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Tambyah, Mallihai M. (2009) *I am a geography and SOSE teacher : developing a subject identity in pre-service secondary social science teachers*. In: AARE 2008 International Education Research Conference : Changing Climates : Education for Sustainable Futures, 30 November - 4 December 2008, Brisbane, Qld.

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**TAM081139**

**I am a geography and SOSE teacher: Developing a subject identity in pre-service secondary social science teachers**

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***Abstract***

Social science teachers in Australia face uncertain times ahead as they look forward to changing curricula and a new emphasis on the disciplines, particularly history. In Queensland social science curriculum is in transition until the new SOSE syllabus is published in 2010. While pre-service programmes must teach knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy, it is also important to develop notions of professional identity as part of the process of teacher education. Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark & Warne (2002:117) point to teachers as professionals “mobilizing a complex of occasional identities in response to shifting contexts”. Pre-service teachers are yet to establish their sense of self as teachers and their subject identity but as Chris Day (2004: 153) asserts, teacher educators must prepare novice teachers to manage change, teach in different school contexts and focus on “clarity of identity and educational purposes”. Identification within a teaching area is arguably the first step in developing a teacher identity. Yet, although subject matter is acknowledged as an important context for teachers’ practice (Stodolsky and Grossman, 1995), there is little research on how teachers construct different identities in the context of the subject-matter they teach (Drake, Spillane & Huffered-Ackles, 2001). In student feedback on a compulsory final year social science curriculum studies unit, the majority of pre-service teachers nominated at least one social science discipline as their subject identity. However, only a small number listed the SOSE curriculum area, even though SOSE is part of their brief. Further ambivalence in subject identity was noted around generalist teaching roles which did not incorporate a subject identity. Follow up interviews after field studies will seek to identify and clarify pre-service social science teachers’ complex identities, including subject identity, in the context of recent teaching experience. Attention to social science teachers’ subject identity aims to enhance beginning teachers’ sense of educational purpose, professionalism and self-efficacy in uncertain times.

***Introduction***

Social science teachers in Australia face uncertain times as they wait to see what the new national curriculum in history holds for them. Pre-service teacher education courses currently prepare beginning secondary social science teachers to teach senior discipline-based subjects such as history or geography and the core integrated subject of Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) in years 8 and 9. However, SOSE in its current integrated form is under threat from recent Federal

policy (Council for the Australian Federation, 2007) which calls for the abandonment of SOSE in favour of the disciplines under the new umbrella of Humanities and social sciences (including history, geography and economics) and there is confusion as to the future of social science education in the junior secondary school. One of the goals of teacher-education is to prepare teachers who are knowledgeable and flexible enough to manage the changing curriculum agenda while addressing the broader issues of developing teachers' sense of educational purpose, pedagogical practices, teacher identity and agency (Day, 2004). Significantly, secondary teachers' identity is intrinsically bound to their subject area (Beijaard, 1995). This paper investigates subject identity in a small cohort of pre-service secondary social science teachers in 2008. Investigating pre-service secondary teachers' identification with SOSE, as a key aspect of their teacher identity, illustrates some of the contradictions and uncertainties that currently beset social science education. Such difficulties impact on the future of effective teaching of social science education in Australia.

### ***Leanne's case***

The issues that confront secondary pre-service social science teachers emerge largely after they have completed curriculum studies in SOSE and in their chosen discipline area such as geography, legal studies, or history followed by teaching practice. Leanne, a former student, wrote, "I'm afraid my subject knowledge will be limited for teaching SOSE" (personal email communication, February 21, 2008). Time spent in the classroom had not resolved Leanne's concerns about the scope of SOSE. Despite a challenging curriculum design task the previous semester that required her to engage in detail with the Queensland SOSE curriculum, Leanne had received little clarification from her teaching practice as to what she was expected to "know" in SOSE. While her concerns appeared to centre on subject knowledge, she was equally confused about whether SOSE was really concerned with the development of thinking skills with much less emphasis on content. Furthermore, she questioned whether her own interests in Asian studies, international relations and green politics would have any bearing on her knowledge base for SOSE in contrast to her fellow student, Mary, whose strength was history, and perceived to have a more valuable, disciplinary-based perspective to offer in teaching SOSE. As a parent, Leanne also voiced her concern about the pedagogy and subject knowledge of some SOSE teachers. Her worries about personal subject knowledge and the image and status of SOSE in schools were affecting her development and purpose for teaching, specifically her subject identity as a SOSE teacher.

Leanne's concerns prompted this preliminary investigation of pre-service secondary social science teachers' professional identity with a view to examining its implications for the teaching of integrated social science, specifically SOSE. The study was undertaken as part of an evaluation of core social education curriculum studies units which all pre-service secondary social science teachers complete in their third and fourth year of teacher-education at Queensland University of Technology. The purpose of these units is two-fold: one, to introduce the students to the Queensland Year 1-9 SOSE curriculum and the Queensland senior syllabus in their chosen social science, and two, to develop the pedagogy associated with inquiry-based learning and other curriculum initiatives in social science.

One of the aims of the study was to investigate whether, at the end of core units and field placements, pre-service secondary social science teachers developed an emerging identity as "SOSE teachers" in their teacher-education. The

significance of such work is supported by Chris Day's assertion that pre-service teacher education must prepare teachers to manage change and focus explicitly on "clarity of identity and educational purpose" (2004, p.153). Efforts to develop secondary social science teachers' identity and sense of purpose as SOSE teachers may contribute to improved teaching and increased status for SOSE in Queensland schools.

### ***SOSE – an image problem?***

The broad scope of SOSE presents teachers with some challenges. Stodolsky and Grossman (1995) argue that "Subject matter is one of the primary organizers of the professional life of secondary teachers" (p. 228). SOSE is taught throughout the states and territories of Australia in the compulsory years of schooling, although in Victoria and New South Wales history is taught as a separate school subject. In Queensland, SOSE is taught from years 1 – 9 and integrates the disciplines of history, geography, economics, sociology and politics. In addition, SOSE includes environmental studies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, Asian studies and civics and citizenship. The Queensland SOSE syllabus emphasizes that the concepts, processes and values of the curriculum are drawn from the disciplines of history, geography and economics (QSCC, 2000) and the Year 9 SOSE Essential Learnings stipulate that students will be able to "plan investigations using discipline-specific inquiry models and processes" (The State of Queensland (Queensland Studies Authority) 2007, p.2). These curriculum statements clearly articulate the disciplinary basis of SOSE. Teachers' subject knowledge in the disciplines and expertise in social science pedagogy in the middle years is vital in preparing students to continue in the social sciences in the senior phase.

Yet, it requires experience teaching across the disciplines for teachers to become familiar with the broad knowledge base required for SOSE. A survey of Queensland pre-service social science teachers recently returned from field placements found that SOSE was a dynamic subject; it was also challenging because a large proportion of participants admitted they were teaching subject matter they had not learned at university (Tristram & Byerlee, 2007). Research on conceptions of subject matter in school subjects found that that social studies, English and science (in comparison with maths and foreign languages) represent subjects at "the less well-defined, less sequential, and more dynamic end of the spectrum" (Stodolsky & Grossman, 1995, p. 243) giving teachers much greater autonomy and high levels of curriculum control over what they teach. However, such conceptions may also lead to an image problem in the schools for integrated subjects such as SOSE where there is less consensus about content. Such image problems may impact on secondary teachers whose professional identity is framed, to a large extent, by the subjects they teach.

### ***Teacher identity***

The concept of identity broadly refers to the meanings one attaches to oneself or are attributed to one by other people. Teachers have a strong sense of professional identity (Sachs, 2005) Connelly and Clandinin (1999) describe teachers' professional knowledge in terms of the "personal practical knowledge" held by "teachers as knowers: knowers of themselves, of their situations, of children, of subject matter, of teaching, of learning" (p.1). This personal and professional knowledge is demonstrated in teaching practice and can be understood in teachers' individual stories as they seek to know who they are. The storied dimension to

understanding teachers' professional identity is a useful one to use in collaboration with Sach's (2005) definition of professional identity as "the way that people understand their own individual experience and how they act and identify with various groups" (p.8). The concept of teachers as "knowers" and how they understand their own teaching experience can be contextualised to the knowledge base that teachers bring to their work. However, Smith (2007) found that despite the interest in teacher identity studies in recent years, teachers' knowledge and personal development have been considered separately and sometimes in opposition to each other. Drawing on his work with primary science teachers Smith asserted that "building and using...a knowledge repertoire occurs along the marshalling of other sorts of knowledge and experience by the students as they are constructing their identities of themselves as teachers" (Smith, 2007, p. 378). He concluded that focusing on teachers' identity is connected to knowledge growth and should not be seen as an alternative.

The literature on professional identity has largely focused on primary rather than secondary teachers. Jennifer Nias's foundational work on primary teachers' identities argued for the distinction between personal and professional elements in teachers' lives (Nias, 1989 cited in Day, Kingston, Stobart & Sammons, 2006). She identified the personal, professional, emotional and organisational aspects of teacher identity and the interplay of these aspects with individual agency and structural aspects of schooling (Nias, 1989 cited in Day, *et. al.*, 2006). However, the research on secondary teachers' identity paints a different picture. Douwe Beijaard (1995) researched 28 secondary teachers with an average teaching experience of twenty-one years. His work drew on research by Sikes *et. al.* (1991), who found that the three distinguishing features of teachers' professional identity were the subject they teach, relationships with students, and their role or role conception. By examining biographical perspectives and participants' story-lines Beijaard (1995) found that the professional identity of secondary teachers derived primarily from the subject they taught. Relationships with colleagues in the same school who also taught the same subject and the status of these school subjects were pivotal to secondary teachers' professional identity. Conversely, perceptions of professional identity were negatively influenced by colleagues who did not take the subject seriously (Beijaard, 1995). Changes in the situation for secondary teachers, for example, the integration of subjects impacted negatively on secondary teachers' professional identity (Beijaard, 1992 cited in Beijaard, 1995).

In reviewing research on teacher identity Day, *et. al.*, (2006) concluded that while primary teachers' professional and personal identities were closely related, for secondary teachers, subject specialisation and subject status were more important. They argued that teachers' professional identities are not always stable and that at certain times, teachers "struggle to construct and sustain a stable identity" (Day, *et. al.*, 2006, p. 613) depending on certain life, career and organisational phases. The early days of teaching may be one such time. For example, in ethnographic interviews undertaken at regular intervals with twenty-eight Scottish teachers in their first year of teaching McNally, Blake, Corbin and Gray (2008) found few references to subject knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge or the professional standards in the first four months. They concluded that the cognitive dimensions of learning to teach were "temporarily bracketed by new teachers as what they want to develop next" (McNally, Blake, Corbin & Gray, 2008, p. 295). Similarly, it can be argued that pre-service secondary social science teachers are in the process of establishing their sense of self as teachers and their subject identity.

Although subject matter is acknowledged as an important context for teachers' practice (Stodolsky and Grossman, 1995), there is little research on how teachers construct different identities in the context of the subject-matter they teach

(Drake, Spillane & Hufferd-Ackles, 2001). Even in elementary school, teachers' professional identities were specific to the subject matter they taught and differed from subject to subject (Drake, Spillane & Hufferd-Ackles, 2001). Shulman's (1986, 1987) theorization of the knowledge base for teaching is applicable here, given that teacher identity develops in the context of subject knowledge for teaching.

Shulman drew attention to three essential types of knowledge for teaching: subject content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and curriculum knowledge. Briefly, subject content knowledge refers to substantive and propositional knowledge in the discipline. Pedagogical content knowledge refers to "the particular form of content knowledge that embodies the aspects of content most germane to its teachability" (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). In teaching, pedagogical content knowledge is particularly important because it blends content and pedagogy in ways that distinguishes content specialists from teachers. Curriculum knowledge refers to the full range of "materials and programs that serve as 'tools of the trade' for teachers" (Shulman, 1987, p. 8).

This paper proposes that the "teacher identity" of pre-service secondary social science teachers as "subject specialists" develops in the context of Shulman's (1986, 1987) domains of the knowledge base for teaching; furthermore, it is intrinsically linked with teachers' broader professional identity, shaped by both individual and contextual factors. Sachs (2005) describes the *entrepreneurial* and *activist* professional identity of teachers emerging from changing educational policies, government policies and professional development initiatives that shape teachers' work. Teachers' professional identity provides a broad framework for teachers on "how to be", "how to act" and "how to understand" their work and role in society (Sachs, 2005, p. 15). The question of how SOSE impacts and shapes pre-service secondary social science teachers' identity is contextualised within two theoretical frameworks: one, Sach's conceptualisation of the *activist* identity where what is taught and how it is taught shapes teachers' view of themselves and two, Shulman's theory of the knowledge base for teaching which is critical to the intellectual work that teachers undertake on a daily basis. Theorization of subject identities in pre-service secondary social science teachers draws attention to the broader purpose of teacher education to develop teachers' professional identity.

In Australia, changes to the work of teachers posed by government-led education reform and teacher accountability initiatives such as proposals to lift teacher quality and boosting literacy and numeracy (Gillard, 2008a), the emphasis on meeting professional standards for teaching (for e.g., Queensland College of Teachers, 2006) and impending curriculum change signalled by the new national curriculum (Rudd, 2008) create continually shifting contextual factors for teaching. In this climate teachers' views of themselves and their identity cannot be assumed to be either stable or coherent. Based on Giddens (1991, cited in Day, 2004) teachers' biographical narratives indicate teachers structure and continually revise their identity and position themselves in relation to beliefs, purposes and teaching practices for teaching. In work with nurses and primary teachers Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark and Warne (2002) developed an 'uncertain' theory of professionalism where teachers are professionals "mobilizing a complex of occasional identities in response to shifting contexts" (p. 117). They read teacher identities as fragmented "mini-narratives of identification; unstable, shifting, sometimes contradictory or expressed as conflicts" where the teacher identifies variously as "the recollected pupil, pressured individual, subject specialist, the person/teacher I am" and so on (Stronach, *et. al.*, 2002, p. 116). The current research focuses on one of these mini-narratives, i.e., the teacher as subject specialist, and considers whether pre-service

secondary social science teachers' professional identity refers to SOSE or whether their identity focuses more on specialist teaching roles.

## **Method**

### **Aim of the study**

The research focused on this question: how does SOSE impact and shape pre-service secondary social science teachers' identity? It was hypothesized that identification with SOSE at this early stage of their careers would positively influence beginning teachers' approach to SOSE.

### **Research participants and data collection**

The research cohort comprised seventy undergraduates and nine postgraduates enrolled in their third, compulsory social science curriculum unit at Queensland University of Technology (n=79). The unit aimed to provide a solid grounding in inquiry-based teaching for senior social science curriculum and alert students to their broader professional role. Students then commenced a four week teaching placement at a variety of secondary Queensland schools. Each student had two senior secondary teaching areas, one of which was a senior social science, eg., History and English or Physical Education and Geography.

Data was collected from these students in two phases. First, anonymous answers to a written questionnaire were obtained in week six of the on-campus unit. Second, students were invited by email to attend a short interview with the lecturer after they had completed their placement. Interviews were conducted after final grades in the unit were delivered and up to two months after the field placement.

### **Instruments and procedure**

#### *Questionnaire*

The questionnaire focused on feedback on unit content and learning activities with an additional section encouraging students to think about their identity as a social science teacher. They were asked to describe themselves by completing the sentence, " I am....." and to record reasons for this description. The questions prompted students to consider whether their recent work with their senior social science curriculum impacted on their description, and what other experiences had influenced their subject identity to date. The questionnaires were anonymous and completed as an in-class tutorial activity; responses were collected from sixty-one students.

#### *Interview*

The purpose of the interview was to encourage reflective practice through the lens of curriculum knowledge. Collins (2004) argued that reflective practice in teacher education should be informed by "lenses through which practice might be examined, justified and/or changed. These lenses should include ethical lenses, research-based lenses, cultural lenses....to enrich their conceptual repertoire so that they can engage in wide-visioned rather than blinkered reflective practice" (p. 232). The value of investigating teacher identity after field placements is supported by Burnett (2006) whose analysis of the impact of initial teacher education in England on teaching practice found pre-service teachers' practical experiences has implications for how they conceptualise knowledge. In a comparative study of field placements for elementary and secondary teachers Parkison (2008) also found that pre-service secondary teachers focused on content knowledge and the methodology of their subject areas during their teaching practice. The interviews were audio-recorded and

further explored the impact of teaching practice on students' identity as social science teachers. The researcher was not involved in teaching this unit or in conducting interviews; she analysed data from the questionnaires and listened to the audio-tapes to elicit and transcribe significant themes and quotations. Twenty interviewees (identified by pseudonyms) commented on their professional identity.

#### *Summary of data collection*

Number of participants:	79
Questionnaire responses:	61
Interviews referring to subject identity:	20

### **Data analysis**

#### **Questionnaire**

Students described themselves in a variety of ways incorporating either one or both of their senior subject areas in response to the question: *Think about your identity as a social science teacher today. How would you describe yourself now? Eg., "I am a PE and geography teacher" or "I am a secondary teacher and I teach SOSE", or, "I am a history teacher", or "I am a Home Economics teacher"*. This modelling was provided to prompt brief descriptions of professional identity. Some typical responses were:

- I am a history teacher who also teaches English*
- I am a drama / history teacher*
- I am a PE and history teacher*
- I am a geography teacher who can also teach SOSE if required*
- I am a history and geography teacher*
- I am a BCT & Geography teacher*
- I am high school teacher – business and history*
- I am a dance teacher with the ability to teach geography*
- I am a music teacher and I also teach secondary history & SOSE*
- I am a visual arts and history teacher*
- I am a geography teacher*
- I am a secondary teacher and I teach history and SOSE*

These statements reflected the first and second teaching areas nominated by each student for their degree. The range of subject areas encompassed the full range including senior social sciences, SOSE, English, science, business studies, visual arts, dance, film and TV, information technology, home economics, music and mathematics. The cohort was strongest in history reflecting the fact that of the 79 enrolled in the unit, 53% had history as either their first or second teaching area and 20% had geography as either their first or second teaching area.

Students provided a variety of reasons for their self-description that referred to the nature of the senior curriculum with which they had identified. The following are some reasons provided by those who described themselves as history teachers: history was important to know, enjoyment of history, liking history more than the other teaching area, viewing subject matter from the eyes of a "historian", pride in being a history teacher, passion / interest / love of history, experience developing curriculum units and desire to teach history. Some serious misconceptions of history were also noted with one student said they identified as a history teacher because it was "straight forward...I don't have to worry about the values aspect". One student was concerned about having only a small amount of knowledge of history and another that history was currently under the SOSE umbrella.

Students who described themselves as geography teachers were in the largest minority, yet their passion for geography was no less strong than the history students. Like the history teachers, their reasons were the importance of geography, enjoyment of geography curriculum, love / passion for geography, commitment and sense of progress as a geography teacher. One teacher worried that he or she may have to teach in a school that did not have senior geography and another was concerned about difficulties in explaining geography concepts. Another listed geography as a teaching area but did not see it as the “first and foremost reason for teaching”.

The data from the questionnaire reveals that about 73% of this cohort strongly identified with either history or geography and were prepared to list it in a description of themselves. Reasons were provided in emotional terms, with some awareness that familiarity with the subject and an emotional connection to the subject were reasons for wanting to be in the profession. Not surprisingly, in a teacher-education unit to develop curriculum knowledge, awareness of curricular knowledge was evident in identifying with these subjects and there was a sense of optimism and enthusiasm about teaching history and geography among these students.

In cases where the social science subject was the second teaching area, the data indicated that it was a valuable context for their first teaching area. A student who identified as a drama and legal studies teacher valued legal studies because it provided issues as a context for “provocative performance work”, even though he did not want to be a teacher anyway! Another drama / history teacher thought the two areas could “meld” together. There were also four students who described themselves as a “social science teacher” based on a desire to teach philosophy, personal interest, belief in being able to teach “most of the social science subjects”, and awareness that history was applicable in all areas of study. For these few students social science is part of their identity, yet there is no strong allegiance to a particular subject or to SOSE. Rather, their identity is a pragmatic one, reflecting life choices and the reality of teaching in schools.

Surprisingly, only 5% of these students professed a strong identification with the general role of teaching. One student wanted to “consider myself a teacher” with leanings towards subject areas varying from time to time. Another student said that being a teacher “is more important than what I teach”, views echoed by a fellow student who said “I am a teacher first and foremost. History is my passion... But one ...must be able to teach across multiple fields.” One student in this category pointed out that he/she wanted students to “excel within the wider community” and thus “the content is not as important as developing solid life skills”, while yet another student admitted to being “a confused teacher” and quite ambivalent about teaching as a career.

Of the sixty-one responses received, only 22% of students identified SOSE as their subject area, and in all of these cases, SOSE was listed second in their personal description. Positive views of SOSE reported by these students included a good high school SOSE/history experience, the likelihood of having to teach SOSE due to job availability, it was their choice of teaching area, enjoying teaching SOSE and strong feelings in favour of SOSE. Negative views were also voiced with one ambivalent student saying “a lot of what SOSE entails is broad and I feel like there is a lot of ground to cover”. In other negative perceptions, SOSE was perceived as “so mixed and matched. No real continuity”, the syllabus “seems a little too flexible”, acknowledgement of poor background knowledge and a lack of university-based education to teach SOSE.

## Interviews

One of the questions asked during the interview was *has this unit had an impact on your subject identity as a social science teacher?* Many interviewees said that they had only started thinking about their professional identity in their fourth year of teacher-education, supported by positive teaching experiences on field placement. Judy expressed her satisfaction with the curriculum units saying “I’ve walked away from these subjects feeling better about myself as a developing teacher and a professional.” Acceptance of the general teacher role was noted by students who did not venture a subject identity. For example, Elise said “I consider myself to be a teacher of youth” and Nicole noted “I teach teenagers”.

The issue of subject matter proficiency in history, geography, legal studies and SOSE was mentioned by the majority of interviewees. Dawn, a geography and PE teacher, emerged from prac “thinking a lot more about curriculum content in Geography and now the Essential Learnings [a new curriculum initiative]”. Teaching practice had alerted her to the need for both subject matter knowledge and curricular knowledge. Jack, who identified as a history and information technology (IT) teacher, thought he would emphasise IT because of the shortage of IT teachers. He intended to pick up “lots of teaching areas while at school ... it doesn’t matter so much what you are trained for.” Jan identified strongly and passionately as a history teacher having “discovered a natural aptitude for history.” Chris, who had never studied history at school, discovered he loved history and identified as a history teacher. George was confident based on a wide-ranging field placement: “I teach social sciences and English...I see myself as being able to teach all the different social sciences.” Subject expertise and recent teaching had impacted positively on these students’ perception of their ability to teach their senior social science. The optimism and quiet confidence with the respective senior social science curriculum areas was a distinctive feature of these interviews.

The importance of teaching practice in confirming teacher identity was evident in James’s situation. James drew on his recent teaching to confirm his decision he did not want to teach legal studies: “For me...my identity is as a drama teacher...whereas legal... I don’t think ... I didn’t really enjoy it...I won’t be applying for legal jobs....I am a drama teacher....because of the huge amount of industry experience I’ve had....If I was teaching legal studies....I would have to go further and find things that would keep me interested in the subject.”

In contrast to the senior subjects, the case was different with SOSE. There was criticism of the SOSE curriculum and awareness of a lack of the knowledge base to teach it. For example, while quite confident of her ability to teach history, Jan had not taught SOSE and this lack of experience compounded negative views of the SOSE curriculum. “The SOSE curriculum is very hard to understand....I feel quite ready to go into a classroom and teach history, now, I won’t probably say exactly the same thing about SOSE.” Similarly, Mary admitted to not understanding the SOSE syllabus. She “did a lot of SOSE work on prac which made it easier”, but history remained her passion because of an “awesome school history teacher”. Pat lamented her own lack of knowledge for teaching SOSE saying “I wish I had more history...or SOSE knowledge”. She taught SOSE from a geography base as this was her area of expertise. She concluded “SOSE could be such a great subject...it needs more of a foundation to build upon.” Her criticism here appeared to be directed more at the institution for failing to provide her with more opportunities to develop the subject expertise needed for SOSE, in addition to the specialist knowledge she had developed in geography. James’s view of SOSE curriculum was unflattering and influenced by his own inadequate knowledge base: “I don’t like

junior SOSE because it is a mix of everything....I don't feel confident teaching it. I haven't got a geography background, I don't have a history background."

Despite this ambivalence, a few students like Bob, Chris and Joseph had a fairly positive view of SOSE teaching. While initially unsure of SOSE, Chris who identified as a history teacher said, "I've been teaching it and I've been enjoying it now." Bob had taught his first SOSE class and found it "great", noting that the difference between teaching SOSE and PE was the need to find resources. Joseph, who identified as a PE teacher with "a massive background in sport", commented he would be applying for Geography and SOSE jobs. "If offered a pure SOSE job [it] wouldn't bother me at all." None of these students voiced criticism of the SOSE syllabus or concerns about the knowledge base for teaching SOSE.

### ***Findings and discussion***

The findings from the questionnaire indicate that an emerging teacher identity can be identified through a curriculum lens in secondary pre-service teacher education. Although this approach is not specifically identified by Collins (2004) it appears to be a valid approach on which to base reflective practice in teacher education. Influenced by their recent curriculum work, students reflected on their curricular knowledge and mainly admitted to a professional identity with the traditional subjects of history and geography (Beijaard, 1995; Day, *et. al.*, 2006).

The interviews indicated that formation of subject identity is influenced by a variety of factors: previous experience at school, curriculum studies at university, industry factors (if applicable), field experiences and personal passion and interest in the subject. The interviews revealed a degree of optimistic self-confidence with senior curriculum and subject matter.

Shulman's (1986, 1987) theorization of the knowledge base for teaching is a useful interpretive framework for the development of teacher identity in pre-service teacher education. Not surprisingly, while on campus, pre-service teachers' emerging identity was largely framed by curricular knowledge and to a lesser extent by familiarity with subject knowledge for teaching. This was strengthened by teaching practice. An activist identity (Sachs, 2005) in terms of what pre-service teachers had taught gained expression and momentum while on field placement. Elsewhere I have argued that some SOSE teachers value the processes of inquiry and pedagogical content knowledge rather than subject content knowledge (Tambyah, 2008). However, it seems that at this point in the pre-service phase, pedagogy is not a significant aspect of teacher identity. Further research and interviewing after the internship is warranted to investigate whether a more complex teacher identity emerges.

Teacher identity for the majority of pre-service teachers appeared to be relatively stable, with clear allegiances in subject identity. This is attributed to recent engagement with the senior curriculum, and in some cases, as a result of positive teaching experiences (Burnett, 2006; Parkison, 2008). However, this stability is likely to change as pre-service teachers complete their education and start work. A small number of this cohort eschewed the social sciences for a general identification as a teacher with broader responsibilities to students and a pragmatic acceptance of the reality of teaching, which indicated that a more general teacher identity was emerging. At this time, only a small number admitted to shifting or contradictory identities (Stronach, *et. al.*, 2002) while on campus or as a result of teaching practice.

The scope of this small research project precluded in-depth exploration of the many factors that influence teacher identity. However, from a curriculum perspective the data indicated that less than a quarter of this cohort identified as being "SOSE teachers". All the students were aware of the SOSE curriculum and had developed a SOSE unit in their third year, but for the majority, SOSE was simply not part of their identity as a teacher. For many SOSE appeared to be largely invisible in terms of their professional identity, propelled by a perceived lack of knowledge and concomitant lack of teaching experience. Negative views were expressed on the broad scope of SOSE and the lack of foundational knowledge to teach it. Further ambivalence centred on the content of SOSE and difficulty in interpreting the curriculum. Teaching practice alleviated some of the uncertainty and anxiety surrounding SOSE but there was not the same enthusiasm for SOSE in comparison to senior subjects such as history or geography. Rather, there was a tacit acceptance that SOSE was a necessary part of the teaching job. Here the notion of the " 'uncertain being' of the contemporary teaching professional" is relevant (Stronach, *et. al.* , 2002, p. 125).

### **Conclusion**

Teacher identity, particularly subject identity, has emerged in this study as an important dimension of secondary social science pre-service teacher education. Day (2004) argued for clarity of identity and educational purposes in teacher-education -- this study demonstrates that pre-service social science teachers do not actively consider or begin to frame their teacher identity until relevant curricular have been explored and implemented. The implication for teacher education is that a curriculum lens can be used in the context of coursework and field placements to explore and frame an activist teacher identity (Sachs, 2005). Furthermore, subject knowledge and curricular knowledge (Shulman, 1986, 1987) emerged as distinctive aspects of secondary social science teachers' professional identity at this point in the pre-service phase. Supported by the structure of pre-service education, secondary social science teachers' identity appears to be relatively stable, and professional identity for some, as a senior history or geography teacher, is established.

However, the research showed there was considerable uncertainty surrounding SOSE. Subject identities are powerful contexts for teachers and the perception of subjects in a school. Unless pre-service secondary social science teachers think of themselves as SOSE teachers, as well as history or geography teachers, their purpose for teaching social science in lower secondary is likely to be poorly articulated and executed. In these uncertain times as teachers await the impact of the national curriculum in history there is need for even greater clarity around what else teachers need to know and be able to do in other areas of social education. The ambivalence around SOSE, indicated in its minor status among this cohort of pre-service social science teachers, highlights that teacher education needs to work on developing a robust SOSE teacher identity in the context of developing the knowledge base for teaching. Ironically, if the national curriculum in history gives teachers "a clear understanding of what needs to be covered in each subject and in each phase of schooling" (Gillard, 2008b) it may herald a new era of respect and enhanced status for social science in schools.

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