on covering the content of the textbook. With four choices, the highest possible weighted average would be 4.0, while the lowest possible would be 1.0. These results can be seen in Table 14. The most common choice was focusing on the skills most relevant on the diploma exam, with 50% of participants ranking this as their first choice, while another 39% ranked it as their second choice. The second most common choice was focusing on developing responsible citizens, which was the first choice of 37% of participants. Only 17% of participants said the thing that drives their teaching the most was focusing on all curricular outcomes equally. This suggests that many teachers may be prioritizing some curricular outcomes over others and based on this particular question it seems likely that they would be prioritizing outcomes that are most likely to be needed on the diploma exam over others.

Table 14

What Drives Your Teaching?

Focusing on…	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Total	Mean	St. Dev.
Skills most relevant to the diploma exam	9	7	2	0	18	3.39	0.678
All curricular outcomes equally	3	6	9	0	18	2.67	0.745
The development of responsible citizens	7	6	4	2	19	2.95	0.998
Covering the content of the textbook	0	0	3	16	19	1.16	0.365

Also of note, but more concerning than interesting, is the potential, based on these responses, that covering the content of the textbook is more important than the development of responsible citizens, despite the purpose of the entire social studies curriculum being the development of responsible citizens to at least some teachers.

Despite 72% of participants saying that the most important thing in their Social Studies 30-1 classroom was responsible citizenship, the fact that only 37% said that what drives their teaching most is citizenship, while 50% said that teaching the skills most relevant to the diploma exam drives their teaching, suggests that, at least in my small sample of high school social studies teachers, the number one driving force in Social Studies 30-1 classrooms is the diploma exam.

Alignment Between In-Class Marks and Diploma Exam Marks

Another component of the overall theme of classroom culture that was discussed by participants was the importance of in-class marks aligning with diploma exam marks. When asked about this, the responses ranged from very definitive, ‘yes within 10%’, to

'yes and no', to 'not necessarily', and all the way to not being very concerned at all. As far as support for the alignment of class awarded and diploma exam marks, three separate but related themes emerged. First, as pointed out by Wayne and Connor, since the diploma exam is based on the program of studies and teachers teach what is in the program of studies, how students do on the diploma exam should be a reflection of what is taught in class. Wayne took this one step further suggesting "*this also makes it a reflection of how the teacher taught the class (theme two). He went on to say that how students do on the diploma exam is not the only measure of how well a teacher teaches, but it is an important measure to consider."*

This idea supports the results of the survey where 10/19 or 53% of participants agreed to some degree that student results on the diploma exam reflect their abilities as a teacher. The third theme, also brought up by Wayne, which is that the "*marks from the written response section should be more closely aligned than the multiple choice section because classroom teachers mark the written response section,*" meaning that the written response questions should be assessed in a similar manner to the in-class written assignments students are tasked to do. Of course, for this to be the case, it is important that all Social Studies 30-1 teachers are given opportunities to participate in diploma exam marking sessions in order to ensure that a similar standard of marking is being used across the province.

Support for Differences Between In-Class and Diploma Exam Marks

There were also three main themes present in support of the idea that it is not important for in-class marks to align with diploma exam marks. The first theme is that the diploma exam and in-class assignments are often assessing different things, therefore,

they do not need to be in alignment. This is evident in Leon's response, "*You do projects throughout the year that are very important and useful but don't help on the exam*." Students that perform better on these types of projects than they do on the diploma exam could then have a lack of alignment between their class marks and their diploma exam mark, which, according to Leon, is okay. This suggestion was echoed by Jenna who when discussing potential discrepancies between the two stated that "*There are certain outcomes that aren't assessed on the diploma exam and that could mean there is a discrepancy*." It stands to reason that if the diploma exam and classroom teachers are not assessing all of the same outcomes that there is a chance, even a good chance, that there will be some difference between the two marks. The question is, how much difference is okay?

This brings us to the second theme, differences between in-class marks and diploma exam marks are okay, but those differences should be reasonable and/or explainable on an individual basis. Even Wayne, the most ardent supporter of alignment between in-class marks and diploma marks suggested that the in-class and diploma exam marks only need to be within 10% of each other. Leon agreed that there should be a reasonable margin of difference but did not want to define what that should be numerically, as it was relative to each student. As each student is unique and has individual strengths and weaknesses, the level of alignment between each student's class mark and diploma exam mark may vary greatly. According to both Jenna and Wayne, this variance should be easily explained or even predicted by the classroom teacher.

Wayne explained that alignment between in-class marks and diploma exam results are the responsibility of both students and teachers and assuming that the teacher

has taught the course well, the rest is "*based on student responsibility and if the student chooses not to engage (with the course or assignments) or not follow the guidance of their teacher then they may not align*." Jenna expanded on the role that students may play in creating a difference between their class marks and diploma exam marks by describing two different situations that she has seen on numerous occasions: "*Some students may have low class marks because they didn't do some assignments or didn't try on them but will still do well on the exam. Other students may take every opportunity to redo and fix assignments, however their exam mark will likely be lower than their class mark, but it shouldn't be a surprise."*

Both Wayne and Jenna agreed that in cases of differences like this, the teacher should be able to explain what caused the difference and it should not really be a surprise to the teacher as they know their students. This also connects to the third theme, that alignment between in-class marks and the diploma exam is not that important, as much of that alignment is based on student effort or lack thereof in class and/or on the diploma exam. In the quote above, Jenna describes how much of the differences between in-class marks and diploma exam marks she sees in her classes are the result of the effort of the individual students and as teachers do not have a whole lot of control over elements like effort in class, then any discrepancy that comes as a result is not that important. Hayley shared similar thoughts despite working in a very different environment: "*The nature of the alternative ed, module-based course requires students to be self- directed. Those that are, do well on the exam, those that aren't, usually don't. Students who are engaged in the course do well on the exam and have closer alignment. Students that don't want to*

take the course but have to, tended to not do as well on the exam and had less alignment."

In her context, alignment between the two sets of marks is not that important because one of the main factors in that alignment is student effort and engagement, and due to the fact she teaches in an alternative education setting, her main goal is to get students to complete their courses and graduate, with little pressure to have them achieve certain grades or to engage them beyond the minimum required for them to pass. This suggests that if students are more engaged in the course, there should be better alignment between in-class marks and diploma exam results. Of course, engagement is not the only factor that impacts how students will do on the diploma exam or any exam for that matter.

Things like anxiety, test wiseness, reading ability, a student's emotional state during the exam, maturity, etc. all can play a role in how a student performs on an exam. However, if all these things are equal, students that are more engaged in the course are likely to do better on the diploma exam than those that are not engaged in the course.

Though it is clear based on the ATA's (ATA, 2016) findings, and supported by the results of this study, that most social studies teachers believe in the importance of citizenship education, it appears that the culture of test taking, specifically regarding the diploma exam, is the main driving force in high school social studies classes. This is evident in the fact that the number one focus amongst survey participants was teaching the skills and knowledge most likely to be needed on the diploma exam as well as the common belief that in-class marks need to be closely aligned to diploma exam marks. This belief implies that diploma exam marks are a more accurate reflection of what

students know, despite the time teachers spend with their students and the amount of evidence of learning they collect. This is one of many examples of disconnects that appeared throughout my research.

Disconnects

Disconnect Between Citizenship and the Diploma Exam

The fourth theme that arose during my research was a seeming disconnect in various topics in the surveys and interviews. The first major area of disconnect was between the construct of citizenship and the diploma exam. In both the survey portion of my research and the follow-up interviews, participants were asked whether they thought the diploma exam assesses the traits of good citizenship. In the survey, only 5/19 or (26%) of participants said that the diploma exam clearly assesses the specific traits of citizenship. Three of the interviewees said that the diploma exam does not assess the traits of good citizenship.

Two interviewees, Connor and Jenna, can see how it might be assessing some traits of good citizenship, particularly in the written section, but both question whether it does so in a meaningful way. Jenna described two specific ways in which the diploma exam may assess at least some of the traits of good citizenship. First, she explained that "*a trait of good citizenship is to think creatively and critically which can lead to empath*y" and since the diploma exam, at least to an extent, attempts to assess creative and critical thinking it may also be able to assess a student's level of empathy. She also suggests that in encouraging students to look at alternative perspectives in their essays, it can serve to address open-mindedness, though in her experience "*it is often more just checking off a box in the how to write an essay list, and it's often just lip service, rather*

than genuine open-mindedness." This shows that though there may be connections, they likely are not that strong. Paul said he felt *"that the old curriculum did a much better job of it*," but stopped shy of saying that the current diploma exam did not assess the traits of good citizenship.

An interesting development that came out of this discussion was whether or not it mattered that the diploma exam did not really assess the traits of good citizenship. Wayne and Hayley had polar opposite responses with Wayne saying, "*To me, it doesn't matter at all, as there is still 70% of the overall course mark where teachers can assess those traits*." Jenna, however, believes that "*since the whole goal of social studies is to build responsible citizens then it does matter, and the diploma exam should do a better job in trying to assess the traits of good citizenship*." Connor's response was in between those perspectives, stating that "*It only really matters if the diploma exam was the only assessment being used to assess students*." He went on to say, "*We should be doing a better job though*" and used Finland as an example of a nation that is doing a better job at assessing citizenship. He explained that Finland has a project that includes students giving back to the community and being assessed on it. He suggested this could be a possible solution to assessing the traits of good citizenship as "*it is very difficult to assess these traits using a pen and paper exam*." Those saying that it does not matter, or that it does not necessarily matter, also seem to have a disconnect between the overall goal of the program of studies and the role of the diploma exam. It is true that the diploma exam is only one assessment, but in my experience, it is the single largest assessment students have to complete and so if the largest, and likely most important assessment in Social Studies 30-1 does not assess citizenship, then citizenship is not being valued as much as it

should be. Furthermore, suggesting that that does not matter, goes against the results of my survey (Table 10) where citizenship was clearly the most important component of the course.

Disconnect Between Perceived and Real Understanding of Citizenship

Another area of disconnect can be seen in looking at the discrepancy between some of the participants' perceived understanding of citizenship and its traits and their actual understanding of it. When asked whether or not citizenship can be assessed, Wayne said, "*To do so would require specific citizenship criteria to live up to and would be easier to do in faith-based schools*." This response suggests that despite being confident that he had a clear understanding of citizenship, the respondent did not have as clear of an understanding as he believed since there is clear criteria for students to live up to, which were outlined previously. Failing that, even looking at the current program of studies, there are several traits of citizenship in a liberal democracy that are explicitly mentioned. Another example of this disconnect can be seen by revisiting Leon's comment on critical thinking. "*It's not our job to teach kids what to think, but how to think. As long as they come to their viewpoints through critical thinking, what they think doesn't matter*." As much as critical thinking is an important part of citizenship, critical thinking on its own does not represent what it means to be a good citizen and there are still opinions and perspectives that, even if arrived at through critical thinking, go against the overall understanding of what citizenship in a liberal democracy is. This disconnect can further be seen in looking at Wayne and Jenna in their comments regarding the subjectivity of citizenship. Both expressed concern about assessing citizenship as the

understanding of citizenship can be quite subjective; however, this again goes against the clear directive from the program of studies of what a good citizen should be.

Disconnect Between Participants' Own Responses

The third major area of disconnect was between the participants own responses regarding the quality of the diploma exam, where in numerous cases multiple participants seem to present conflicting perspectives on the diploma exam. This can be seen when in one statement they explain how negative the exam is and then in another statement either speak out in support of the exam or state that it is a good exam. This can be seen when looking at some of Connor's comments on the diploma exam. He first speaks out in support for the diploma exam when in reference to the reduction in value of the diploma exam from 50% to 30%: "*I'm getting to the point where I wish it wasn't reduced to 30%.*" By wishing that the diploma exam was still worth 50% of a student's final grade, Connor is implicitly offering his support for the diploma exam. He further goes on to say, "*I know some people want to get rid of the exam. I'm not sold on that. The current model where teachers are item writers make it much better than other alternatives*." In this statement he clearly sees the value in and supports teachers being part of the process of making the exam as item writers, which includes writing sources and/or questions for the multiple-choice section of the diploma exam. Despite this support Connor also said, "*I have a problem with the multiple-choice. The multiple-choice really only assesses reading comprehension*." This statement against the multiple-choice section of the diploma exam seems to contradict his previous statement of support for the diploma exam due to the involvement of teachers in the process of writing diploma exam questions.

A similar disconnect was evident in some of the responses that Jenna made when discussing the diploma exam. She first speaks out in support of the diploma exam when she said: "*The diploma gives a standard for all students in a given year, though I don't know if that standard is the same year to year, I appreciate what I know about the amount of effort that goes into it regarding marking, standard setting, and field testing so given that is a large scale standardized test, it is well done."*

Despite commending the work that goes into the development and assessment of the diploma exam she also describes some very serious flaws with the diploma exam. "*It is not reflective of the curriculum in its entirety. Moreover, it's a narrow and prescriptive way of responding, which limits how you are able to assess students. It also likely has cultural implications*." This response outlines two critical issues with the diploma exam. First, there are validity issues with the exam as it does not reflect the entire curriculum, yet it is supposed to be a comprehensive, final exam. This combined with the fact that the diploma exam forces students to respond in a "narrow and prescriptive way" on the written response section show underrepresentation issues. The second critical issue Jenna's response brings to light is the potential lack of fairness she alludes to when stating that the diploma exam "likely has cultural implications." This is suggesting that the diploma exam has a cultural bias which would mean the exam is lacking fairness, which if true would be greatly disturbing.

In looking at these two examples of seeming contradictions it is important to consider how the participants can reconcile these contradictory beliefs. The answer appears to be fairly straightforward but is also troubling. In both cases, the participants are making statements of support for the diploma exam largely in comparison to other

potential standardized tests. In particular, they seem to be comparing them to exams made by private, for profit corporations, whose main goal would be maximizing profit rather than assessing students. This can be seen in Jenna's statement of support for the diploma exam, "*Given that it is a large-scale standardized test, it is well done. Particularly compared to some large exams created in the US. It's also not made by a private company; it is created by the department of education and educators*." Connor implies a similar sentiment, "*The alternative to the diploma exam would involve exams of some sort, but who would write them? What would their interest and experience be? The current model where teachers are item writers make it better than alternatives*." In this light, it appears that both Connor and Jenna are viewing the diploma exam as the best (or at least a better) option of standardized tests. The troubling part of this though, is the underlying assumption that we need a standardized test at all. It seems that both participants have accepted that we need to have a standardized test and since that is the case, the diploma exam is the best option. Unfortunately, this understanding or acceptance, when on a large scale, allows for the continued use and support for what appears to be a poor assessment tool and one that is detrimental to the pursuit of citizenship education.

Disconnect Between Philosophical Beliefs and Actual Practice

The final area of disconnect is between participants' philosophical beliefs and their actual practice in the classroom. This disconnect can best be seen by revisiting Tables 10 and 11 that look at what drives instruction in Social Studies 30-1 classrooms. The most striking result from these two tables is that 72% of participants said that the most important thing in their Social Studies 30-1 classrooms was responsible citizenship.

You would expect then that when asked what drives their instruction in that same classroom, there would be a similar focus. However, only 37% of participants said focusing on responsible citizenship was their first focus. The rest of the participants said their first focus was on either the skills most relevant to the diploma exam (50%) or focusing on all outcomes equally (13%). As to what is causing this disconnect for some teachers, two potential sources surfaced during the follow-up interviews. The first is the sheer number of outcomes in the program of studies and the potentially overwhelming amount of content that goes with those outcomes. As Jenna explained, "*I find it very difficult to balance the content level of the curriculum with citizenship and other parts of the curriculum. There's too much content pressure in Social Studies and even more so in grade 12*."

The second, and perhaps most likely source, is the significant amount of pressure that some teachers face regarding the diploma exam. As Hayley puts it, "*Developing citizenship is a huge part of what we want to accomplish but focusing on those things won't help to prepare students for the exam*." For those teachers that experience a great deal of pressure in regard to student performance on the diploma exam, it would not be surprising that they focus more on preparing their students for the diploma exam than on citizenship, even if they believe the most important part of Social Studies 30-1 is responsible citizenship. Though she has not experienced pressure from administration or others to make sure her students achieve certain grades on the diploma exam, Jenna clearly explains how this would impact her if she did face that pressure: "*If there was pressure it would likely cause me to teach to the exam more, at the expense of the outcomes that are not as likely to be on the exam. It would specifically lead you to focus*

more on the content of the course as opposed to other parts of the curriculum like the front matter. It would be about content and how to write the diploma exam questions." As the bulk of the discussion of citizenship occurs in the front matter of the program of studies and is not generally tested on the diploma exam, it seems likely that some teachers, under the veil of pressure for their students to achieve certain standards, focus more on preparing their students for the diploma exam at the expense of responsible citizenship.

The sheer volume of disconnect associated with the teaching of citizenship education in Social Studies 30-1 classrooms reflects the lack of capacity in teaching citizenship education that Hughes and Sears (2006) found. This lack of capacity to teach citizenship and the disconnect that social studies teachers appear to be facing, make it fair to question the effectiveness of citizenship education in Social Studies 30-1 classes. It also may provide some insight into the amount of focus on the assessment of citizenship in Social Studies 30-1 classes.

Assessing Citizenship

The final theme was that of assessing citizenship. As there is a relative paucity of research on assessing citizenship, numerous questions were designed specifically to address this theme. This includes questions regarding the extent to which participants assess citizenship in general and specifically in Social Studies 30-1, whether citizenship can be assessed, and whether citizenship should be assessed. Results of the Likert scale questions on assessment can be seen in Table 15.

Table 15

Assessing Citizenship

Question	VSD	SD	Disagree	Agree	SA	VSA	Total	Mean	St. Dev.
I assess citizenship in SS 30-1	1	1	6	4	4	2	18	3.83	1.302
I assess citizenship in other SS classes	1	1	6	3	3	4	18	4	1.453
Citizenship can be assessed by teacher	1	3	2	5	0	6	17	4.06	1.662
Citizenship should be assessed	1	3	4	5	0	5	18	3.83	1.572

Frequency of Assessing Citizenship in the Classroom

From these results and the responses of the interviews, four broad themes emerge: 1) frequency of assessing citizenship in social studies classes; 2) the influence of the diploma exam on the assessment of citizenship; 3) the ability to assess citizenship; and 4) the ethics of assessing citizenship. Beginning with the frequency of assessing citizenship regardless of whether it is in Social Studies 30-1 or other social studies classes, 44% or 8/18 participants replied that they do not assess citizenship to any extent. This is similar to the results of the results from the interviews where two of the six interviewees, Hayley and Wayne, said that they did not assess citizenship at all. Hayley does not assess citizenship because she teaches a module-based course in an alternative setting and said there really are no opportunities to assess it. Wayne, on the other hand, does not assess

citizenship as he feels "*It is not our place in the public-school system to evaluate whether a student is a 'good' citizen or not*." This response was particularly interesting as he supported the teaching of citizenship, just not the assessment of it. The other four interviewees all said to at least some degree that they assessed citizenship, but in each case, it was in either an informal manner or as part of formative assessment rather than a summative assessment. Connor and Paul both said that they assess citizenship through class and/or one on one discussions. Connor described his approach as follows, "*I assess it by talking about its importance every day. You unpack what good citizenship is, what it looks like. You ask how much do you know about poverty? About other countries*?" Connor went on to explain that these types of discussions also allowed him to model what good citizenship is. Paul describes a similar approach: "*Part of my assessment regarding understanding citizenship is about being able to have discussions of a particularly hot topic, not necessarily in a formal manner. Through this I can get an understanding of the perspectives of the students and that hopefully will lead to more discussions with students one on one*." These discussions allow the teacher to informally assess students' understanding of citizenship, their thinking about citizenship issues, their values and dispositions and also to track any potential growth in those areas.

Though admitting to not assessing citizenship much in her Social Studies 30-1 class, Jenna explained how she would really like to do so in a much more formal manner if she had the time. She admitted to struggling to balance the content level of the course with citizenship in general and all of the specific outcomes. She believes however that if given the opportunity to teach the course more often (she had only taught the course once at the time of the interview), she would be able to focus more on citizenship and even had

a plan for how to assess it: "*I would do it similar to GLO-5 in English (Respect, support and collaborate with others) but with citizenship. Based on co-constructed criteria, using a checklist and having formal observations by students and teachers*." This would allow her to assess the students and their development of responsible citizenship, while at the same time giving ownership of citizenship to the students by having them assess themselves and think about their own citizenship and what makes someone a good citizen.

Influence of the Diploma Exam on the Assessment of Citizenship

Regarding the influence that the diploma exam has on the assessment of citizenship, it appears that it may not determine whether or not social studies teachers assess citizenship, but it does impact the extent to which some teachers assess it. When looking at the results from the survey, it is clear that there was no difference in the number the teachers that assess citizenship in Social Studies 30-1 versus other social studies classes, as 8/18 participants said they don't assess citizenship in either case. Likewise, the 10 participants that said they assess citizenship in Social Studies 30-1 also said they assess citizenship in their other social studies classes. The impact that the diploma does appear to have though, is the degree to which teachers that do assess citizenship, assess it in Social Studies 30-1 in comparison to their other social studies classes. This can be seen in the survey responses participants had a stronger level of agreement that they assess citizenship in social studies courses other than Social Studies 30-1. This can also be seen in an additional comment by one of the participants that does assess citizenship, made in response to the question, to what extent does the goal of citizenship shape your instruction and assessment practice? Her response was "*to a*

considerable extent at the grade 10 and 11 level where there is not the pressure of the diploma exam." Together, these results suggest that there must be other reasons why some social studies teachers do not assess citizenship.

Can Citizenship be Assessed?

One of the reasons why some teachers may not be assessing citizenship is because they do not feel that citizenship can be assessed. In the survey, 35% or 6/17 participants said that citizenship cannot be assessed by teachers. An example of this can be seen in one response from the surveys where one teacher said about citizenship, "*I can model what I believe good citizenship is and I can offer opportunities for students to learn about community members that display traits of good citizenship but I don't think it can be assessed and given a score*." One reason why this teacher and others may feel they cannot assess citizenship is that there is no single understanding of what citizenship is. This can be seen in one comment from the survey where one teacher, in response to the question of whether teachers can assess citizenship responded, "*To a degree but not always – lots left to individual interpretation*." Despite 35% of participants in the survey saying that citizenship cannot be assessed, all six interviewees said that citizenship can be assessed though one, Wayne, said to do this "*would require specific citizenship criteria for students to live up to and would be easier to do in faith based schools*." Leon was one of the more stringent supporters of the idea citizenship can be assessed, saying that "*Everything can be explicitly assessed, including citizenship*." The other four all agreed that citizenship can be assessed, though it may not always be easy to do so. When looking at the responses about the ability to assess citizenship, three themes emerged: 1) how to

assess citizenship; 2) the subjectivity involved in assessing citizenship; and 3) the need for relationships to enable a teacher to assess citizenship.

How to assess citizenship. Two of the six interviewees focused explicitly on how teachers can assess citizenship. Paul talked about how citizenship can be assessed both informally, through class discussions as discussed above, and more formally "*through different written assignments including essays that are focused on specific citizenship related topics or questions*." Leon's focus was more on how citizenship can be assessed on a larger scale. He talked about how at a high school in Edmonton they have what is called the 'Connect Course' in which students can earn both CTS and Social Studies credits in grade 10. In this course, "*Students choose an issue that to them is the most pressing current issue locally, nationally, or globally, and then create a plan of action for their chosen issue. The last half of the course is then based around an awareness campaign for their chosen issue."* The students are assessed using a relatively broad rubric to allow for the differences in the various issues and projects.

The subjectivity of assessing citizenship. Both Wayne and Jenna focused on the issue of subjectivity in trying to assess citizenship, but with very different takes on the issue. First, Wayne again raised his reservations about assessing citizenship as he feels that there is too much subjectivity in what it means to be a good citizen and expressed his concern that "*it may not be a good idea for teachers, who each have their own understanding of citizenship, to be evaluating whether a kid is a good kid or not*." Due to this, he feels that teachers should be providing students different perspectives related to citizenship and allowing them to form their own understandings and make their own choices without being evaluated by a teacher. Jenna acknowledges that citizenship and

assessing it can be very subjective but differs from Wayne in that she believes citizenship can still be assessed. To do so, according to Jenna, *"You just need to be thoughtful of how you assess and aware of and check your own biases and to be trusting and putting some faith in your students. It's similar to saying poetry can't be assessed or art can't be assessed. You just need to be very clear and deliberate on how and what you are assessing*."

One way in which to both address the personal bias of teachers and the need for clear and deliberate assessment would be to co-construct criteria based on the program of studies and/or the specific traits that make up the construct of citizenship as discussed earlier. Jenna mentioned that she is concerned that "*if students are not formally assessed on citizenship, they may not fully develop the traits of responsible citizenship*," which puts into question the purpose and overall success of the entire Social Studies Program of Studies.

The importance of relationship building to assess citizenship. The third and final theme that came up was the need to build relationships. Hayley explained that, "*The only way you will be able to assess citizenship is to first build positive relationships with your students. This will allow for constructive discussions in which you can illicit students' understanding of citizenship and also whether or not they are being open-minded, willing to listen, and other traits of citizenship*."

She went on to explain that teachers need to build a relationship in which they are able to model good citizenship and the traits of good citizenship, like critical thinking, to their students and the students trust them enough to then try the same thing. Connor offered similar views and went even further in discussing the need for teachers to build

relationships with their students and model good citizenship to them: "*Some (teachers) don't want to dive into citizenship because it takes work to assess it as you have to take time to build relationships with kids. In any strong social studies class where you're setting up the course based on the curriculum, I don't see how you can't. Part of the interactions with students, discussions, show you what kind of citizens the students are. It's not easy, but I can't say we can't do it. Part of the problem is in many schools they will put anybody into social studies classes and in many cases, they don't have passion for the class. If teachers aren't passionate or aware of current events, then how are students supposed to be passionate about it? If you aren't passionate about what it means to be a good citizen, or if you aren't aware, how are you going to teach students to be good citizens*?"

This response, which is similar to Llewellyn et al.'s (2007) findings about the reluctance of teachers to address controversial issues, clearly shows the importance of teachers in not only modeling good citizenship to their students, but also in helping to inspire students to become passionate about citizenship and what it means to be a good citizen.

Should Citizenship be Assessed?

The final theme that emerged regarding the assessment of citizenship is the ethics of assessing citizenship. The main question to come out of this theme is should teachers assess whether students are good citizens? The results from Likert scale questions show the same split between those who feel citizenship should be assessed (56%) and those that don't (44%) as there was for the questions of whether or not they assess citizenship in their social studies classes (56% yes, 44% no). Only one interviewee said that we

should not assess citizenship and that was Wayne. This is quite evident in his statement that "*citizenship is too subjective. I don't think it's the teacher's responsibility to deem what is and what isn't a good citizen*." To an extent, this may be correct. Citizenship can be subjective, and teachers probably should not be responsible for deciding what is and what is not a good citizen based on their own personal beliefs and values. They should instead first turn to the research and their curricular documents to help them to understand what a good citizen is and then involve their students to explore citizenship in an engaging and meaningful way. Hayley was also concerned about the subjectivity of citizenship though unlike Wayne, her approach was not to discard the notion of assessing citizenship, but rather to focus on formative assessment rather than summative assessment. She suggests using "*observations and making notes on students based on the idea of citizenship, but not assigning an actual grade based on whether a student is a good citizen or not as not everyone's definition of citizenship is the same*."

The main theme from the other four interviewees was that since citizenship is such an important part of the social studies program of studies, then it needs to be assessed. This can clearly be seen in Paul's response to the question, "*Citizenship is something that is important and that we should talk about. If we are going to spend time putting it in the curriculum and the textbook, then we should take time to discuss it and we should take time to assess it*."

This sentiment can also be seen in Connor's response where he said "*it definitely should be assessed. If we aren't, then I really question the purpose of social studies*." Taken together, these responses bring up an important question, what is the purpose of teaching social studies? According to the Social Studies 30-1 Program of Studies, it is to

create active, engaged, and responsible citizens. If that is the purpose of the entire program, then how would you ever know if the program is working without assessing it?

The fact that there are social studies teachers that do not assess citizenship (44% of survey participants) or do not believe that it can or even should be assessed, is concerning on several levels. First, if teachers are not assessing citizenship education and the program of studies is designed to develop responsible citizens, then it is justifiable to question what is actually being taught and assessed in these social studies classes.

Second, if teachers believe that citizenship cannot be assessed (44% of survey participants), then it is important to ask if these teachers have a clear understanding of what citizenship is? Finally, it is important to ask if citizenship is not being assessed, is there less of an emphasis on citizenship by teachers and/or students in the classroom and, if so, what are the potential implications of this?

DISCUSSION

My main research question was: in what ways do Social Studies 30-1 teachers focus on the instruction and assessment of citizenship in their classes? In order to answer that question, it was important for me to also understand what citizenship education meant to Social Studies 30-1 teachers. To do so, I used three separate approaches in my research. First, in the survey I asked each participant to explain what kind of citizens they wanted their students to be upon completion of Social Studies 30-1. Second, also in the survey, I used Likert scale questions to ascertain the extent to which they felt that the specific traits that I had identified as being part of citizenship education should be a part of citizenship education or not. Finally, during the follow up interviews, I asked the interviewees what a responsible or good citizen was to them? In answering that question, I asked them to consider what being an active and engaged citizen looked like, as those two concepts were popular responses to a similar question in the survey.

Alignment

Understanding of Citizenship

The responses to the first question, about what kind of citizen teachers wanted their students to be upon completion of their course, show a great deal of alignment with the Social Studies curriculum in Alberta. The K-12 Alberta Program of Studies begins by stating that "social studies provided opportunities for students to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge that will enable them to become engaged, active, informed and responsible citizens" (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 1). Those four adjectives used by Alberta Education to describe the kind of citizens they want to be developed through the social studies program were very prevalent in the responses to this question. At least one

of ‘active’, ‘engaged’, ‘informed’, or ‘responsible’, was explicitly stated or described in 79% of the responses. 37% of the responses mentioned or alluded to at least two of the above adjectives, while 16% of the responses mentioned or described three of them.

Furthermore, 68% of the responses directly referred to skills that are specifically mentioned in the Social Studies 30-1 Program of Studies, with the most commonly mentioned skill being critical thinking, which was stated as being an important part of being a good citizen by 53% of the respondents. Additional connections to the Program of Studies can be found in 21% of responses discussing the ability of students to effect change, which is also directly mentioned in the K-12 Alberta Program of Studies when explaining that the role of social studies is to develop “the key values and attitudes, knowledge and understanding, and skills and processes necessary for students to become active and responsible citizens, engaged in the democratic process and aware of their capacity to effect change in their communities, society, and world” (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 1). Only one response did not directly connect to the Alberta Program of Studies at all. This response did not contradict the idea of citizenship presented in the Program of Studies but rather was just somewhat vague in the description of what it meant to be a good citizen, simply stating that they “*want students to be good citizens and be able to demonstrate the attributes of good citizenship and what it means*.” This could suggest that this one particular participant may not have an overly clear understanding of what it means to be a good citizen, but when looking at this participant’s other responses, particularly on the optional responses connected to the Likert scale questions, they directly explain the importance of students being actively engaged in society and the democratic process as well as discussing different skills that are clearly included in the

Program of Studies, including communication and thinking skills that were mentioned by several other participants. Taking this into consideration, it is safe to say that on at least a superficial level, all participants demonstrated a clear understanding of what a good citizen is and that understanding seems to be highly aligned with the understanding of citizenship as presented in the Program of Studies.

As positive as this may seem to be, it is important to note that just because most of the responses reflect specific elements of the Program of Studies, it does not mean that teachers have a complete understanding of what citizenship is. It also does not mean that all teachers have the same level of understanding of citizenship or the same belief in what the Program of Studies says good citizenship is. It is possible that some responses may be based more on repeating what teachers have read in the Program of Studies and what they are supposed to say about citizenship rather than what they actually believe citizenship should be. In this way, these results are similar to what Tupper and Capello (2012) found regarding student understandings of citizenship in Saskatchewan. Students were able to clearly explain what citizenship was in a way that was highly reflective of the curriculum, but we do not know if those beliefs reflect the actual beliefs of those students or if they merely reflect what they have been told citizenship should be.

Furthermore, by looking at the responses to other interview questions, like those based on assessing citizenship, it is clear that some teachers who believe they have a clear understanding of citizenship, do not fully understand what citizenship education is. An example of this can be seen when looking at Wayne's responses to questions about assessing citizenship. Wayne stated that he does not assess citizenship as it is "*not our place in the public-school system. To do so would require specific citizenship criteria to*

live up to and would be easier to do in faith-based schools. (Otherwise, there's) too much subjectivity amongst teachers on what a good citizen is, whose morality are you using?"

This response suggests three potential areas of misunderstanding regarding citizenship education. First, is that it appears that Wayne is assuming that there are not already criteria for what good citizenship is. As has been pointed out by Ghasempoor et al. (2012), Sears (2014) and others, there are specific traits, many of which are largely agreed upon in the literature, that make up citizenship education, thus providing specific criteria to assess. The second area of potential misunderstanding comes from Wayne's use of morality in his understanding of citizenship education, which suggests that his understanding of citizenship education is probably more closely aligned with the idea of character education. The third area of misunderstanding comes from the implication that you cannot have clear criteria for what a good citizen is in a secular society. This shows a clear disconnect with the entire purpose of citizenship education and public education in general in Canada, which as Osborne points out, is and has always been to develop citizens that can best help the country (2000, p. 8). Though this may be defined in different ways, throughout history, there have been very clear criteria for what makes a good citizen and that remains true today.

Traits of Citizenship

Regarding the specific traits that make up citizenship education, there seems to be a high degree of alignment between the specific knowledge, skills, and attributes that make up the construct of citizenship and the responses of the Social Studies 30-1 teachers that participated in the survey. This also suggests that there is a high degree of alignment between the responses of the Social Studies 30-1 teachers that participated in the survey

and the work of Ghasempoor et al. (2012), which provided the majority of the traits I have included in my understanding of citizenship. Of the three types of traits, there was the highest degree of alignment with the skills traits. The skills traits had a combined weighted average of 5.07 out of a maximum of six, with 5/7 (71%) having a weighted average of at least five. The values and dispositions traits have the second highest degree of alignment with a combined weighted average of 4.95, with 9/15 (60%) having a weighted average of at least five. The content traits had the lowest degree of alignment, with a combined weighted average of 4.77, with 2/13 having a weighted average of at least five. There was only one trait whose inclusion in the citizenship education was even remotely close to being rejected and that was loyalty, with 37% of participants disagreeing with its inclusion to some degree. This is not overly surprising though, as in looking at the literature about citizenship education, including Osborne (1996), it appears that loyalty is becoming emphasized less and less both in academia and in curricula.

When looking at which specific traits had the highest degree of alignment, there are two that really stand out when compared to the rest: critical thinking and analyzing information. Critical thinking had a weighted average of 5.58, with 79% of participants very strongly agreeing that it should be part of citizenship education, while analyzing information had a weighted average of 5.42, with 68% of participants very strongly agreeing that it should be part of citizenship education. The fact that critical thinking was the trait with the highest degree of alignment is not surprising given it was the single most common response to the survey question asking participants what kind of citizens the participants wanted their students to be. This makes sense, as critical thinking has long been part of the Social Studies Program of Studies. It is also not surprising that analyzing

information had the next highest degree of alignment, as critical thinking plays an important role in analyzing information. After critical thinking and analyzing information, the three traits with the next highest degree of alignment were all disposition/value traits. Willingness to listen had the third highest degree of alignment with a weighted average of 5.33, while courage to defend a position and open-mindedness were tied for fourth with a weighted average of 5.21. The content trait with the highest degree of alignment was human rights, with a weighted average of 5.2, though it should be noted that human rights did have a higher percentage of participants very strongly agreeing with its inclusion than all traits, except critical thinking and analyzing information, with 65% of participants very strongly agreeing. Overall, there was a high degree of alignment between what traits the participants feel should be a part of citizenship education and what traits that I am arguing make up the construct of citizenship.

As can be seen in Table 16, there is considerably less alignment between the disposition and knowledge traits and the Social Studies 30-1 Program of Studies in comparison to the skill traits of citizenship and the Social Studies 30-1 Program of Studies.

Table 16

Summary of Alignment Between Citizenship and Social Studies 30-1

Trait Type	Rank	Mean	Traits With Direct Connection	Traits With Indirect Connection	Traits With No Connection
Knowledge	2	1.21	7	3	4
Skills	1	1.86	6	1	0
Dispositions	3	0.8	2	8	5

This lack of alignment should not be overly surprising as the definition of citizenship in this paper and the traits within, are based largely on what Westheimer and Kahne (2004) call the justice-oriented citizen, which they argue is the least emphasized type of democratic education reform. This lack of alignment also supports Kennelly and Llewellyn's (2011) findings that the Alberta curriculum is more reflective of a neo-liberal or conservative approach to citizenship, which promotes more of an emphasis on fulfilling civic duties and working for the good of the country, as opposed to a more justice oriented approach, which is more focused on improving the human condition. It is important to note that as the Alberta Social Studies Program of Studies covers kindergarten through grade 12, it is possible that some citizenship traits that are not included in the Social Studies 30-1 Program of Studies could be included at other grade levels. This is less likely with the skills and dispositions of citizenship, however, as the front matter of the program of studies for social studies is the same for every grade level and this is where most of the skills and dispositions are found.

Lack of Alignment Between Citizenship and Social Studies 30-1

The relative lack of alignment between the construct of citizenship and the Social Studies 30-1 Program of Studies is problematic on various levels. First, seeing as the overall goal of social studies in general, including Social Studies 30-1, is citizenship, it is problematic that the program of studies does not reflect the construct of citizenship in its entirety. Simply put, the program of studies is offering an incomplete understanding of citizenship, which can then lead to incomplete teaching of citizenship and incomplete learning about citizenship. This leads to another issue with this lack of alignment; the issue of how teachers deal with it. There are two basic options for teachers in the face of

this lack of alignment between the curriculum and the construct of citizenship: simply follow the curriculum exactly as it is laid out, thus missing part of what citizenship is, or supplement the curriculum by adding in those missing pieces of citizenship. If teachers choose the first option and only teach exactly what is in the curriculum, then their students likely will not have a complete understanding of what it means to be a responsible citizen based on the construct of citizenship discussed in this paper, or lack certain skills and dispositions necessary for responsible citizenship, which can be problematic for the students and society as a whole. If, on the other hand, teachers choose the second option and add in the missing elements of citizenship, they may run into difficulties with parents or administrators that want teachers to solely focus on what is explicitly included in the curriculum.

In looking at the results from the two numerical response questions that looked at what drives instruction in Social Studies 30-1 classrooms, there were some clear and somewhat troubling results. In a sense, it is positive that 72% of participants said that citizenship is the most important thing in Social Studies 30-1, as citizenship plays such an important role in social studies. However, the fact that 28% of participants said that doing well on the diploma exam is more important than citizenship is alarming, as the entire purpose of social studies is to help students "to become engaged, active, informed and responsible citizens" (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 1). These results suggest that, in some classes at least, the purpose of the entire social studies program is being overridden by an external exam, which supports the findings of Agrey (2004) and Tupper (2007). Now, if the diploma exam accurately reflects and/or assesses citizenship, then this would not be

as large of an issue. However, as discussed previously in this paper, outside a few specific skills, the diploma exam does not assess citizenship to a significant degree.

The second numerical response question further sheds light on the above issue. In that question, participants were asked to rank four options in the order they drove their teaching. Half of the participants said that focusing on skills that are the most relevant for the diploma exam was their strongest driving force. This is problematic for two reasons: first, it means that for half of the respondents preparing students for the diploma exam is more important than the development of responsible citizenship, even though, as noted above, that is in fact the goal of social studies. It is also problematic as it means that these teachers are prioritizing some skills, and by extension some outcomes, over others as they are intentionally focusing more on those skills and outcomes that are easier to assess on the diploma exam. This reflects what both Agrey (2005) and Tupper (2007) found in their studies of diploma exam teachers under the previous social studies curriculum. So, even though the social studies curriculum changed, issues with teachers prioritizing skills and outcomes most relevant to the diploma exam still exist. This should not be a surprise though, as in the face of high-stakes standardized tests, teachers (and entire schools and school districts) will often teach to the test in order to have their students achieve higher test scores (Sacks, 1999; Sheppard, 2002).

The Diploma Exam

Lack of Alignment Between Program of Studies and the Diploma Exam

The fact that some teachers are prioritizing the skills and outcomes they feel will best prepare their students on the diploma exam suggests that there is, at least to some degree, a lack of alignment between the Social Studies 30-1 Diploma Exam and the

Social Studies 30-1 Program of Studies. According to the results of both the survey and the follow up interviews, this is the perception of a not insignificant percentage of participants. When directly asked if they felt that the diploma exam reflects the Program of Studies, 26% of participants felt that it did not reflect the specific outcomes of the Program of Studies, while 16% either strongly or very strongly disagreed that it did. Though the other 58% agreed that the diploma exam did reflect the specific outcomes of the diploma exam, it was not a strong sense of agreement. One thing the survey could not tell us is whether or not the diploma exam reflected all of the specific outcomes or if it reflected them all equally. That is where the follow up interviews provided more information about the degree to which the diploma exam reflects the program of studies. Of the six teachers interviewed, only one was overly supportive of the idea that the diploma exam clearly reflects the program of studies. The other five interviews all had concerns about how closely the diploma exam reflected the diploma exam.

If the diploma exam does in fact reflect the program of studies, which according to the participants of my research, it does to a degree, it does not necessarily mean that it reflects the overall goal of citizenship. Before distributing my survey, I performed my own analysis on the diploma exam to determine the level of alignment between the diploma exam and citizenship (see Table 3). The results of that analysis have been summarized in Table 17 and Table 18.

Table 17

Summary of Alignment Between Part A of Diploma Exam and Citizenship

Trait Type	Rank	Mean	Traits With Direct Connection	Traits With Indirect Connection	Traits With No Connection
Knowledge	1	0.93	0	13	1
Skills	2	0.86	3	0	0
Dispositions	3	0.73	0	11	4

Table 18

Summary of Alignment Between Part B of Diploma Exam and Citizenship

Trait Type	Rank	Mean	Traits with direct connection	Traits with indirect connection	Traits with no connection
Knowledge	1	1.21	7	3	4
Skills	2	0.57	2	0	0
Dispositions	3	0	0	0	0

These results line up quite closely with the perspectives of the participants of the survey where only 26% of participants felt that the diploma exam reflects the specific traits of citizenship. Looking into each specific trait of citizenship, the results of the survey also line up with these results. The traits with the highest amount of support were the knowledge traits with 52% of participants agreeing that they are clearly assessed on the diploma exam, followed by the skills traits at 42%, and the disposition traits at 26%. The biggest issue that comes from this lack of alignment is that the most important, and likely largest assessment that students will take during Social Studies 30-1, does not reflect the overall goal of citizenship or many of the traits that make up citizenship. Based on the fact that the diploma exam does not clearly assess citizenship and that at least

some teachers are prioritizing some outcomes over others due to the diploma exam, then it is important to question whether or not we should continue to use the diploma exam.

Reasons to Continue to Use the Diploma Exam

When looking at whether we should continue to use the diploma exam or not, it is important to consider two things: first, what purpose is the diploma exam serving and second, is the diploma exam a quality assessment tool. According the General Diploma Exam Bulletin (Alberta Education, 2018), the three aims of diploma exams are:

To certify the level of individual student achievement in selected grade 12 courses, to ensure that province-wide standards of achievement are maintained and to report individual and group results (p. 1).

Certifying the level of achievement/creating a provincial standard. Regarding certifying the level of individual achievement, there are various arguments to support this purpose. First, given the level of competition for entrance into university and other post-secondary institutions, it is important for all students to have as level of a playing field as possible. Having a standardized test that all students in a given subject area have to take, means that when applying for post-secondary school, students are being measured by the same standards and that a 90% in one school reflects the same level of achievement as a 90% at another school in another part of the province. This reflects what Jenna explained in her discussion on the benefits of the diploma exam. The same is true when students are applying for scholarships that can be worth tens of thousands of dollars. When thousands of dollars are on the line, it is important to make sure that all students have the same chance and it can be argued that having the diploma exam does just that. There are however, two major issues with this line of thinking. First, this argument assumes that the

diploma exam is an accurate indicator of a student's knowledge and ability in social studies, which, is not necessarily the case. As Nathan (2002) puts it, "It is a widely held but patently false assumption that smart students always do well on standardized tests" (p. 597). This is similar to what Jenna had to say regarding the diploma exam: "*To a degree it tests a student's ability to take a test rather than what they know*." Second, as discussed earlier in this paper, due to the process of equating that is used on Part B (the multiple-choice section) of the exam, we cannot be sure that 90% for one student does in fact equal the same level of achievement as another student that scored 90%. Another underlying issue with this argument though is that it assumes that teachers are all using different standards to assess their students and as a result not all teachers assessments and evaluations of students can be trusted. It further opens the door for arguments about some teachers inflating the grades for their students, giving them an advantage over other students applying for entrance into post-secondary schooling and/or for scholarships.

During the interview portion of my research, Wayne addressed this issue when discussing the decrease in value of diploma exams from 50% to 30% when he said, "*The teacher has more influence on the success of the student and can potentially increase or decrease their mark. But I'm okay with that, I believe in the professionalism of teachers*." The point he was trying to get across was that teachers, as professionals, are well qualified to determine what a student's grade is and, as such, should be trusted to do so. This only works though if the public has as much faith in teachers as Wayne does and if all teachers have a deep understanding of assessment theory and best practices in assessment, which does not seem to be the case.

One way to potentially increase the public's faith in the teaching profession would be to ensure that all pre-service teacher programs have a more common foundation in order to avoid having some beginning teachers that are well versed in assessment theory and understand the difference between formative and summative assessment, as well as the importance of reliability, validity and fairness in their assessments, while other beginning teachers' understanding of assessment may be limited to such trivial things as how to order their multiple choice responses. This would help to ensure that beginning teachers at least had similar levels of understanding of assessment, which should lead to more consistent rates of evaluation across the province. This could be further aided by having mandated standards training as part of teachers' professional development on a regular basis. Ideally this would include updates and refreshers on current assessment theory and also working with colleagues to ensure that teachers that teach the same subjects and grade levels are assessing their students at a similar standard. A final, additional solution, that was brought up by Connor during his interview, is the importance of having teachers that are both properly trained to teach the subjects they are teaching and have the passion for those subjects. He sees this as a particular problem in social studies where over the course of his nearly 30 years of teaching he has consistently heard the statement that "anybody can teach social studies" with the result of numerous high school social studies teachers not having the training and or expertise to be social studies teachers. This practice of assuming anybody can teach social studies, and by implication citizenship, is an example of the lack of capacity being built around citizenship education as described by Hughes and Sears (2006). Putting these solutions into place would also address the second purpose of diploma exams, "To ensure that

province-wide standards of achievement are maintained" (Alberta Education, 2018, p. 1). Ensuring a province-wide standard of achievement is also important, but with more consistent pre-service education for teachers, a rigorous and consistent approach to professional development and putting teachers into positions they are best suited for, then the need to write diploma exams to ensure a specific standard could be greatly decreased. It would also go a long way in trying to build capacity in citizenship education, which, as has been pointed out in this paper and by Hughes and Sears (2006), is lacking.

Reporting results. In regard to the final purpose of the diploma exams, "to report individual and group results" (Alberta Education, 2018, p. 1), though it may be important to report these results, the way in which they are reported tend to create more negatives than positives. First, the reporting of individual results serves to "rank and sort" students solely on their achievement on individual exams. This sorting of students teaches students that the most important thing about school is how they score on the diploma exam. As Wayne put it during his interview, too much pressure to do well on the diploma exam "*causes them (students) to get too focused on marks rather than the actual learning and skill development*." In addition to students focusing more on their score on the diploma exam than actually learning, students also may suffer from increased anxiety due to the pressure to outperform their peers and may struggle with their self-worth, as their worth may become tied to the score they achieve on their diploma exams. From a citizenship standpoint, this can lead to the idea that those who do better on the diploma exam are better citizens. This is similar to what Tupper (2007) observed: "In social studies classrooms, the implication seems to be that students are good citizens in so far as they are able to fit into an existing system, which in turn helps them to succeed on

standardized tests" (p. 267). If this is the case, then there is a second competing concept of citizenship, one based on testing and fitting into the traditional model of school, which seems to be at odds with the construct of citizenship discussed in this paper. By embracing or even simply continuing the culture of high stakes standardized testing that comes with the diploma exam, we are actively working against the construct of citizenship and promoting a very different, and potentially harmful understanding of what it means to be a good citizen.

The other issue created by reporting the results of diploma exams is how schools, politicians and parents use these results to compare different schools. When diploma exam results are published in order to compare schools, the implication is that the schools with the highest average scores on diploma exams are better than schools that have lower average scores on diploma exams. There are numerous issues with using diploma exam scores in this way. First, this discounts all of the other elements of a school that make it a quality school. Things like the culture of the school, how inclusive it is, programs for students with special needs, extracurricular activities, arts programs, Career and Technology Studies (CTS) programs, athletics, its community involvement, etc. It also does not take into consideration the factors that often play a role in how successful students are, like their socioeconomic backgrounds, whether or not they were read to at a young age, whether they get an adequate amount of sleep, etc. Schools in areas of high socioeconomic status and where students have enough food to eat and get enough sleep and generally do not have to deal with many of the potential struggles that many students today have to deal with, tend to do better regardless of what happens in the school. As Connor points out, this "*is often the case in some private schools where they only admit*

high achieving students in the first place, meaning their results on diploma exams are likely to be higher than public schools where all students are eligible for admittance." Though Connor may be mistaken about the private schools only admitting high achieving students, he is correct in that there are reasons students attending private schools tend to perform better on standardized tests other than the actual quality of the school. The cost of some private schools can limit attendance to students from wealthy families, but for the most part, students that attend private schools tend to come from homogenous middle to upper class communities. It is often the backgrounds of these students and the privilege that comes with their upbringing that helps them to outperform their public-school counterparts. What this does is to serve to increasingly privilege certain groups over others. This reflects Kohn's (2002) assertion that high-stakes standardized tests are biased towards students that come from privileged backgrounds. Finally, this type of assumption also contributes to the false narrative that the only thing that matters in education is the grade you get at the end of the course. This completely ignores the amount of learning that goes on in this classroom, the improvement that individual students make, and the type of person or citizen that students have become over their time in high school.

Problems With the Diploma Exam

As noted, there are obvious issues with the rationale behind the diploma exam and the ways in which the results are used, however, there are also issues with the diploma exam as an assessment tool, which should make us further question whether or not we should be using it. As discussed in the framework section of this paper, there are specific fairness, validity and consequential validity issues with the diploma exam. Regarding fairness, there are two potential issues. The first, is that based on the past eight diploma

exam sittings, there appears to be a bias against female students, as despite having a higher in class average in each semester, female students had a lower diploma exam average. It is important to note that the bias we are seeing could also be the result of teachers being biased against male students and so further investigation, perhaps using test-take think alouds, is needed. If the diploma exam is biased against female students, as it appears it may be, then that would support the findings of bias against female students on the Social Studies 30 diploma exam of Christison (1997). Another potential lack of fairness with the diploma exam is based on the changing standard on the written response section from year to year.

Negative consequences of the diploma exam. One of the most common negative consequences that arises from the diploma exam that was either directly discussed or indirectly alluded to was the increase in stress and anxiety that the diploma exam places on both students and teachers. It is important to note that stress in itself is not necessarily negative, as it can help students and teachers to focus more and work harder to overcome whatever it is that is causing the stress. This can help to teach resiliency and build confidence in students and teachers alike. However, if the stress is causing anxiety, panic attacks, or other health related issues, then it can be said that the stress is having negative consequences. This can be seen in the works of Ford (2018) and Madaus et al. (2009) who found that the stress and emotional toll of high stakes, standardized tests can cause students to suffer from sleeplessness and/or become sick to their stomachs. One of the things about the diploma exam that causes so much stress for some students is the potential consequences that not doing well on the diploma exam can have. As the diploma exam is worth so much, students may be concerned that if they do not score high

enough on that one exam they may not be able to get into the post-secondary institute of their choice, take the specific program they are interested in, or qualify for scholarships that they may need in order to be able to afford to attend post-secondary. In 2010 at the school that I taught Social Studies 30-1, at least three students lost their conditional acceptance into university after they failed one of their diploma exams despite having strong marks going into the exam. Granted, with over 100 graduates, this experience only happened to a small percentage of the students taking diploma exams that year, the consequences for those few students were significant and should not be discounted. With the recent decrease in value of the diploma exam from 50% to 30%, the likelihood of consequences like those mentioned above are less likely and as a result the level of stress and anxiety students face due to the diploma exam should decrease, which is what three of the six interviewees said when asked about the impacts of the reduction in value of the diploma exam.

Another benefit for students from the reduction of the value of the diploma exam that was brought up in the interviews was that it reduced the potential negative impact that having a "bad day" when writing the diploma exam would have on students. There are many reasons that students may have an off day while writing their diploma exam, like going through a breakup, dealing with family problems, having to look after siblings, not getting enough sleep the night before, not eating, etc., and as the diploma exam is a one-time test, which is still worth 30% of a student's entire grade, having a "bad day" can have serious negative consequences for a student. Whether it is losing conditional acceptance into university, not being able to get into a student's school or program of choice or no longer qualifying for needed scholarships, the consequences for students can

be severe and as such the continued use of diploma exams and the way in which we use them needs to be continually evaluated.

The diploma exam can also be a considerable source of stress for teachers, which too can lead to potential negative consequences for all of us. Despite this stress, "supporters of high-stakes testing argue that these examinations force students, parents, teachers and school administrators to take education seriously. The public ranking of schools and districts expose those students and teachers who fail to do this" (Agrey 2005, pp. 32-33). However, according to Nathan (2002), "Research shows that high-stakes tests discourage and demoralize at least as many students and teachers as they motivate to work harder" (p. 598). This is similar to the experiences of some Social Studies 30-1 teachers as evident in one specific response in the survey: "*The diploma exam is a constant source of stress for both teachers and students. It looms over everyone at all times and one cannot help but feel the push to get better results – unfortunately, sometimes this stands in the way of best teaching practices as you 'teach the test*.'"

So rather than take education more seriously, standardized tests may simply make teachers take the test seriously by doing whatever they can to get good results on that test.

Teaching to the test. If teachers are "teaching to the test," it means that they are likely not focusing on the entire curriculum, but rather those specific outcomes they know are more likely to be on the diploma exam. This is supported by the results of my survey where on the ranking question participants were asked to rank what drives their teaching. They were given four options: focusing on the skills most relevant to the diploma exam, focusing on all curricular outcomes equally, focusing on the development of responsible citizens, or focusing on covering the content of the textbook. Focusing on the skills most

relevant to the diploma exam was the most common first and second choice of participants with nine participants making it their first choice and seven participants making it their second choice. Focusing on the development of responsible citizens was a close second with seven first choices and six second choices, while focusing on all curricular outcomes equally was third with three first choices and six second choices.

This suggests that some teachers (potentially a large percentage of teachers) are prioritizing certain curricular outcomes over others, with those more likely to help students on the diploma exam being prioritized over those that are less likely. This supports the findings under the previous curriculum and its diploma exam in the research done by Agrey (2005) and Tupper (2007). This means that despite the change in curriculum, it still seems that some grade 12 social studies teachers are focusing more on certain testable outcomes than others.

One of the potential consequences of teachers focusing on certain outcomes rather than others, is that students may come out of high school lacking certain skills that are important for students as they enter the world of post-secondary education, the workforce and adulthood in general. In looking at the Social Studies 30-1 Program of Studies, there are four categories of skill outcomes: dimensions of thinking, social participation as a democratic process, research for deliberative inquiry, and communication (Alberta Education, 2007, pp. 17-19). Of the four of those categories of skills, the only category that is addressed to a significant degree on the diploma exam is the dimensions of thinking. It can safely be argued that the diploma exam attempts to address critical, creative, and historical thinking, but it is questionable as to whether it does so in a meaningful way. The diploma exam also potentially addresses geographic thinking,

though that likely depends on what specific questions are included in a given sitting of the diploma exam. However, the diploma exam does not really address this in a robust way. The final dimension of thinking outcome in the Program of Studies is general learner outcome S.4, "students will demonstrate skills of decision making and problem solving" (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 18). As this dimension of thinking, like others, is not noticeably addressed on the diploma exam, it is possible that it is not a focus in Social Studies 30-1 classes. If teachers are focusing just on the dimensions of thinking that are likely to be addressed on the diploma exam, students may not develop the skills needed to help them problem solve and make decisions.

The other category of skill that is at least somewhat addressed by the diploma exam, in part A of the exam, is communication. Obviously, as part A of the diploma exam consists of two written assignments, students' abilities to communicate through writing is going to be assessed. However, general learner outcome S.8, which states "students will demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy" (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 19), clearly shows that students should be developing oral, written and visual literacy skills to communicate and the diploma exam only assesses written communication. As a result, teachers may focus strictly on teaching students to be better writers while important specific outcomes like S.8.2 "use skills of formal and informal discussion and/or debate to persuasively express informed viewpoints on an issue," S.8.3 "ask respectful and relevant questions of others to clarify viewpoints," and S.8.4 "listen respectfully to others" (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 19) may be missed. This means that students may not be have the skills necessary to effectively communicate with other people when forced to actually speak to them, listen and then respond.

The other two categories of skills, “social participation as a democratic practice (and) research for deliberative inquiry”, (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 18) are not addressed at all by the diploma exam and as a result may be neglected by some teachers in place of the skills that are more relevant for the diploma exam. This presents two potentially serious issues. First, students may not have the necessary research skills that they will need in both post-secondary school and in many careers. This would put these students at a competitive disadvantage and potentially leave them unprepared to continue their studies post high school. Second, and more concerning, students may not be developing the specific skills that are needed to be good citizens. Specifically students may not develop skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building, which includes “participat(ing) in persuading, compromising and negotiating to resolve conflicts and differences, interpret(ing) patterns of behavior and attitudes that contribute or pose obstacles to cross-cultural understanding, respect(ing) the needs and perspectives of others (and) collaborat(ing) in groups to solve problems” (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 18).

The fact that these types of skills are not assessed by the diploma exam supports Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) findings that the justice-oriented citizen is the least emphasized of the three types of citizens: the personally responsible, the participatory, and the justice-oriented. Students may also not be encouraged to get involved in their community as their teacher may not focus on general learner outcome “S.6, students will develop age-appropriate behavior for social involvement as responsible citizens contributing to their community” (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 18). If teachers do avoid general learner outcome S.6, it would support what Evans (2006a) found in his study of

33 teachers that specialize in citizenship education where most of the participants focused more on teaching about citizenship, rather than teaching students to actually be good citizens. If teachers are not teaching students to directly contribute to their communities, students may actually become less active in their communities despite the purpose of social studies being to help "students to become active and responsible citizens, engaged in the democratic process and aware of their capacity to effect change in their communities, society and the world" (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 1). This is what one of the participants (Scott) in Agrey's (2005) study observed, "Active participation has been stunted because of the presence of the examination" (p. 169). If this is the case, it undermines the overall purpose of citizenship education.

Reduction of weighting as a potential solution. The fact that students may not be developing into active and responsible citizens due to the over emphasis placed on the diploma exam is quite concerning. However, a potential solution to this issue may already be in place. According to three of the six interviewees, the reduction in value of the diploma exam from 50% to 30% has given teachers more freedom to focus on other elements of Social Studies 30-1 rather than focusing so much on the diploma exam. This includes focusing more on the curriculum in its entirety and in some cases, like with Paul, an increased focus on traits specific to citizenship. Unfortunately, this increased opportunity to focus on citizenship has not been felt by all of the participants in my research. In looking at the survey, only 29% respondents agreed that the reduction in weighting of the diploma exam allowed them to focus more on citizenship, while 55% agreed that it had a positive impact on their teaching. Even though the reduction in weighting has not made that large of a difference in allowing teachers to spend more time

on citizenship, in the perceptions of many teachers, it has made a positive impact on their teaching.

One area in which this impact may be seen is in allowing teachers more freedom to teach in ways that are best suited for their students. This can include focusing on the specific needs of the students in their classes, as mentioned by Leon when he said he now has "*more freedom to teach the way that is most beneficial for the students as it (the diploma exam) is not half their grade now.*" One way in which teachers can better meet the needs of their students is through the specific types of assessments they are using.

One of the other potential negative consequences of the diploma exam is that students are only taught to write one specific type of essay, typically the five-paragraph argumentative essay, as that is the most useful style of writing for the diploma exam. Unfortunately, this can stifle some students' creativity and potentially cause gifted writers to become disillusioned and bored with writing and/or school, as they are not able to write in the way they prefer or in the way that might best suit their strengths and interests. In looking at some of the responses from the survey it is evident that the diploma exam still strongly shapes the assessments of many teachers. When asked to what extent the diploma exam shapes their instruction and assessment practice, 67% of respondents suggested that the diploma exam plays a very large role in shaping their instruction and/or assessment practice. 33% of respondents directly stated that most or even all of their assessments are based directly off the diploma exam. One respondent stated, "*The majority of my assessments in grade 12 are based on the type/style of questions that will be on the diploma exam.*" This suggests that the only assessments used are multiple choice questions, source interpretation assignments, and essays. The same issue can be

seen in a response by a different social studies teacher who said, "*I try to use interesting projects and creative projects for my students, but they are assessed mostly through multiple choice and essay/source analysis*." Responses like these shows how much influence the diploma has on classroom teachers and their assessments and how prevalent the use of the three types of questions that are on the diploma exam are in grade 12 classrooms. This supports what Agrey (2004) and Tupper (2007) found and gives further credence to the idea that the diploma exam is effectively forcing students into only using one specific type of writing rather than using other, potentially more creative styles. However, this is not happening in all classrooms as evidenced by another response to the same question, "*We do model some of our assessments around the diploma exam, but we are moving away from this to allow students to express their understanding in non-traditional (non- diploma) ways*." This suggests that in at least some cases, the influence of the diploma exam may be decreasing somewhat, showing a reduction in its influence found by Agrey (2004) and Tupper (2007). For those teachers that are not moving away from using predominantly diploma exam-based assessments, it is important to consider why they continue to rely so heavily on diploma exam type assessments. It may be, as several participants mentioned in the survey and the interviews, that they simply wanted to prepare their students for the diploma exam. It may be that they have simply used this style of assessment for so long that they do not know how to assess in any other way, or it may be because they do not have the time or support to change the way they are assessing their students. Regardless of the reasons why many teachers continue to focus so much on diploma exam type assessments, it is clear that more effort needs to put into supporting teachers to have the knowledge, understanding, time and confidence to use

alternative methods of assessment. If this does not happen, then we will continue to see teachers not only teach to the exam but assess to the exam as well.

Overall, there are clearly some potential consequential validity issues with the diploma exam. The dual issues of construct underrepresentation and construct irrelevant variance have the potential to very negatively impact both students and society. The potential life altering consequences of a student scoring poorly on the diploma exam and the potential lack of skills being taught to students in order to focus more on diploma exam specific skills, are concerning in their own ways and require continued investigation and potentially another change in the diploma exam. It is possible that some of these issues are being addressed to some degree by the reduction of the weighting of the diploma exam from 50% to 30%, but based on the responses to the survey and in the follow-up interviews, the potential negative consequences for individuals and society as a whole are still evident and remain a factor for students and teachers alike. It is also clear with the differing views on the reduction of the weighting of the diploma exam from 50% to 30% that more research is necessary to fully understand the impacts it has created. This includes the need for further surveying of teachers, an analysis of student achievement on the diploma exam before and after the reduction of weighting, and a survey of students who have taken the diploma exam when it was valued at 50% and those that have taken it with its new value of 30%.

Though participants were not directly asked whether they thought we should keep the diploma exam, interviewees were asked about their views on the diploma exam and from this, despite the reservations that all six interviewees had regarding the diploma exam, they all expressed varying levels of support for the exam and none of them even

hinted at wanting to eliminate it. This is similar to what Agrey (2004) found, where despite all four of the high school social studies teachers in the study clearly describing issues of the diploma exam or issues caused by it, none of them wanted to eliminate the diploma exam. Though both Sarah and Bill did state that they believed the exam (which was worth 50% at that time) should be reduced. In my study, the closest response to wanting to eliminate the diploma exam was made by Connor who suggested, when discussing the decrease in the weighting of the diploma, that it appeared to him that "*both teachers and students are no longer taking the exam seriously enough*" and as a result he wondered "*if it would have been better to eliminate the exam rather than reducing its weighting as it seemed to lose some of its value at the lower weighting*." Aside from that one comment though, there is no evidence that any of the interviewees want to get rid of the diploma exam. That is not to say that the interviewees completely love the diploma exam, rather they see that it does have some value and in the case of Connor and Jenna, they see it as better than any of the alternative standardized tests and so would rather keep it than have their students have to take a standardized test designed by for-profit companies or other entities. Both brought up the fact that there is a need for a common standard for students, particularly when considering scholarships and admittance into post-secondary institutions and so in order to make this fair for all students, there needs to be some sort of standard. They also mentioned that the Alberta Diploma Exam, which is developed and marked by teachers, would be a much fairer assessment than one developed by individual post-secondary institutions or for-profit businesses. The diploma exam also helps to level the playing field for students from isolated communities, like in the Northwest Territories where there is often a perception that the education is not as

good as in larger, less isolated communities, thus discounting the classroom grades achieved in those communities. The diploma exam, however, eliminates those concerns, as all students taking Social Studies 30-1 take the same exam, which is marked by the same group of teachers.

Improving the Diploma Exam

Despite the discussed benefits of the diploma exam, the responses about the diploma exam during the interviews suggest an appetite for some improvements to at least elements of the exam. The most common desire appears to be a wish to change the structure of the exam in some way. All of the respondents, except Wayne, wanted to change some aspect of the exam. Wayne thought that the test was a good test but was concerned how "*the pressure to perform well on the test might have a negative impact on students and teachers*" but did not want to actually change the test in any way. Of the two sections of the diploma exam, the section that was most likely to be mentioned in needing to change was the multiple-choice section. Three of the interviewees mentioned specific problems with the multiple-choice and in one of the surveys it was explained that the diploma exam does not reflect the specific outcomes of the program of studies, "*as it has completely become a reading comprehension test*." This idea was supported by Connor and Jenna in their interviews. This also reflects one of the views from Agrey's (2004) study where Mike explained, "The examination is a content-based reading exercise which is inconsistent with current learning theories regarding brain-based and student learning" (p. 189). It is interesting that even with a different curriculum and a different exam, the same criticism of the test being a reading test still exists. The obvious solution to this issue would be to either eliminate the exam in its entirety or eliminate the multiple-choice

section. Assuming the first option is not a reality based on the previously mentioned aims of the diploma exam and the elimination of the multiple-choice section, and its simplicity in marking is not an option, then other options must be considered. There are two clear ways of addressing this issue without eliminating the use of multiple-choice questions.

First, the questions and sources could be written at a reading level that was accessible to all students in Social Studies 30-1, which would help to assess their mastery of the content and skills of the curriculum as opposed to simply their reading level. Second, Alberta Education could reduce the length and number of sources that have to be read to answer each question, which would again better assess the outcomes of the curriculum rather than just a student's ability to read.

Even though the written response section seemed to be the more popular section of the diploma exam with the interviewees, there were still issues with it that the interviewees wanted to see addressed. The first, brought up by Paul, was to ensure that the sources for the essay question were general enough that students could draw on their understanding of the curriculum as a whole to answer the question rather than have sources based on very specific concepts, like Neo-conservatism, which only represent a very small and specific part of the curriculum. This would make the diploma exam fairer and more reflective of the curriculum in its entirety. The other change of the written response section had to do with the actual standard being used in assessing students' written answers. Jenna explained that the standard for excellence is often unnecessarily high, so much so that she is not sure that she could meet that standard given the time allowed to complete the test. Obviously, in order to set a standard, a certain level of rigor is needed, but if experienced and qualified teachers do not feel that they can meet the

standard of excellence, then perhaps the standard needs to be lowered to a more reasonable level. The other change discussed was a more consistent standard being set from year to year. Jenna and Hayley discussed the frustration they felt over having the standards for the written response changing from semester to semester and from year to year. As the standard changes for each sitting of the diploma exam, it can be difficult for students and their teachers to properly prepare for the exam and may mean the exam is lacking fairness from semester to semester or from year to year. In this case, it can be difficult to balance the desire to be fair to all students when you compare different semesters and different years, as some sources are going to be more difficult than others to analyze and discuss and so it may be necessary to allow for different standards for the differing level of difficulty of the sources. However, that does not make it any easier for students and teachers who are facing what can be enormous pressure to have good results on the diploma exam.

Alignment Between In-Class and Diploma Exam Marks

The changing standard from semester to semester and year to year can also make it difficult for some teachers to have a close alignment between their class awarded marks and the marks their students earn on the diploma exam. Whether or not having a close alignment between class awarded marks and diploma exam marks is important can be a very controversial issue and is one that is often poorly understood. As part of the demographics section to open the survey, participants were asked what the alignment was between the in-class marks and the diploma exam marks for their students. Of the 21 participants, 18 responded to this question and of those 14 provided a numerical response. Seven of the respondents said their diploma exam marks are typically within

10% of their in-class marks, four respondents said their marks were typically within 5% of each other, and the remaining three respondents individually said their marks were within either 6%, 7%, or 8% of each other. The non-numerical responses included things like, ‘it varies’, ‘small’, and ‘depends on the year.’ Interestingly, only one of the respondents said that their administration was concerned about the alignment between the two, saying their administration wanted a discrepancy of no more than 5% between the in-class marks and the diploma exam marks.

Based on the responses above, it appears that most of the respondents have a fairly close alignment between their in-class marks and their diploma exam marks. They also reflect the Alberta provincial results from the January 2019 diploma exam where the provincial average for in-class marks was 76.0% and the provincial average on the diploma exam was 65.8%, making an average discrepancy of 10.2%. These results, though interesting, are probably not as important as discussing whether or not it is important for there to be a close alignment between in-class marks and diploma exam marks. This is the question that was posed to the six interviewees. Though there was a wide array in responses, in looking at all the responses together, it can be said that according to the interviewees, in typical circumstances there should be some level of alignment between in-class marks and marks on the diploma exam. As Wayne pointed out, and as 74% of the participants of the survey also stated, the diploma exam does assess specific outcomes from the program of studies and since teachers are supposed to teach what is in the program of studies, if teachers have done their jobs, then there should be some alignment between the two marks.

However, as pointed out by several of the interviewees, the diploma exam does not assess all of the outcomes of the program of studies and so assuming that teachers are in fact teaching the entire program of studies, it stands that there likely will be some difference between the two marks. This may be particularly true for students who, for example, are stronger oral communicators than they are written communicators. If these students are allowed to present orally in class, they will likely do better on those types of assessments than they would when forced to only use written communication on the diploma exam, meaning their in-class marks would likely be higher than their diploma exam mark. In this case, the difference in marks is not the fault of anything the teacher or the student did, but rather is a reflection of the limited capacity of the diploma exam, and all pen and paper tests for that matter, to fully assess the curriculum in its entirety.

Based on the concerns that were brought up regarding the multiple-choice section, it would make sense that there may be less alignment between the in-class marks and the marks for the multiple-choice section of the diploma exam. This could be the case for students that have done well throughout the class but may not be exceptionally strong readers, and as several participants pointed out, the multiple-choice section of the diploma exam requires a high level of reading comprehension and an understanding of how take multiple-choice tests. The opposite scenario, as discussed by Jenna, may also be true, where a student that may not have done as well in the course and may not even understand the content of the course that well but is a strong reader and is a strong test taker might do really well on the multiple choice section, causing a large difference between their two grades. These two scenarios combined with the fact that teachers mark the written response section of the diploma exam is why Wayne believes that there

should be greater alignment between the written response section of the diploma exam and the in-class mark. There may be some logic to this belief, if teachers are marking both in-class assignments and the written response section, then the standards used for both should be similar. For this to truly be the case though, the conditions for writing in-class assignments would need to be the exact same as the conditions for writing the diploma exam, which is incredibly unlikely. It is true that some teachers will try to replicate the conditions of the diploma exam as much as possible, however, the very nature of a one-time, stand-alone standardized test makes it virtually impossible to completely replicate. For those teachers that do try to replicate the conditions of the diploma exam, by using strategies like timed writing assignments, marking first drafts of assignments, not allowing research, only allowing a single sitting to complete the assignment, etc., the marks for these types of assignments and the standards used, should be similar to that of the standard on the diploma exam. That does not mean that these strategies are beneficial to student learning or good assessment practice, but they should help to ensure the standard of assessment used in class is similar to that on the diploma exam. Of course, the only way this makes sense is if classroom teachers are in fact using the same standard as will be used in marking the diploma exam. As mentioned previously, this can be difficult as the standard does change to a degree from semester to semester and year to year. However, so long as teachers are using the same rubrics that are used on the diploma exam and have a general understanding of what the standard should be, then their in-class marks on the assignments that are similar to the diploma exam should be closely aligned with the marks their students receive on the written

section of the diploma exam. One of the potential issues with the use rubrics such as these though, is that they can lead to an over narrowing of criteria.

This brings us back to the initial question in this section: is having a close alignment between in-class marks and diploma exam marks really a good thing? If the answer is yes, which most of the participants seem to be suggesting, then it is important for teachers to at the very least work with other teachers that have experience in marking diploma exams and ideally participate in diploma exam marking themselves. This will help to ensure that students' in-class marks are more closely aligned with their diploma exam marks and, more importantly, it should help prepare students for writing the diploma exam and set them up for success. For these reasons, if the goal is to ensure closer alignment between in class marks and diploma exam marks, it is important to involve as many teachers as possible in the marking process and to have a combination of different markers each marking session to ensure that as many teachers as possible understand the general standard and expectations for the diploma exam. The trouble with this argument is twofold: first, as mentioned above, the diploma exam only measures some specific outcomes from the program of studies and not others, meaning the diploma exam and in-class marks of teachers are to a degree measuring different things; and second, this argument is also implying that the diploma exam mark is somehow superior or more legitimate than in-class marks, despite its lack of alignment with the curriculum and the construct of citizenship. Due to this lack of alignment, it could be argued that in-class marks are actually more reflective of a student's ability and knowledge than the diploma exam.

Evidence of this can be found in Jenna's discussion of potential differences between in-class marks and the diploma exam often being based to a degree on student effort. In some classes where students are allowed to re-write and re-submit written assignments, it is possible that there may actually be a larger difference between the in-class mark and the mark on the written response section of the diploma exam. Based on the time constraint on the diploma exam, when students complete their written response section of the exam, they are essentially submitting a rough draft or first draft for both their essay and their source interpretation assignment. In classes where teachers only mark the final draft of essays or allow students to re-write the essays and keep the final mark as opposed to the first mark for their essay, then the marks that students achieve on their in-class essays will likely be higher than the marks they receive on the written response section of the diploma exam. This could, contrary to Wayne's suggestion, actually cause a greater difference between the in-class mark and the diploma exam mark. It would also likely provide a more accurate picture of the totality of a student's abilities than the diploma exam would. Based on these conflicting perspectives, it seems safe to say that depending on how a teacher structures their class, there is going to be a degree of differences between in-class marks and diploma exam marks, but the extent of that difference is going to vary. The question is how much of a difference between marks is acceptable and does it even matter?

As stated previously, there was no consensus amongst those interviewed as to whether it is important for in-class marks to align with diploma exam marks, but there were some common threads amongst many of them regarding this question. The biggest similarity was the belief that any difference outside a certain limit should at least be

explainable and possibly even predicted. In situations like the one above, where a teacher allows students to re-write and re-submit their written assignments, then the teacher should have a good idea of how their students will do on their written response questions based on how well they did on their first drafts of their written assignments. This is particularly true when these teachers have experience marking diploma exams, thus providing them with an understanding of the type of standard used on the exam. As suggested by Jenna, teachers may also be able to predict or at least be able to explain differences caused by other issues, such as students that suffer from test anxiety or have lower in-class marks due to poor attendance, missed assignments, or a lack of effort, yet are intelligent and tend to perform well on tests.

One of the issues that did not come up directly in the survey or in the follow-up interviews, but rather has arisen based on some of the other issues discussed regarding the diploma exam, is the issue of teachers teaching to the test. Regarding differences between in-class marks and diploma exam marks, a lack of differences can be quite negative and indicate problematic practices in the classroom. In cases where there is no difference between in-class marks and diploma exam marks, it may be a case where the lack of difference is a result of a teacher teaching to the test and/or focusing only on the outcomes that are specifically going to be assessed on the diploma exam. It could also be a case where the only assessments that the teacher uses are the same types as used on the diploma exam: multiple choice questions, source interpretation assignments and essays. If that is the case, then the students in those classes are likely being disadvantaged by not being assessed in any other ways. In a situation like this, perhaps it would be better if

there was a difference between the in-class marks and diploma exam marks if it means that students are being assessed in multiple ways.

Another issue that may lead to differences between the two marks is if teachers are assessing citizenship in a summative manner. As discussed earlier, the diploma exam does not clearly assess the traits of citizenship. As such, if a teacher were to formally assess citizenship and include that in their in-class mark, then there may be a difference between the in-class mark and the diploma exam mark. Of course, this would only be the case if teachers are in fact formally assessing citizenship in a summative manner, which is not a guarantee. On the survey, when asked if they assess citizenship in Social Studies 30-1, 56% of participants said that they do in fact assess citizenship, while 44% said that they did not. Though this does represent a slight majority, it suggests that assessing citizenship does not seem to be a priority. This supports what Pike (2012) found in his study of citizenship education in England where the assessment of citizenship did not seem to be a priority at any level, including in the classroom. Furthermore, the survey also does not tell us whether those teachers are assessing citizenship in a formative or summative matter and whether they are attaching a grade or a mark to that assessment. In the follow-up interviews, however, I was able to garner a little more information about that.

Assessing Citizenship

Of the six interviewees, two said they do not assess citizenship at all - Wayne, who does not believe that we should assess citizenship, and Hayley, who explained that due to the module based nature of her job in the alternative programming at her school, she was unable to assess citizenship. The other four interviewees all said that to a degree

they do assess citizenship though in each case it was done in either an informal manner or, if in a more formal manner through discussion and observation, there were no marks attached to the assessment. Based on these results, it may not be as large of a contributing factor to the difference between in-class and diploma exam marks as other factors, but for those teachers that do have summative assessments on citizenship, like myself, this could account for some of the difference between the two marks..

Reasons not to Assess Citizenship

The fact that 44% of participants in the survey said they do not assess citizenship, combined with the fact that none of the six interviewees assess citizenship in a summative manner, brings up two other related and relevant questions. First, can citizenship be assessed? and second, should it be assessed? In the survey, 61% of participants said that citizenship can be assessed, while 56% said it should be assessed. Not surprisingly, every one of the participants that said they assess citizenship also said it should be assessed, while the 44% that said they do not assess citizenship also said it should not be assessed. This lack of emphasis on assessing citizenship further supports what Pike (2012) found regarding assessing citizenship education in England where it simply does not seem to be a priority. As to why citizenship should or should not be assessed, when looking at similar questions in the interview section, we can see some potential reasons for each. As for why citizenship should not be assessed, the main reason that was provided came from Wayne who explained that citizenship is too subjective to assess. Hayley also suggested that citizenship is too subjective, but rather than say that citizenship should not be assessed at all, she explained that it should only be assessed informally without having a grade attached to it. As Jenna pointed out though, the issue

with this argument is that much of what teachers are asked to assess on a daily basis is quite subjective, yet teachers still assess them. Things like art, music, poetry and even short stories are fairly subjective and so what is considered good by one person, may not be considered good by someone else. That does not mean that these things are not assessed, it just requires more work and generally some expertise in that specific subject area in order to ensure quality assessment. The same can be true for assessing citizenship, though to ensure that the assessment of citizenship is of a high quality or standard, the teachers assessing should be using similar understandings of what citizenship is and what traits it consists of. To do this, what citizenship is or should be needs to be more clearly defined in the program of studies and all teachers that are teaching social studies need to be trained in social studies and have a sufficient level of expertise in citizenship education. The fact that this is not currently the case clearly reflects what Hughes and Sears (2006) found regarding Canada's lack of capacity building around citizenship education specifically in the following areas:

> The development of clear, consistent and widely accepted goals or outcomes for establishing directions and formulating standards; the provision and/or the development of curriculum materials to support both teaching and learning in citizenship education; the provision of substantive programs for teacher development at both pre-service and in-service levels; and the funding of research and development to support policy and program development as well as teaching learning in citizenship education (p. 7).

Of course, the nature of the Canadian educational system, where, for the most part, each province establishes their own curriculum, does make it more difficult to build capacity at

a national level. Despite this, individual provinces can and should still work to build capacity within their citizenship education programs and subjects.

Though she did not elaborate on her argument that grades should not be attached to citizenship and that teachers should not be determining who is a good citizen and is not a good citizen, Hayley did hit on some potential issues of assessing citizenship in a formal manner with a grade attached to it. First, if students are being graded on their citizenship and they receive a low grade, they may take this to mean that they are not a good citizen, which could make them feel that they are a not a good person and could be quite detrimental to their self-esteem, self-image and overall mental health. The other issue, which Pike (2012) brings up, is the idea that if students are being graded on their citizenship and some students have lower grades than others, it could be going against the basic understanding that all citizens are equal. One way to potentially avoid the first issue would be to assess the specific traits of citizenship, rather than citizenship as a whole, and then, using specific and timely feedback, help the students to work on those traits that they may not be as strong at. The key to this is to create an environment where students understand that learning is a process and that the development of these traits takes time to master, while also understanding that everyone has different strengths and weaknesses and that does not make them better or worse citizens. To do this requires the development of positive relationships between the teacher and their students, which was explained by Connor in his interview when he discussed the need for relationship building in order to facilitate the assessment of citizenship.

When it comes to addressing the concern that Pike (2012) discussed regarding assessing citizenship potentially going against the idea that all citizens are equal, it is

important to note that assessments in education, regardless of what they are assessing, do not suggest that one student is better or worse than another students that scores a different grade on the same assessment. Assessments simply measure the degree to which students meet specific knowledge, skill and value outcomes. Of course, due to the current educational system in Alberta, across Canada and in fact in many places around the world, teachers often need to attach a specific number or letter grade to those assessments and to the cumulative amount of evidence they have regarding the degree to which students meet curricular outcomes. Those grades also do not imply one student is better than another student with different grades. The problem comes from how people decide to interpret those results and how they decide to use them. Oftentimes, people use results of assessments and overall student grades in an attempt to rank and sort students. If this were to happen in an assessment of citizenship, then, yes, it could suggest that not all citizens are equal. But again, it is not the actual assessment suggesting that not all citizens are equal, but rather it would be an individual or institution interpreting the assessment as such, and so rather than not assess citizenship, the focus should be on assessing citizenship using well thought out and meaningful assessments, and ensuring that outside forces are not able to use citizenship assessments to do things they are not meant to do.

Reasons to Assess Citizenship

As far as why we should assess citizenship, two reasons arose from the interviews: 1) to help further teaching and instruction, and 2) because citizenship is such an important part of the overall program of studies and the goal of public education. The first reason, to help further teaching and instruction, is a fundamental part of what assessment is and is one the four specific reasons for assessment as explained in a general

context by the American Psychological Association (1997) and specifically as it pertains to citizenship by Jerome (2008). As using assessment as a guiding tool is such an important component of assessment, it should not be a surprise that five of the six interviewees discussed either using the formative assessment of citizenship or described ways in which they would use formative assessment of citizenship. In three of the interviews, a more informal assessment through discussion was described. Both Wayne and Paul explained that the main informal method they used for assessing citizenship was through discussions. In each case, the respondents described using discussion as a way to assess their students' attitudes about citizenship and other issues or topics related to citizenship. The use of discussion allows teachers to lead students through the study of controversial topics in a way that can help teachers to assess many of the values and dispositions of citizenship, like open-mindedness, compassion, tolerance and respect. It also allows teachers to assess students' abilities to participate in a discussion and defend a position, which are both important skills of citizenship. Teachers can then follow-up with individual students or structure future lessons to address specific values or skills that they feel their students need more focus on. Discussions like these also allow, as Wayne pointed out, the opportunity for teachers to track growth in students regarding citizenship. Unfortunately, as Llewellyn et al. (2007) found, there appears to be a level of fear amongst some teachers tasked with teaching citizenship to have class discussions about controversial subjects or personal political views. To address this fear, there needs to be, as Hughes and Sears (2006) explained, capacity built for these teachers, so they feel comfortable with having these discussions, thus allowing them to assess their students' growth in citizenship.

Jenna and Hayley both described a more formal version of formative assessment based on observation and providing feedback on those observations. Jenna was even more specific in describing a method of formative assessment where teachers and students co-construct criteria on what good citizenship looks like and then formally observe students based on that criteria. These observations can serve to shape future instruction as well as providing the foundation for discussions with students regarding the level to which they are meeting the criteria that they helped to construct. The use of criteria and observation in this manner, which reflects strategies outlined by Davies, Herbst, and Reynolds (2012), would also allow students to evaluate their own performance in class and assess the level at which they are meeting the citizenship criteria. This would help to make students more conscious about citizenship and more aware of the specific skills and values of citizenship, empowering them and helping to encourage them to take ownership of their learning and their own citizenship, while modeling "democratic" education. It also supports the fourth reason for assessment as outlined by Jerome (2008), "learners who are encouraged to become actively involved in their own assessment are more likely to gain a deeper insight into their own learning and the area in which they are learning" (p. 547). Though not explicitly mentioned by either of the two respondents, this type of assessment could also be used as a summative assessment particularly after the students have worked on the specific skills and values that were included in their co-constructed criteria over the course of a term or semester.

The second reason to assess citizenship, the fact that citizenship is such a major component of the program of studies, is probably the most important reason to assess citizenship. Of the six interviewees, four directly mentioned that since citizenship is such

an important part of social studies, that it needs to be assessed. As it has been pointedout on several occasions previously, the purpose of the Alberta K-12 Social Studies curriculum is to help students become "engaged, active, informed and responsible citizens" (Alberta Education, 2007, p.1). As the entire purpose of social studies is citizenship, it does not make sense that teachers would not assess it. Choosing not to assess citizenship in a course designed to teach students to be good citizens would be the same as choosing not to assess students' writing abilities in a writing course. So, rather than ask whether teachers should be assessing citizenship, a better question would be, what are the best methods to assess citizenship?

How to Assess Citizenship

Regarding formative assessment, several methods were discussed including the use of question and answers, class discussions, individual teacher student conferences or discussions, and observations. Regarding summative assessments, however, there were far fewer suggestions. One type of assessment that can potentially assess some traits of citizenship, as pointed out by Paul, is an essay. If the essay is on a topic that is specific to citizenship or students are required to use specific citizenship skills, like critical thinking, then it is possible that at least some traits of citizenship can be assessed using an essay. Of course, as Jenna pointed out, if teachers are hoping to assess specific values or dispositions of citizenship, like open-mindedness or compassion, students may be able to demonstrate those traits in a disingenuous manner, thus making it difficult to truly assess those traits. Another potential method of summative assessment would be to observe students in class and assess them based on specific criteria based on the traits of citizenship. To make this work and to be fair to the students, the students need to be

aware that they are being assessed and to make the assessment more meaningful, students and teachers could co-construct the criteria before being assessed on it. This method, discussed by Jenna, is similar to strategies described by Davies, Herbst, and Reynolds (2012) in their work on assessment. Another suggestion from the interviews, made by Connor, was to adopt a provincial wide citizenship assessment similar to what is used in Finland, "*which has a project that includes students giving back to the community and then they are assessed on it*." This would address the potential issue of subjectivity regarding what citizenship is or should be and would also likely address the issue of teachers prioritizing the specific outcomes that are likely to be on the diploma exam over citizenship and the specific outcomes that address it.

Another option, as promoted by Pike (2012, p. 202), is the use of portfolios as a method of assessing citizenship. The portfolio method could include numerous types of assessments, including observations, essays, research projects, discussion notes, etc., that when put together may be better able to show the entirety of a student's development of citizenship and provide a more complete picture of the student as a citizen. A final option would be the use of what Sears (2014) calls civic profiles, where responsible citizenship or as he describes, civic engagement, is measured using two different civic engagement profiles, one based on civic engagement and one based on the knowledge of civic engagement. Each profile consists of four domains: formal politics, political advocacy, civil society, and grassroots/community action. Students would then be measured in their progress in each profile. Accepting that there are different ways to be engaged civically, or to be a good citizen, students could demonstrate their engagement in any or all of the domains. Though Sears (2014) does not explicitly state how these two profiles will be

measured, admitting that establishing specific standards for them will take considerable work, he does offer up some possibilities. He suggests that a combination of written exams, surveys and other assessments could be used to help provide a basis for measuring these profiles. Direct observation of students based on the traits of citizenship, student experiences outside of school, debates, discussions, and performance-based citizenship projects could all be used to help further measure these civic engagement profiles.

Whether it is civic profiles, portfolios, observations or community service type projects, having some form of formal assessment of citizenship is an important component of any citizenship education program. It is important as it helps students to understand where they are in the development of their own citizenship, makes them more involved in and engaged in their learning, and helps to show the value of citizenship as a whole. Unfortunately, as discussed in this section, many teachers do not assess citizenship or even believe that citizenship can or should be assessed. This lack of understanding regarding the assessment of citizenship and the limited amount of assessment being done on citizenship is concerning and requires further analysis to fully understand the potential implications from this lack of attention and understanding.

CONCLUSION

Implications

When I first began my research, I wanted to know in what ways Social Studies 30-1 teachers focused on the instruction and assessment of citizenship education in their classes. This inquiry was based on my own personal struggles with the seeming disconnect between the overall goal of social studies, responsible citizenship, and the Social Studies 30-1 Diploma Exam. What I found is that there seems to be two dominant and often conflicting forces that drive instruction and assessment in Social Studies 30-1 classrooms: the diploma exam and the program's goal to develop good citizenship. This is evident in the responses on the survey and in the follow up interviews, as well as in my own personal experience. In looking back at the experience of my former student who inspired my research, it is clear to me that the diploma exam did not assess his skills or dispositions. I have often felt I failed this student, as he was not able to pass the diploma exam. Yet, as I reflect on my research and the experiences of this student I wonder instead, if the diploma exam and Alberta Education failed him, and that he in fact failed the exam because he is a good citizen.

Whether this is the case or not, in the conflict between the diploma exam and citizenship it appears that the diploma exam is often the winner. It is clear from both the survey and the interviews that a strong majority of the Social Studies 30-1 teachers that participated in my research feel that citizenship is the most important component of the class. Despite this, the single component that has the most influence on the participants' instruction appears to be the diploma exam. This disconnect, though reflecting my own experience, is concerning as the ultimate goal of Social Studies 30-1 and in fact the entire

K-12 Social Studies Curriculum, is being relegated to the background of the course in favour of a standardized test. By far the biggest concern with these findings is that in order to help their students get the best results they can, many teachers are prioritizing the specific skills and outcomes that are most likely to help on the diploma exam at the expense of the other outcomes in the program of studies and the overall goal of citizenship.

This has numerous potential implications, however one of the most important implications is the impact it can have on students. Prioritizing specific skills and outcomes over others serves to privilege those students whose strengths are based on those skills and outcomes. This means that some students will face an increased challenge in Social Studies 30-1, while others will have an easier time, not because they are smarter, more skilled or better students, but rather because their skill set matches with the diploma exam. This can lead to some students receiving lower grades in the class because the skills they are stronger at, are not being emphasized or potentially even taught or assessed. This discrepancy in grades can have long-term implications for those students, as it may prevent them from winning scholarships, getting into their preferred post-secondary institution or even graduating. This approach of teaching to the test may also cause students to disengage with the class and the subject matter, which, may harm their grades but also prevent them from learning the subject content and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to be a good citizen.

Another major implication is that certain parts of the curriculum, including citizenship, are not being emphasized in some grade 12 social studies classrooms. Even if students are engaged in social studies, if they are not explicitly being taught the specific

knowledge, skills, and dispositions of citizenship, then they may not develop into the type of active, engaged and responsible citizens that we are trying to develop through social studies and that are needed for a liberal democracy to function. Furthermore, as often is the case when "teaching to the test," doing well on that test is deemed more important than actively learning about and participating in citizenship education. As a result, citizenship education, in the face of the diploma exam, can often devolve into a simple transmission of content and test prep rather than deep engagement in citizenship and the use of constructivist pedagogy that is best suited for citizenship education (Hughes & Sears, 2008, p. 124). In this regard schools could be said to be failing not only the students they are supposed to be teaching, but also the country as a whole.

Regarding the lack of assessment of citizenship, the major implication is that social studies teachers that do not assess citizenship have no way of knowing whether or not their students are actually good citizens, developing into good citizens, or developing many of the skills and dispositions of good citizenship. This then presents several other issues. First, without knowing how students are doing and what they know, teachers do not know what areas of citizenship need more attention and, therefore, cannot properly plan for citizenship education. Second, students will not necessarily know how they are progressing, or if they are progressing at all, nor will they know how to improve or further develop the specific traits of citizenship, as they are not receiving any feedback from their teachers regarding citizenship. Finally, there is no way as a school, educational district or the province as a whole to know if the Social Studies Program of Studies is actually being successful in teaching citizenship to their students.

Recommendations

Due to the limited sample size of my research, I am unable to make any generalized statements regarding my findings. However, based on my findings I would make the following recommendations.

As problematic as teaching to the test can be, particularly when ignoring or discounting outcomes that are not as likely to be on the exam, the solution is not as simple as to say teachers should not teach to the test. Teachers have a responsibility to prepare their students to do their best on the diploma exam and so they cannot just ignore that responsibility. However, they also have a responsibility to teach the curriculum in its entirety and not just the outcomes that are likely to be on the diploma exam. As the goal of social studies is citizenship, social studies teachers also have a responsibility to ensure that students are being taught the specific skills, knowledge and dispositions needed to be a good citizen. As long as the diploma exam continues to be used, the key for teachers will be to find a balance between the diploma exam, citizenship and the specific outcomes of the program of studies, which as seen through the survey and the follow-up interviews, is not always that easy.

Recommendations for Alberta Education

Recommendation 1. Fix the diploma exam. The simplest solution for helping teachers to balance the competing goals of the diploma exam, the program of studies and the construct of citizenship is creating an exam that actually reflects the specific traits of citizenship (at least those that are accessible through an exam) and that addresses the program of studies more comprehensively. Furthermore, more work needs to be done to

ensure that extraneous and irrelevant factors (like a student's reading level) are not influencing individual or group results on the diploma exam.

Recommendation 2. Change the ways in which the results of the diploma exam are used. As it stands currently, the results of the diploma exam are often used to rank and sort students, teachers, schools and even entire jurisdictions. As students are often ranked based on their grades in high school, students often place a great deal of pressure on themselves and on their teachers to get high marks on their diploma exam. This can also be seen in the ways in which some parents will put pressure on teachers to make sure their children get as high of a mark on the diploma exam as possible. This combined with the pressure that some school administrators and/or superintendents place on their teachers, can lead teachers to focus solely on the outcomes that are most likely to be on the diploma exam in order to best prepare their students for the diploma exam. If all stakeholders considered class awarded marks to be as valuable and accurate as diploma exam marks, there would be less pressure put on teachers to have their students attain certain grades on the diploma exam, thus allowing them more freedom to teach the course in its entirety, including focusing on citizenship.

Recommendation 3. Change the way results of the diploma exam are reported. In many cases, as the diploma exam results for individual schools are published along with jurisdictional results, people often use these results to rank and sort schools and jurisdictions. This can lead to students and their parents shopping around for the "best" school or school district in the hope that they too can achieve high grades on the diploma exam. The potential loss of students to other schools and school districts can potentially lead to a loss of funding for schools, which will then increase pressure on the teachers to

focus solely on the diploma exam. As a result of this, it is important to question whether the public's need for access to these marks is worth the negative impact that publishing them can have on teachers and the education system as a whole.

Recommendation 4. Include a mandatory citizenship assessment in Social Studies 30-1 in addition to the diploma exam. As has been pointed out in the literature on citizenship and through some of the responses to my research, it can be difficult to assess citizenship in any sort of meaningful way using a pen and paper test. This means that adding a mandatory citizenship assessment would likely require the creation of a more authentic or performance-based assessment where students were able to demonstrate the specific knowledge, skills and dispositions of citizenship. This could be similar to the assessment used in Finland or the one used in the Connect Course in Edmonton where students create an awareness campaign based on a specific issue they are concerned about. Regardless of what specific type of assessment would be developed, if students were required to complete a specific, provincial citizenship assessment as part of Social Studies 30-1, more emphasis would be placed on citizenship and the development of the specific traits of citizenship, thus leading to more actively engaged and aware citizens.

Recommendation 5. Have a more complete and specific definition of what citizenship is, and clearer articulations of its key attributes included in the program of studies. When examining the program of studies, it is easy find adjectives like 'responsible', 'active', 'engaged' and 'informed' to describe the kind of citizen that is meant to be developed (Alberta Education, 2007), but there is no clear definition of what citizenship is, nor is there any explanation of what specific knowledge, skills and dispositions are needed to be a good citizen. This lack of a clear definition can lead

teachers to arrive at potentially vastly different understandings of what it means to be a good citizen and also to not focus as much on the goal of citizenship as they should, given its overall importance to the entire social studies program. It may also prevent teachers from assessing citizenship as they feel it is too subjective, as was the case with two of the interviewees who each stated that citizenship is just too subjective and so should only be assessed informally (Hayley) or should not be assessed at all (Wayne). Having the definition of citizenship more explicitly stated, or having a more complete construct included in the program of studies would help to emphasize what citizenship is and make it easier for teachers to assess students based on the specific traits of citizenship and help teachers to balance the competing interests of citizenship and the diploma exam.

Recommendations for Teacher Education Programs

Recommendation 6. Ensure that teachers who are teaching Social Studies 30-1 have the specific knowledge, skills and understanding of social studies, and all the disciplines it consists of, including citizenship, that is necessary to effectively teach social studies at a high level. Regarding citizenship specifically, teachers should be educated in what good citizenship is and which pedagogical approaches are best suited for citizenship. Though there is often disagreement over what entails best practices when it comes to pedagogy, when it comes to citizenship there is little debate as to the best approach. According to Hughes and Sears (2008),

> There is a consensus across Canada and around the world that best practice in citizenship education is broadly constructivist in character and must engage students in meaningful activities designed to help make sense of and develop competence with civic ideas and practices (p. 128).

As such, it is imperative going forward to ensure that all pre-service teachers are taught what citizenship is, but also the constructivist approaches that are best suited for teaching citizenship.

Recommendation 7. Create a more consistent and more thorough program for the instruction of assessment for pre-service teachers. All pre-service teachers should be taught the purposes of assessment as explained by the American Psychological Association (1997) and Jerome (2008): 1) to help students to better understand their own level of achievement; 2) teachers can provide feedback to their students and/or adjust their teaching based on results from the assessment; 3) groups or teams of teachers can analyze results together to collaborate on lessons, pedagogy, etc., and 4) to encourage students to use self-assessment to deepen their own understanding of the subject area.

They then need to be taught the three basic types of assessment: diagnostic, formative and summative. Finally, they need to be taught about fairness, reliability, and validity, including consequential validity, as they pertain to assessment. This would help to ensure that teachers have a better understanding of assessment and more importantly, what makes a quality assessment. This should help to ensure that teachers have a better understanding of the clear validity and fairness issues surrounding the diploma exam while also giving teachers the knowledge and capability to effectively assess citizenship.

Recommendations for Schools

Recommendation 8. Schools should ensure that only teachers that are actually educated in and have a deep understanding of citizenship teach social studies.

In one of the follow-up interviews, Connor described one of the difficulties he has experienced as a social studies teacher: "*Part of the problem is in many schools they will*

put anybody into social studies classes and in many cases, they don't have the passion for the class. This would never happen in math where a non-math major was put in a math 30 class." He went on to explain how this often leads to teachers that simply do not have the knowledge to help all students learn all they need to learn or teachers that just are not passionate about the subject matter and/or the goal of citizenship, which often leads to students not being engaged in the social studies classroom. In my own school, where I have spent 12 years teaching Social Studies 30-1 and its precursor Social Studies 30, I have also observed similar occurrences where, when it comes to science and math courses, only trained science and math teachers teach those courses, especially at the grade 12 level, whereas in other subjects, particularly social studies, any teacher that has a hole in their schedule is deemed qualified to teach. It would be useful to see what percentage of teachers of diploma exam courses have backgrounds in the courses they are teaching. Of the 21 participants in my research, seven of them did not study social studies or social studies disciplines, like history or economics, while in university. Obviously, not all schools have the luxury of hiring specialists for every subject area but making a more concerted effort to have social studies experts teach social studies, particularly at the grade 12 level, would be beneficial. For those schools that are unable to hire social studies experts to teach social studies, they need to ensure that teachers that are required to teach social studies are provided with professional learning opportunities focused specifically on social studies to help them develop a better understanding of the discipline.

Recommendations for Teachers

Recommendation 9. Teachers need to make sure they are intentionally teaching and assessing citizenship. As far as teaching citizenship goes, teachers should be focusing on a more active, authentic and constructivist approach, including getting students to actively participate in activities outside the classroom. In order to help students to develop good or responsible citizenship, teachers need to intentionally assess the traits that make up citizenship so they can provide feedback to their students and help them grow as learners and citizens. There are two specific ways in which I would suggest teachers do this. The first would be for teachers to directly teach their students about citizenship and the traits that make up citizenship. Based on those specific traits, teachers should collaborate with their students to co-construct criteria for what a good citizen in the classroom looks like. Throughout the school year or semester, using that criteria the teacher would observe and provide informal, formative feedback to the students based on those observations. Once the class was comfortable with this process the teacher should then have the students periodically self-assess in some form and discuss with the teacher how they felt they were meeting the criteria. At the end of the year or semester, the teacher could then confer with each student and discuss their learning and progress throughout the class.

The second way in which teachers should explicitly assess citizenship is through a more formal, summative approach. An example of how this can be done is through the use of a citizenship project such as the one I used when I taught high school social studies (see Appendix D). In this version of a citizenship project students are asked to choose a current issue that interests them, research the issues in question, including different ways

in which the issues could be addressed, and then develop and carry out a plan in which they help to address the issue in a manner of their choosing. Through this project, students are assessed on various traits of citizenship, including critical thinking, open-mindedness, civic-mindedness, and generosity of spirit. Students keep a log or journal of their steps and thought-making processes throughout their project and provide updates to the teacher at various, predetermined points so the teacher can provide ongoing feedback and to offer any support that may be needed. At the end of the project, students present their work to the class and hand in a report that demonstrates how their project demonstrates the specific skills and dispositions of citizenship that the project is designed to assess.

The second recommendation for teachers is to ensure they are acting as positive role models, particularly in relation to citizenship. This means that not only are they teaching the specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions of citizenship, they are also embodying what it means to be a good citizen by practicing those same skills and dispositions. An example of this would be in how they respond to what has been shown to be a flawed assessment, the diploma exam. Teachers that stand up for their students and critique or argue against the use of the diploma exam are demonstrating critical thinking, a willingness to stand up for others, courage to defend a position and other traits of citizenship. The more teachers stand against the diploma exam, the more likely it is there will be meaningful change to the exam to ensure it more accurately reflects citizenship and the program of studies in its entirety, or for it to be replaced altogether.

Recommendations for Further Study

Though this study was successful in highlighting some of the attitudes towards citizenship education amongst some Social Studies 30-1 teachers and providing more evidence of the impact that the diploma exam has on teachers and their ability to address citizenship education, there are a few specific areas in which more study is required. First, has the reduction in value of the diploma exam had a significant impact on teachers and students and if so, what has this impact been? Has it reduced the stress of students and/or teachers on a large scale? Has it reduced the pressure being placed on teachers to make sure their students are reaching a certain level of achievement on the diploma exam? Has it had an impact on the level of student achievement and/or alignment with class marks?

Another area that requires more study is the topic of assessing citizenship. It is clear from the differing views on the assessment of citizenship from the survey and follow-up interviews that there is a good deal of disagreement over whether citizenship should be assessed and whether it can be assessed. There has also been little research done on how to best assess citizenship, meaning that for those teachers that do feel they can and should assess citizenship, there may not be enough information for them to access the best method for assessing citizenship. These topics need to be explored more fully and over a wider cross section of teachers and academics in order to provide a more complete picture of the issues surrounding the assessment of citizenship and the implications of choosing to assess it or not. Finally, more research needs to be done in regard to how students feel about what makes a good citizen, the assessment of citizenship and the diploma exam. As students are the group that are impacted by

education to the highest degree, it is important to provide them a voice, both to better understand the issues surrounding their education and citizenship, and also to actually allow them be active and engaged citizens, as the social studies program of studies is designed to do.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

Demographic Questions

Age, gender, years teaching, years of university, major at university, number of years teaching SS 30-1, size of school, participation in diploma exam program (frequency and type), admin/parent/student expectations for exam results, alignment between exam and school marks

Likert Scale Questions:
(after each question space will be provided for participants to explain their reasoning)

I feel_____should be a knowledge trait in citizenship education (one question for each of the following traits: democratic processes, the media, human rights, diversity, money and the economy, sustainable development/global community, Canadian history, democracy, justice, equality, freedom, authority, and rule of law).

I feel_____should be a skill trait in citizenship education (one question for each of the following traits: critical thinking, analyzing information, expressing opinions, taking part in discussions/debates, negotiating, conflict resolution, and participation in community action).

I feel_____should be a value/disposition trait in citizenship education (one question for each of the following traits: open-mindedness, civic-mindedness, respect, willingness to compromise, tolerance, compassion, generosity of spirit, loyalty, respect for justice, respect of democracy, respect for the rule of law, courage to defend a position, willingness to listen, willingness to work with others, willingness to stand up for others).

I feel the diploma exam clearly reflects the specific outcomes of the Program of Studies. I feel the diploma exam clearly assesses the specific traits of good citizenship.
I feel the diploma exam clearly assesses the specific knowledge and content needed for students to become good citizens.

I feel the diploma exam clearly assesses the specific skills needed to become good citizens.

I feel the diploma exam clearly assesses the specific values and dispositions needed to become good citizens.

I have a clear understanding of what citizenship is.

I purposefully assess citizenship in my social studies 30-1 classes. I purposefully assess citizenship in my other social studies classes.

I believe that citizenship can be assessed by classroom teachers.

I believe that citizenship should be assessed by classroom teachers.

The reduction in value of the diploma exam from 50% to 30% has had a positive impact on my students.

The reduction in value of the diploma exam from 50% to 30% has had a positive impact my teaching.

The reduction in value of the diploma exam from 50% to 30% has allowed me to focus more on citizenship education.

The results that my students achieve are an accurate reflection of my abilities as a teacher.

Ranking Questions:
(after each question space will be provided for participants to explain their reasoning)

Please rank the following statements in the order in which you agree with the statements with the most (1) to the least (3)

a) The most important thing in social studies 30-1 is doing well on the diploma exam.
b) The most important thing in social studies 30-1 is citizenship.
c) The most important thing in social studies 30-1 is ensuring my class awarded marks match my diploma exam marks.

Regarding what drives your teaching, rank the following areas of focus in order from most important (1) to least important (4)

a) Focusing on the specific skills and content that is most relevant for the diploma exam.
b) Focusing on all curricular outcomes equally.
c) Focusing on the development of responsible citizens.
d) Focusing on covering the content from the textbook.

Open Ended Questions:

In your own words, what does citizenship mean to you?

To what extent does the goal of citizenship shape your instruction and assessment practice?

To what extent does the diploma exam shape your instruction and assessment practice?

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. What does responsible citizenship mean to you?

The Diploma Exam

1. In general, how do you feel about the Social Studies 30-1 Diploma Exam?

2. Do you feel it is important for your class awarded marks to closely align with your diploma exam marks? Explain

3. In one of the responses in my survey, a teacher said that their school administration expects their students to exceed the provincial average on diploma exams. Have you experienced the same pressure/expectations? Is this fair? What impact do you think this would have on teachers and students?

4. Several responses in the survey said that the diploma exam does not clearly reflect the program of studies. Do you agree with this? If so, what specific outcomes or types of outcomes are not reflected? Does this matter? Why or why not?

5. Approximately ¾ respondents said that the diploma exam does not assess the specific traits of good citizenship. Do you agree? If so, what does the diploma exam assess? Does this matter?

6. What are your feelings regarding the reduction in weighting of the diploma exam from 50% to 30%? What are potential benefits and/or drawbacks? Consider the following:

Assessing Citizenship

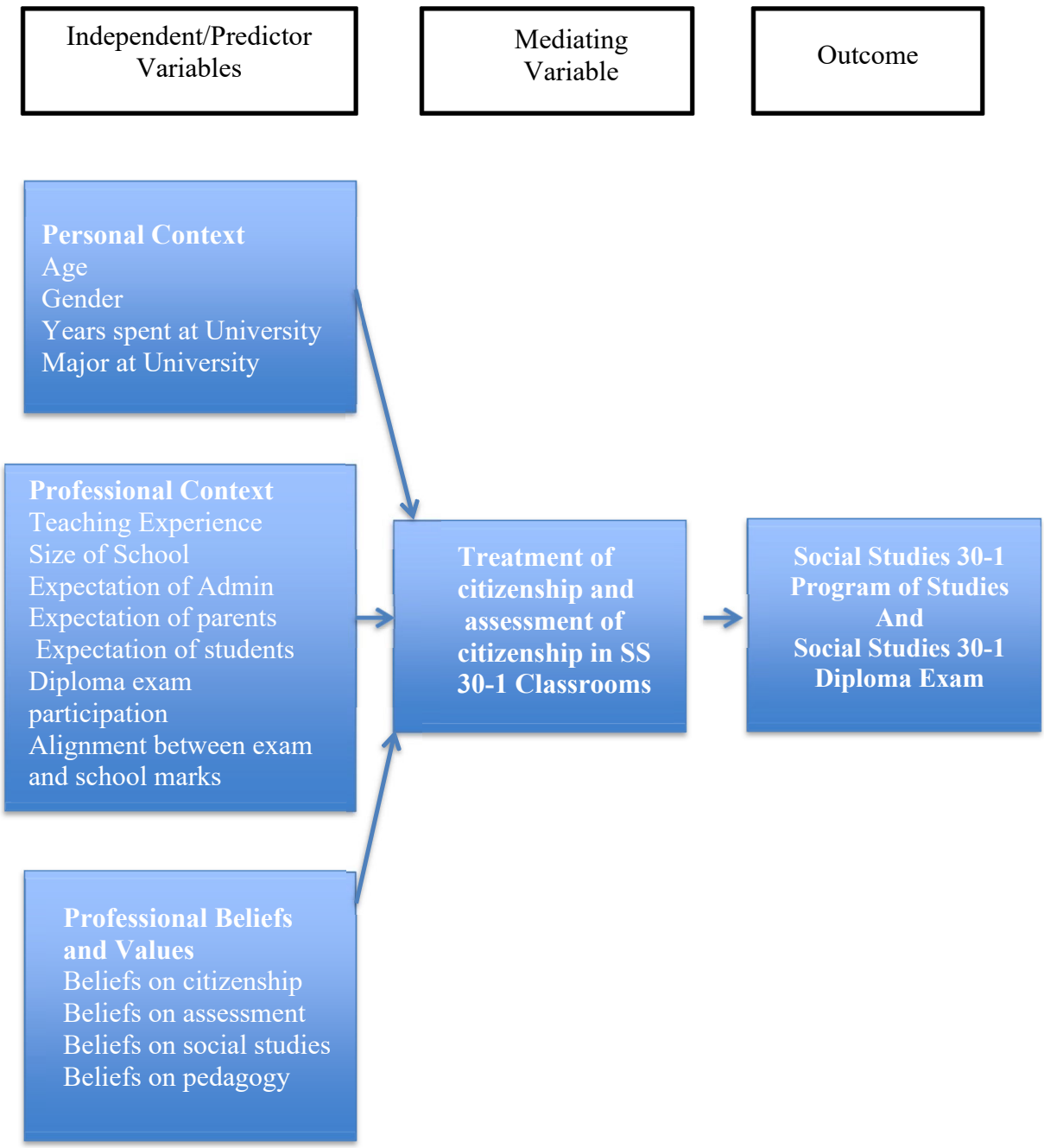
1. To what extent do you assess citizenship in your Social Studies 30-1 class? Is this the same as in your other classes?

2. Half of the respondents so far stated that they did not believe that citizenship can be assessed by classroom teachers. Why do you think that is? Do you agree?

3. Half of the respondents also felt that citizenship should not be assessed. What are some reasons why citizenship should be assessed? Shouldn't?

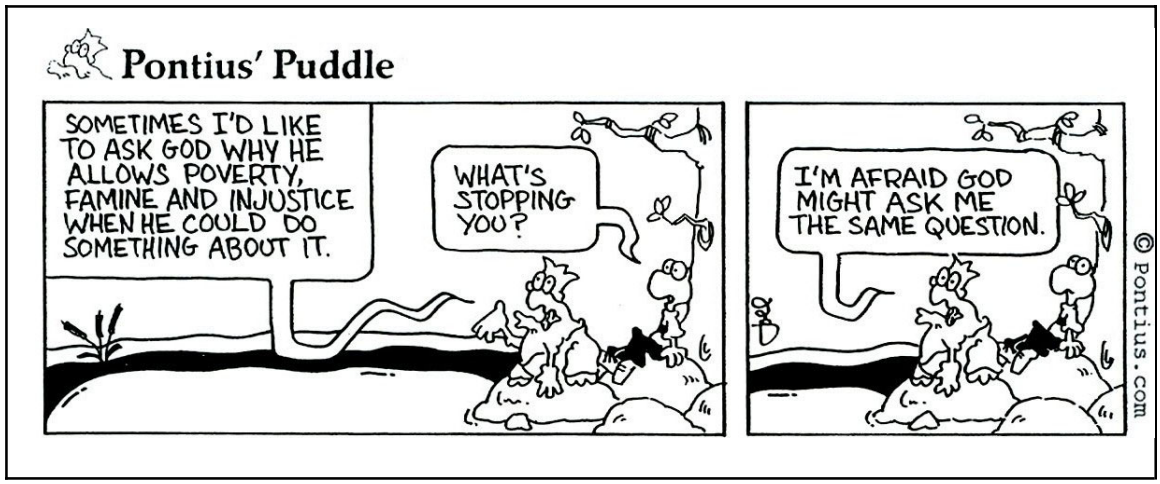
Appendix C

Data Matrix



Appendix D

Citizenship Project



Responsible citizenship, like democracy, is not just voting in elections or obeying the law. Those are both important roles of a citizen, but they in themselves do not make you a responsible citizen. Citizenship is a way of life that involves the key values of generosity, open-mindedness, civic-mindedness, and a willingness to stand up for others, specific skills like critical and creative thinking and a lifelong commitment to the active pursuit of improving the human condition. This assignment is designed to assess those specific skills and values that help to make up a responsible citizen.

Assignment:

Your assignment is to create, develop, and put into action a plan in which you can help make the community, the country, or the world a better place.

Throughout your project you will keep a journal in which you explain the process, what you were thinking during the project, why you made the choices you made, and what changes you noticed due to your project.

At the end of the semester you will present your project to the class. Again, the presentation can take many forms, but you must be prepared to speak to the class about your work.

Some Advice:

- Choose your project thoughtfully but quickly - there is less time and it will go faster than you think.
- Narrow your scope - be realistic in what you can accomplish given the time frame and your other commitments.
- Ask for help - you can draw on many resources to help guide you in this endeavor: your teacher, your parents, your friends, etc.
- Use the deadlines as "anti-procrastination" tools.

When a forest fire began, a tiny hummingbird flew to a lake, picked up a drop of water in its beak, flew back and dropped it on the fire.

It went back and forth, again and again.

All the other animals just laughed at the hummingbird and said, "What are you doing? It's not going to make a difference!"

His answer was, "I'm doing the best I can."

Quechua tale

Evaluation

You will be evaluated using a 4-point scale:

Nobel Peace Prize	Order of Canada	I did it for the tax receipt	I did it because I had to
4 = excellent	3 = proficient	2 = satisfactory	1 = limited

*N*ote*: if for any specific category there is not enough evidence that you have met the criteria you will be given a zero for that specific category

Criteria:

1. **The student demonstrated skills of the Research Process (2X weight = 8 marks)**
   - develop, refine and apply questions to address an issue
   - select and analyze relevant information when conducting research
   - reflect on changes on point of view or opinion based on research
   - draw conclusions based on research

2. **The student demonstrated Social Participation (4 marks)**
   - leadership
   - cooperation

3. **The student demonstrated skills of Communication (4 marks)**
   - communicate effectively
   - apply appropriate technologies to extend and communicate

4. **The student showed the values of (2 marks each)**
   - Open-Mindedness
   - Civic-Mindedness
   - Generosity of Spirit
   - Willingness to stand up for others

**Notice that there are not certain marks devoted to individual components of this assignment, for example 10 marks per journal entry. You must show that you meet the criteria of the assignment - how you do this is entirely up to you.*

"Courage my friends, 'tis never too late to make the world a better place."

~Tommy Douglas