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Selecting Methods to Teach Controversial Topics: A Grounded Theory Study

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SELECTING METHODS TO TEACH CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS:
A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
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ABSTRACT

This grounded theory study examined the perceptions of 14 high school social studies teachers from three school districts in the Central Florida area. They were interviewed to uncover the decision-making process that high school social studies teachers use to choose methodologies when teaching controversial public issues (CPIs). The result was a three-phase model, the CPI Decision-Making Model, in which teachers move through three conceptual phases to decide on a particular methodology. By working through this process, teachers analyze the benefits and drawbacks of different methods for teaching controversial public issues. Significant results from this study included: (a) teachers were choosing to avoid teaching CPIs with standard-level students with student-centered methods, (b) teachers received little to no training in alternative methods and no training in how to deal with controversy in the classroom, (c) teachers possibly overestimated their ability to remain neutral in the classroom, and (d) teachers were learning their methodologies for teaching CPIs through unorthodox means.

To my wife Heather, my children Emma and Milo.

I love you with all my heart. I hope I have made you proud.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Overview

We live in contentious and political times. Between inflammatory remarks made by politicians, issues with the validity of news coverage, and an increasingly polarized social politic, our American society has become a battleground. In his farewell speech at the University of Chicago, President Obama lamented that the country had become more politically divided during his time as president, a claim that was confirmed by the Pew Research Center (Dimock, 2017). This conflict has even begun to move into the classroom, as evidenced by the report, *Teaching and Learning in the Age of Trump* (Rogers et al., 2017). The report discussed the condition inside schools during the first few months of the Trump Administration, making note of the issues surrounding the discussion of immigration, LBGTQ rights, and other controversial social issues that have emerged during these turbulent times. Rogers et al. described several new and troubling trends growing in schools, including an increase in unsubstantiated claims by students, incivility, the use of derogatory terms, religious intolerance, and even open racism, noting that:

Growing polarization and contentiousness in classrooms and schools undercuts the democratic purposes of public education. Ideally, public schools provide opportunities for students to deliberate productively across lines of difference and practice working together to solve collective problems. Heightened incivility makes it more difficult for schools to achieve this valued goal. (p. 35)

Our inability to handle difficult, sensitive issues in our society has additionally made our classrooms less democratic. If we are to preserve our democracy, we must prepare our students to participate in difficult discussions about it in open, democratic classrooms.

In the *Federalist Papers*, No. 10, James Madison spoke of the issues of majority factions and how the fallibility of man can hijack democracy. He wrote about how the life of the republic depends on the ability of people to communicate with one another about those issues of critical importance and that which people hold strong opinions:

As long as the reason of man continues fallible and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed. As long as the connection subsists between his reason and his self-love, his opinions and his passions will have a reciprocal influence on each other; and the former will be objects to which the latter will attach themselves (Madison, Hamilton, & Jay, 1961/1787, p.78).

This difference of opinions and the imperfection of reason are hurdles that must be overcome for a democracy to work. Freedom of the press and freedom of speech are necessary for a democracy to flourish because they expose us to different opinions and reasoning, and allow us to discuss important issues in our lives. Democracy was built on the discussion of important topics by those informed of them and willing to participate in solving social issues. Unfortunately, discussion of controversial public issues that involves the cross-cutting of different ideas has been occurring less frequently in the United States in recent years (Hess, 2009). If we wish to have a democracy in which the people are well-informed and are able to participate, we must foster a more democratic education that encourages open discussion so that tomorrow's citizens can be prepared to take up the mantle of citizenship.

Part of democratic citizenship education must involve teaching students to understand and discuss controversial public issues (Hess, 2008; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017). It is up to the citizens of tomorrow to determine the fate of our democracy by being engaged in public debate and making decisions related to policy. Our democracy requires a well-informed, capable, and motivated public willing to take on the problems that come with being the world's superpower to inform reasoned, effective decision making. Racial tensions, religious conflict, wage gaps between the rich and poor, terrorism, immigration, hypernationalism, globalization, and gender issues are just a few of the problems that tomorrow's citizens must address. Whether they are deciding to vote or what policy and laws to support, 21st century students will be making difficult decisions in their future, and it is the job of our teachers to prepare them for that work. In the words of Thomas Jefferson, "Wherever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government; that whenever things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, they may be relied on to set them to rights" (Library of Congress, 2019). Our forefathers understood that a government run by the people can only function with a capable populace. Citizens must be informed about relevant public issues and they must be willing to do something about resolving controversies concerning these issues in order for our democracy to continue to function.

An issue exists in how these topics are taught in American schools. For at least the past century, social studies teachers in high schools across the United States have continued to teach using teacher-centered methodologies (Cuban, 1984, 2016; Hahn, 1996). History classes continue to be dominated by lecture-and-textbook formatted lessons (Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Perrotta & Bohan, 2013), with the teacher standing at the front of the classroom delivering

lessons in a top-down format. In this model, the teacher is the purveyor of all knowledge, pouring knowledge into the heads of students without question (Freire, 1970). The issues with this top-down model are numerous (Monte-Sano, 2008; Mueller & Colley, 2015; Ochoa-Becker, 2007). The importance in the framework of this study is that the top-down model warps the classroom into an undemocratic space where open discussion of important public issues is not feasible. The American social studies classroom should be a place where democracy happens; a laboratory for student-citizens to experiment with the values and ideas that help shape our society. To accomplish this, social studies teachers must embrace pedagogies that not only allow students to experience democratic life (Evans & Saxe, 1996; Massialas & Allen, 1996) but must also let them wrestle with controversial public issues (Evans & Saxe, 1996; Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Totten, 2015). To have one without the other would not be a true expression of democratic education. Examining controversial issues without student-centered methodologies would result in exploring topics as if there was consensus on all fronts, obstructing the democratic education envisioned by Jefferson and Madison. Using alternative student-centered pedagogies without examining the problematic issues society faces would be educational, but not necessarily democratic. If the goal of social studies teachers is to develop the citizen of tomorrow with the capabilities to help shape a better democratic society (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2017), it is imperative that we adopt a model of education embracing alternative methods to teach controversial public issues in high school social studies classrooms to model the quintessential properties of democracy.

Open discussion of important social issues illustrates several key aspects of democratic education (Hess, 2009). The authentic exploration of relevant issues is lauded in many

democratic nations as a means of developing citizens prepared for the work of democracy (Hahn, 1996). It is seen as a method of not only teaching the relevant content in social studies classrooms, but also as a means of developing critical thinking skills as students “talk themselves to understanding” (Hess, 2009, p. 19) by working through their thought processes with other interlocutors, thereby developing critical thinking skills essential for democratic participation. Discussions of social topics are also a more authentic classroom activity when considering what students will encounter in the real world, where adults interact with other people and must develop their own opinions on difficult topics.

Despite efforts to make this teaching a reality in secondary schools, social studies teachers continue to teach using traditional methods (Perrotta & Bohan, 2013). Ochoa-Becker (2007) suggested several reasons why this might be the case. First, teachers lack the required training on using alternative teaching methods to teach controversial public issues. She commented on a study performed by Goodman (1988) in which he found that teacher preparation programs rarely included pedagogy on democratic education. According to Bittman, Russell, Kenna, Beckles, and Zandt (2017), there exists little evidence that social studies teacher preparation programs include coursework on alternative), let alone methods for discussing controversial topics. With conditions such as these, social studies education that includes discussion of controversial topics in a democratic fashion would only be used if social studies teachers had the time, resources, and freedom to discover alternative methodologies for themselves.

The lack of academic freedom is also a primary concern of teachers in not incorporating controversial issues into the classroom (Ochoa-Becker, 2007). Taylor (1996) discussed several

cases involving the lack of academic freedom in classrooms, noting that “this right is more limited in public schools than in colleges, universities, and private schools because of greater regulation of the public school curriculum by state and local school boards” (p. 17). Social studies teachers have also believed themselves to be restrained when teaching content standards: a consequence of standardized testing. Teachers may also fear reprisal from the community (e.g., parents, other influential groups) or administration for teaching sensitive/controversial topics. Furthermore, schools rarely embrace the values of democracy that their programs espouse, preferring smooth operations over the conflict of teacher curriculum choices (McNeil, 1986). This lack of freedom prohibits the discussion of controversial public issues in the classroom, reducing not only the awareness of the issues themselves, but also students’ understanding of the value of democratic discussion.

Problem Statement

High school social studies teachers have been avoiding teaching controversial topics using alternative teaching methods. Doing so deprives students of the authentic democratic experience of tackling problems of democracy in authentic ways within the classroom. When controversial issues are discussed in the high school social studies classroom, it is often through a direct instruction format, relying heavily on lecture. There are several issues with this mode of instruction. First, it fails to acknowledge that there is disagreement about the events of history and their importance (Loewen, 1995; Metro, 2018; Paxton, 1999). Second, it privileges some perspectives over others and fails to acknowledge that conflicting views exist (Anyon, 1979). Third, it undermines the democratic goals of citizenship education by providing a pedagogy of consumption that is not allowed to be challenged (Freire, 1970); this form of learning is more

autocratic than democratic. Fourth, it has failed to show long-term benefits for students who fail to find the relevance of such a pedagogy (Ochoa-Becker, 2007).

If we accept that it is the role of social studies teachers to instill in students the values and skills requisite to a democratic education (Dewey, 2001/1916; NCSS, 2013; Ochoa-Becker, 2007), it is clearly an issue that, by not utilizing student-driven methods, lessons are falling short of the participative democratic ideal. Researchers have speculated about the processes that teachers use in deciding whether to use alternative methods to teach controversial social issues (Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017; Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Noddings & Brooks, 2017), but it has not been the subject of a specific study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to examine the decision-making process of high school social studies teachers in three eastern Central Florida school districts, namely Seminole, Orange, and Volusia county school districts. The primary focus of this study was to identify the thought processes of social studies teachers when deciding which methodology to use when teaching controversial public issues.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following four research questions:

1. What is the process that high school social studies teachers use to decide which methods to use when teaching controversial public issues?
2. What challenges exist for high school social studies teachers to teach controversial public issues in their classrooms?

3. What factors dissuade high school social studies teachers from using alternative methods to teach controversial public issues in their classrooms?
4. What role do high school social studies teachers serve in covering controversial public issues?

Definition of Terms

It is necessary to define what is meant by controversial public issues (CPIs), traditional teaching methods, and alternative teaching methods. There are many definitions for what a controversial public issue is, including: (a) an unresolved question of public policy that should be adopted to address public problems (Hess, 2009, p.5); (b) an issue about which there is no one fixed or universally held point of view. Such issues are those which commonly divide society and for which significant groups offer conflicting explanations and solutions (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998, p.56); and (c) discussion marked especially by the expression of opposing views (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

For this study, I adopted a modified version of Hess' (2009) definition: *Controversial public issues* (CPIs) are issues or problems that are of concern to the public and of which there is significant disagreement between relatively well-informed persons. This definition does not have the concreteness that makes for easy measurement, but there is at least some agreement about topics that are considered controversial in American education. The role of government in peoples' lives, if war is justified, the complexity of race relations in the U.S., and rights of the Communist Party in the U.S. are only a few topics that can stir controversy (Evans & Saxe, 1996; Noddings & Brooks, 2017).

Along similar lines, it is necessary to define the types of pedagogical methods for teaching these CPIs. *Traditional teaching methods* are those methods that have dominated social studies classrooms for near a century. Not exclusive to social studies in particular, traditional methodologies have typically employed the following elements (Cuban, 1984):

- The primary method of delivering information to students is through a lecture format;
- Lessons are teacher-focused, with the teacher being the sole source of knowledge;
- Teaching focuses on covering as much breadth of information as possible, but typically only includes basic ideas;
- Curriculum materials typically consist of a textbook (physical or digital) along with worksheets or other ancillary materials; and
- Assessments test a student's ability to recall memorized features from lectures.

Alternative teaching methods in social studies attempt to alleviate the problems presented by the traditional model. Several models exist, such as the decision-oriented model (Engle & Ochoa, 1988) and public-policy model (Oliver & Shaver, 1966), and they tend to have several characteristics in common:

- These methods embrace additional delivery methods beyond the lecture format (e.g. reciprocal teaching, project-based learning, values-clarification);
- Learning is student-focused and student-driven, with the student or student-led groups being the main actors in the classroom;
- Students examine information for themselves, including understanding forms of reasoning, presentation of evidence, and examining conflicting opinions about a subject; and

- Teachers guide students through the process of inquiry, including posing questions of relevance and importance to their learning, gathering evidence, understanding the problem, and defending their position.

Study Assumptions

Research is value-laden, and biases are always present. In this study, the researcher assumed that democratic education, as described by Dewey (1916/2001) is necessary for a free and open society. Democratic education is one that encourages students to share different experiences about the world, compels students to identify significant issues that can be solved by social action, and empowers students to act. Democratic education is pragmatic; it aims to improve the lives of those in society by allowing students to use their natural capacity to think and find solutions to society's problems. In this capacity, democratic education leads to social progress and, if necessary, reform. This form of education should be the primary goal of any U.S. social studies teacher.

Democratic education also functions on the assumption that reality is multi-faceted, and participants experience it from many different perspectives. Democratic education only works if teachers and students (a) acknowledge differing views of reality, (b) understand how perspectives are informed by experience, and (c) share information about these experiences with one another to help society identify relevant social issues and find solutions. Because multiple perspectives inform our idea of reality, we must find information from various sources. In the tradition of democratic education, I have attempted, in this study, to bridge the varied social realities of study participants to get a greater understanding of the existence of this phenomenon. In other words, I have adopted a social constructivist framework to show how the different understandings of

study participants have been socially constructed. Finally, democratic education assumes that it is the job of schools and social studies teachers, in particular, to prepare students for becoming citizens in a democratic society.

Limitations of the Study

As a qualitative study based on grounded theory methodology, this study utilized a relatively small number of participants, limiting the researchers' ability to generalize findings.. The study participants were volunteers who were both able and willing to participate. It is likely that the study was skewed to only those whose opinions were stronger or to those who had the availability to meet for the study. Participants may have responded to questions with what they thought was the correct answer rather than what they believed to be the truth. As the researcher is also an educator and has been a colleague of several of the study participants, there was likely to be some issue with bias in the collection of and interpretation of data. The methodology adopted to conduct the study accounted, to some extent, for this limitation.

As the focus of this study was to examine teacher decision-making, the methodology relied heavily on collecting interview data about teacher perceptions and experiences teaching controversial public issues in the classroom. However, these behaviors were not observed, as this was not an evaluative study. It was anticipated that some results from this study would be different if interview data would have been enhanced by classroom observations.

Significance of the Study

There are several reasons why avoiding teaching CPIs using alternative teaching methods is an issue. First, students who are taught using the traditional lecture format have problems

remembering what is taught shortly after learning the material (Ochoa-Becker, 2007). For instance, students who were taught using traditional methodologies could not remember material from class even shortly after the assessment as they had not internalized the material. This lecture-dominant social sciences is closer to Edgar B. Wesley's notion of “social sciences adapted and simplified for pedagogical purposes” (Evans, 2004, p. 147). What is prized about this style of teaching social studies is its efficiency; it covers a great breadth of information in a short amount of time. However, because this teaching is vague and distant, the content is not made relevant to students, a notion that Alfred North Whitehead referred to as “inert ideas.” Traditional pedagogy emphasizes teaching as much information deemed necessary in as little time as possible and assessing students on what tidbits of information they know. Unfortunately, this information is not what teenagers find relevant in their own lives (Gould & Howson, 2009). Because there is no relevance to students, the information holds no weight and is not stored. Although these methods are efficient in the short term, they are ineffective in the long-term.

The traditional format disseminates information in a way that fails to examine the controversy of each topic. History is taught as a succinct narrative of critical players and easily understood events with a clear line of cause-and-effect relationships that created the world as we see it today. However, social studies teachers teaching in this manner have deprived students of the opportunity to examine the content in a more meaningful fashion by examining the conflict and disagreements that scholars have about the importance of events, giving the false impression that there is agreement on all fronts. By not understanding the nature of these disagreements, students are also unaware of the greater reason behind scholars’ beliefs. The traditional methodology employed by teachers in high school social studies courses has not been just

ineffective; it has been undemocratic. To correct this, we must embrace a pedagogy that allows examination of the events that have shaped this nation into what it is and critically examine the narrative that we tell ourselves in order to create a more democratic public space allows perspectives to be explored with vigor and dignity.

Beyond being essential for fostering a democratic environment, teaching CPIs using alternative methods has been endorsed by multiple stakeholders. At the national level, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has formulated several position statements that encourage the use of alternative teaching methods to teach matters of public debate. In its 2017 position statement, *Revitalizing Civic Learning in Schools*, the NCSS stated:

The goal of schooling, therefore, is not merely preparation for citizenship, but citizenship itself; to equip a citizenry with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for active and engaged civic life. The National Council for the Social Studies firmly agrees with this premise and believes that no other subject area is better suited to achieve this essential goal in schools than the social studies. (para. 1)

If we take this mission statement to heart and accept that it is the duty of social studies teachers to prepare students to be citizens in a democratic society, we must also prepare them to deal with making critical decisions in our democracy.

At the local level, school districts in the Central Florida area officially have endorsed the use of democratic pedagogies in their schools in part by making use of Marzano's teaching framework, *The Art and Science of Teaching* (2018). This teaching framework stated that mild controversy can enhance student engagement and encouraged teachers to use participative, active learning strategies. Beyond the Marzano framework, the research on the specific benefits of

teaching using alternative teaching methods with CPIs has been limited. However, there are at least a few results that point to positive outcomes. The use of alternative methods of teaching with democratic content has been shown to increase student engagement in the classroom (Sheppard, Katz, & Grosland, 2015). These methods have also been linked to an increase in critical thinking skills, an increase in behaviors related to tolerance and empathy, and an increase in cosmopolitanism and global mindedness (Hahn, 1996). As the United States continues to grow, becoming more diverse and urbanized along the way, these skills will be essential for its continued development to deal with the problems that this growth will undoubtedly create.

There are publications and recent research in the field of using alternative methods and teaching with controversial topics. However, there is little indication as to why teachers have chosen to avoid them. Unfortunately, much of the research regarding the benefits of alternative teaching methods such as inquiry-oriented or decision-oriented approaches have become outdated, with most having occurred before the phenomenon of social media and the increasingly controversial Trump presidency. Additionally, evidence that does support the reasons why teachers may avoid controversial issues has emerged from case studies looking at specific conditions of individuals rather than grounded theory studies attempting to create a framework as to why a phenomenon continues to exist. Many of the results regarding why teachers avoid both alternative teaching methods and CPIs have been by products of other research questions. There has been no explicit research study conducted to investigate why teachers avoid alternative teaching methods. This study was designed to be the first in a series to identify the decision-making process of teachers when planning lessons on controversial topics. Future studies include

examining teacher efficacy and fidelity in lesson execution and possibly action research to identify best practices for teaching controversial public issues.

Organization of the Study

The focus of Chapter 1 was to introduce the issue of social studies teachers' pedagogical choices with controversial public issues. Chapter 2 includes both a review of the relevant literature to familiarize the reader with how the problem has emerged and persisted, as well as possible reasons as to why it manifests today. Chapter 3 contains an explanation of the methodology used in this grounded theory study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study data pulled from interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. Chapter 5 provides a summary and discussion of the findings, as well as suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter contains a review of the literature regarding how controversial public issues have been taught in high school social studies classrooms. It includes an explanation of how it is that teachers have typically avoided using alternative methods in doing so. The chapter begins with a brief narrative history of the topic, how high school social studies were first taught in American schools, how alternative methods emerged during the Progressive Era, how controversial topics were taught during the 1930s, how the New Social Studies movement in the mid-20th century embraced both alternative methods and controversial public issues (CPIs), and how the standards movement and social efficiency removed this new pedagogy from classrooms. These influential time periods show how the use of CPIs and alternative methodologies have evolved over time. The chapter concludes with a more traditional literature review looking at common explanations given for why teachers choose to teach controversial topics in the current fashion. By using this approach, I aimed to give both a historical understanding of how social studies education has arrived at this point and to provide a thorough review of the current research within this field.

The history presented in this chapter was not designed to be exhaustive. Rather, it was intended to provide examples of how past teachers taught using controversial public issues and alternative teaching methods, and how that compares to what was occurring at the time of the present study. I recognize that one could find at least anecdotal evidence of past pioneering social studies teachers who had their students examine fascinating and controversial topics. Though true, no evidence shows that this was ever a large-scale trend in the U.S. The overall

goal in this literature review was to identify the different facets of the problem, not to illustrate each time it has emerged. The explanations for the problem that I have provided have come mainly from my suppositions as well as accounts given by primary theorists in this field such as Ochoa-Becker (2007), Cuban (2016), and Evans (2004). Though I believe that the claims made by these theorists were well-founded, they may not fully explain the issues identified later in this study. Charmaz (2006) has stated that although a literature review is necessary to begin a grounded theory study, there is no guarantee that those trends will be the ones that emerge from the data. It is possible that another literature review may be required later to provide context for emergent trends in the study, but for now, the goal of this literature review was to show that the problem existed, that it was persistent, and put forth some ideas as to why it has continued to persist (Figure 1).

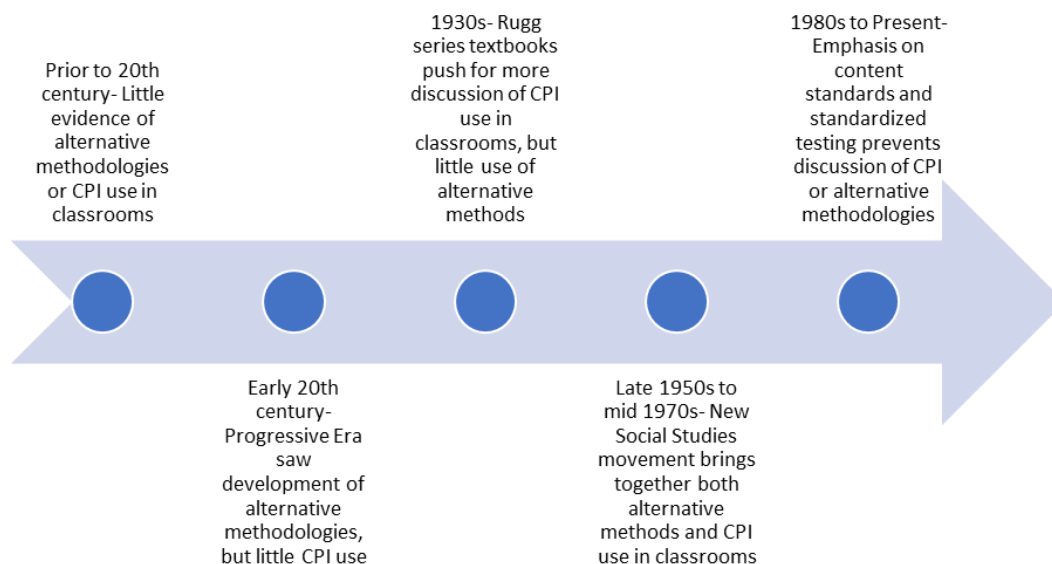


Figure 1. Timeline of the development of both alternative methodologies and controversial public issues (CPI) content in American education from late 19th century to present.

History of CPIs and Alternative Methodologies

Secondary Social Studies up to the Late 19th Century.

To begin, I must address what scholars have known about the development of alternative teaching methods in addressing controversial issues in secondary schools in the United States up to the Progressive Era. I have chosen the secondary school because those are the years in which there has been more focus on the content to be gained rather than the skills to be developed (Cuban, 1984), and that content can include more controversial public issues. Despite the claim that any material can be taught to students so long as it is approached appropriately to their development (Bruner, 1960), controversial topics are frequently avoided at the elementary school level. Therefore, I concentrated my research in secondary schools, more specifically in high schools. However, because high schools did not exist until the early 20th century, I began my historical analysis by looking at secondary schools more generally.

Outside of the training that teachers gained in normal schools or the setup of their classrooms, it is hard to gauge how the classes functioned, as we do not have access to pictures, lesson plans, or other forms of evidence at the time beyond some anecdotal first-hand accounts. However, based upon what we know about the demographic and cultural history of early American education, we can make some assumptions.

First, there was very little enrollment in secondary schools at the time, especially in rural areas (Cuban, 1984; Rugg & Schumaker, 1969). Compulsory education did not start in the United States until 1860, and it would take half a century before every state in the Union made going to school a legal requirement. Children in cities were more likely to get an education, mostly because they were not needed to assist on the farm, but the urbanization of the United

States did not begin in earnest until the movement of immigrants began in the late 19th century. Spring (2005) mentioned that the original estimates about the elite status of high schools in the U.S. may have been exaggerated, stating that in one Massachusetts county in the 1860s about one-fifth of all students had attended high school at least at some point. Additionally, high schools may have taught a more diverse group than initially thought, mostly from the pressure to prepare students for the emerging labor market (Spring, 2005). Schools were eventually seen as ways to Americanize immigrants, as well as the Black, Native American, and other non-White groups in the U.S. (Spring, 2005). The dramatic shift in urban dwelling which occurred between the beginning and end of the 1800s is illustrative of how schools began to expand so significantly. As immigrants began to pour into the U.S. after the Civil War, there arose a pressing need to educate them to American ways, as well as to educate the newly freed Blacks in the South, of which 79.9% were illiterate at the age of 14 in 1870 (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2018). The methodologies of schools became focused on the need to assimilate students into American culture as well as to provide them with the means of a productive life. Because the purpose of American education was to solidify a singular American nationality, methodologies that emphasize control and a teacher-centered classroom dominated.

Parochial schools, religious schools, boarding schools, and common schools were the basis of formal education up to the mid-1850s (Spring, 2005), and built the foundation for secondary education. The normal schools that opened in the 1830s would train teachers for these schools, primarily to teach students the essential norms and values of being Protestant Americans including the teaching of history and geography, but it was not a rigorous scholarly practice. Many of the lessons blended myth and tales thought necessary to impart essential moral

character in students and "to inspire patriotism and moral certitude" (Saxe, 1991, p. 30). These history lessons were based on the texts available at the time, which were full of "a hodgepodge of historical information and facts, and the general method of instruction in schools was formal recitation or question and answer" (Evans, 2004, p. 5). Traditional methods continued to dominate because the focus was on getting students to understand these myths, not to explore their relation to them or examine them in depth.

American history did not become an official course of study at Harvard until 1860 (Evans, 2004), and most instruction in history was incorporated in other subjects. Before that, most of the curriculum that could be identified as social studies fell under geography, humanities, and political economy. Rugg and Schumaker (1969) offered a vague account as to how American schools developed the methodology used, focusing on how schools functioned as a socializing force to create order in American society. This socialization was accomplished not only to deal with the immigrant influx but also to deal with the demands of industrialization. Schools eventually took on the role of preparing people for the industrial economy. Rugg and Schumaker (1969) mentioned that curriculum movements at the time were more focused on rearranging the content already in existence than in developing a new one based in democratic education. Little support existed prior to 1900 for the development of job skills in public education, with that falling to training and vocational schools that would develop toward the end of the century. The innovations Rugg and Schumaker spoke of involving a more pragmatic form of education that emphasized skills outside of studying the classics would not emerge for several decades. The changes failed due to a combination of (a) lack of teacher training and pay and (b) reliance on textbooks, primers, and spellers as the primary source of curriculum. These two factors were key

to determining methodology, and most teachers resorted to rote memorization. The common schools were still dependent upon McGuffey's Primer and Noah Webster's blue-backed speller for their recitation lessons. Those few students who progressed to high school mostly recited Latin, Greek, and other ancient languages and history to prepare them for college (Evans, 2004; Rugg & Schumaker, 1969). University professors developed preparation materials, primarily because they were the only ones available or qualified for the task. However, those materials were developed under the assumption that students who take secondary courses would move onto college, and both high schools and colleges favored memorization-dominated pedagogy.

Progressive Secondary Education in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century.

In *My Pedagogical Creed*, John Dewey (1897) illustrated his main concerns about the development of education. Then, as now, there was a growing concern as to the legitimacy of the activity of formal education, with doubt cast on the validity of how students were learning how to become citizens. Dewey believed that the purpose of schools was to create the kinds of experiences that would best foster the growth of tomorrow's citizen, and that schools should work towards setting children on the path to becoming productive members of society, stating:

I believe that the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demand of the social situations in which he finds himself. Though these demands he is stimulated to act as a member of a unity, to emerge from this original narrowness of action and feeling and to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs. (Dewey, 1896, p.77)

Many have viewed Dewey as the father of democratic education; and following him, many researchers and theorists have echoed his call for a more substantial, experiential

democratic education. His idea for a curriculum that moved away from the recitation of obscure facts of ancient history to one more grounded in the realities of life in America was so profound that it has continued to influence educators over a century later. What is important to note is that Dewey did not just promote a new educational philosophy; he also developed a radical new methodology that would revolutionize how schools functioned.

Dewey's laboratory school opened in 1896 as a truly new vision of what education could be. The laboratory school did not look anything like any of the other schools at the time. The rooms had no furniture or standard books to use. Students did not engage in recitation exercises, but instead, focused on lessons of practical and home economy, and learned their mathematics, history, and reading through what Dewey thought was authentic democratic exercise. Dewey developed his school to create in students those experiences that would lead to their development as functioning adults. For example, when describing his geography curriculum, Dewey mentioned:

To the child simply because he is a child, geography is not and cannot be, what it is to the one who writes the scientific treatise on geography. The latter has had exactly the experience which it is one the problem of instruction to induce... We must discover what there is lying within the child's present sphere of experience (or within the scope of experiences which he can easily get) which deserves to be called geographical. (Dewey in Kliebard, 2004, pp. 63-64)

Dewey's curriculum gives us a historical marker for some of the first student-driven lessons taught in the United States. Dewey's history methods focused more on the development of "occupations" of different people, asking students to examine how people thought about

problems of their time and solved them with the tools of their time at a pace that was appropriate for their development. The chronology of history was ignored to favor of a more existential approach of learning (Kliebard, 2004). Dewey's pedagogy also did not specifically mention anything about teaching controversial issues, arguably because he dealt with younger children.

Some saw Dewey's work as a revolution; others saw it as scholastic chaos that lacked the structure of traditional schools (Rugg & Schumaker, 1969). Either way, the school only operated from 1896-1904, not even lasting a decade. Despite the relatively short lifespan of his laboratory school, Dewey's ideas and methods would continue to inspire educators for decades to come, making Dewey the father of progressive education and inspiring similar experiments in alternative methodologies such as Professor J. L. Meriam's laboratory school in 1906. Devoid of furniture or standard curriculum, students in Meriam's laboratory school took frequent field trips, excursions, discussions, and other activities in order to provide students to learn through authentic life experiences. Later attempts at developing progressive education, such as the Winnetka Schools of the 1930s, would draw upon these early examples as models.

The movement towards a progressive education focused on social efficiency was criticized starting in the late 1890s by some of the academic elite who championed a more traditional curriculum and pedagogy. Munroe (1892) presented a critique of the socialization of schools, stating that schools should not be provided with free textbooks. Writing before Dewey had begun his experiments, Munroe was already lamenting the movement of education away from the designs of the intellectual elite and more toward the needs of the industrial economy:

It is here that the socialistic tendency is, in my judgment, dangerous. The socialists and those who in the line of education, if in no other, are socialists, would burden the free

school with subjects and methods belonging to the home, and would carry free education to a time of life when, by the suppression of individual effort, moral stamina are weakened and when, as a measure of common safety, school education is no longer necessary (Munroe, 1892, p. 149).

With his critique, Monroe provided us with a glimpse as to the attitudes at the time about the purpose of education: college preparation and maintaining America's traditions. Munroe argued that schools should focus on academic disciplines and avoid matters of the home and that schools should avoid the call for efficiency and practicality. To do so would be to turn schools into the parents and remove the need for the home (Munroe, 1892). Though not a specific part of the progressive curriculum at the time, Munroe complained that it was the focus on superficial public issues that was causing social decay and that schools should focus on developing scholarly research skills rather than an awareness of what was occurring at the present time. He stated:

The mental vice of these newspaper days is superficiality, this vice the schools are doing much to encourage. Make the child accurate, thorough, persistent, logical, and let mere information take a secondary place. If he has acquired these to qualities, he has learned how to study; in teaching him how to study the school has done its work. (Munroe, 1892, p.153)

Though current events and controversial public issues were noticeably drawing the attention of some people in education during the late 19th century, the traditionalists did not feel that schools were the appropriate place for them.

Some intellectuals of the late 19th and early 20th centuries grew increasingly frustrated with how history was being taught in schools and the preoccupation with college admission. Debate grew over how the methods used to teach history were shaped by their purpose, and that history courses at the time failed to meet the needs of a changing America. This debate gained more and more momentum, leading to the creation of the National Education Association's Committee of Ten in 1894 and the History Ten subcommittee to deal with the issue of history curriculum and methodology. The History Ten was interested in developing a new history curriculum not dominated by university interests and a movement away from recitation (NEA, 1894). The committee designed a new curriculum plan that, though still dominated by history, created some new guidelines for teaching methodology. These included the minimal use of lectures, using multiple textbooks instead of just one, recitation as a supplement to reading, encouragement of impromptu discussions and debate, and parallel readings in other topics (Evans, 2004). This newer methodology was a bold transition from what had come before and provided us our first example of a policy designed to instill debate about contemporary topics into the curriculum. However, there is little evidence that any of these suggestions made a significant impact on secondary school methodology (Cuban, 1984; Evans, 2004). The American History Association Committee of Seven met later the same year to build on the Committee of Ten's report, recommending a four-block history curriculum centered around textbook learning. This textbook-centered model of teaching history, focused on American and World history with the occasional mention of economics and government, would become the dominant form of teaching social studies for the next century. Evans (2004) wrote,

The history taught in the nation's schools in the era around and after the turn of the century was both traditional and conservative. . . .It served to glorify the nation's past by instituting fact, myth, and legend for historical analysis, and asking few questions about the structure of society or the direction in which it was headed (p. 4).

On only a few occasions would ripples be made in the sea of lectures and direct instruction. Primarily, this was because of (a) a lack of alternative teaching materials, (b) teachers learning pedagogy from their predecessors, and (c) pressure from outside of schools to preserve American cultural identity.

After 1900, we see the development of scientific studies and quantitative methods focused on finding solutions to problems in American education, including pedagogy. This development involved translating the works of psychologists and intellectuals such as William James, Wilhelm Wundt, and Francis Galton into educational terms. E.L. Thorndike and his contemporaries provided the first analysis on teaching methodology that would inform later reports (Kliebard, 2004). These reports would demonstrate how ineffective the classic recitation model of teaching was and would start to build the case for a new form of education. Thorndike also began his work to show how scientific management can be brought into the classroom to make it more efficient, sparking the social efficiency movement in education by showing how science can be used to improve student achievement and run schools more efficiently.

Harold Rugg and the Use of Controversial Topics in the 1930s.

Though the Progressive Era brought new attempts at alternative methodologies, curricula held to traditional content that avoided controversial public issues. There was an increase in the

enrollment in high schools; thus, this historical analysis was focused more specifically on high school social studies.

As the 1930s crept closer and closer, educators began to grow weary of the standard textbooks that were available to students. The AHA Committee of Seven of 1896, as well as the 1916 Report of the Social Studies Committee, referenced the importance of a good textbook for social studies courses, but the textbooks that were available at the time were not of high quality. Rapid urbanization, the Jim Crow era and Reconstruction of the South, as well as the influx of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, had all brought social problems into American classrooms, but they were not being discussed in these texts or classes. Even with the newly founded Problems in Democracy course that began in the 1920s, high school studies students were not receiving education on social problems of the time; this would change with the Great Depression and the introduction of Harold Rugg's textbook series.

Rugg was the first significant example of social meliorism in high schools (Kliebard, 2004); he wanted high schools to tackle the problems that society was facing, and attempt to find viable solutions. Rugg, in collaboration with his brother Earle, developed a series of pamphlets in 1929 about problems in America such as urbanization and immigration (Evans, 2004). These pamphlets would eventually develop into a series of textbooks that Rugg would use to give teachers the ability to teach controversial topics in class. In his textbooks, he discussed issues such as social class, immigration, and income inequality. Though this is an excellent example of the use of controversial public issues in education, the textbooks still made sweeping generalizations and represented more of the same direct instruction that had dominated schools previously.

Nevertheless, this change in the curriculum created a back-and-forth battle between the traditional historians who argued for the classic model of history teaching, the social efficiency experts and administrators who argued that schools should prepare students for their place in the workforce, and Rugg and other social meliorists who argued that students should study the social problems that plague society and develop solutions. More questioning could be found in the classrooms that used the Rugg textbook series in response to this examination of society's problems, but not much more (Evans, 2004). Specifically why is uncertain, but it most likely was due to the prescriptive nature of Rugg's writing. Despite a focus on social issues, his textbooks and lessons maintained the same teacher-centered dynamic that dominated history classes of the time. According to Cuban (1984), high school classrooms largely remained unchanged and teacher-driven. Even though teachers might have had access to the newer Rugg textbooks, which were the most commercially successful textbook series of their time, they still used the older model of teaching.

Rugg and other social meliorists would continue to receive criticism not just from other educators, but also from outside political groups. Rugg's textbooks would be touted as a danger to American democracy and even seen as a form of Communist propaganda (Evans, 2004; Kliebard, 2004). Although his textbooks were never quite so radical, they did point the finger at the problems of maintaining the status quo, encouraging civil unrest and criticizing US policies during the Red Scare. It also did not help that Rugg himself liked to debate the merits of his textbook series in public openly, and he was renowned for vituperatively eviscerating his opponents (Evans, 2004). As controversy surrounded Rugg, teachers started to move away from using textbooks and the discussions of social topics encouraged therein. Thus, as it was for Rugg,

fear of public backlash has continued to be an issue for teachers teaching CPIs at the time of the present study, with teachers choosing to avoid them.

The focus on social efficiency would continue to dominate schools from that point forward, bolstered by the push for scientific management during the 1920s and 1930s. Administrators were reported to have entered teacher's classrooms, examined their lesson plans in the middle of teaching, and enforced strong oversight over their teachers (Cuban, 1984). Practices such as these tend to make teachers conform to the standard practices of schools. Even those schools that claimed to be more progressive had, when implementing evaluation protocols, caused teachers to implement more teacher-driven lessons and avoid topics that might cause an issue. Political groups continued to criticize the Progressive-era curriculum changes and methodology, often employing demagoguery revolving around Communism. This campaign was not enough to defeat the Progressives of the 1930s, however, especially during a time of increased awareness of social problems.

Sputnik, the NEA, the NSS, and the Evaluation of Schools in the 1960s and 1970s.

Up until the 1950s, there have been several largely unsuccessful attempts to imbue social studies classes either with new methodologies or to have students examine controversial issues. However, a genuine attempt at marrying the two in the U.S. would not occur until the mid-20th century. A conservative temperament followed the Progressive Era and would remain well into the 1950s. Good feelings and a reluctance to revisit the social problems of the Great Depression and World War era had a visible presence in the classroom. After *Sputnik* launched in 1957 and challenged the pre-eminence of American technological superiority on the world stage, those feelings quickly dissipated. Officials in the U.S. feared losing ground to the Soviets in the space

race and other ventures and promptly sought to institute a way to close the now apparent achievement gap between the two superpowers. It was then that President Eisenhower signed into law the National Defense Education Act shortly after in 1958 to fund new curriculum projects in the United States. There was now an influx of money to those groups capable of developing innovative and rigorous curriculum projects that would challenge the minds of America's supposedly lackluster students. The National Science Foundation began handing out grants to those groups capable of developing new programs around this time, including a curriculum development program which would eventually include the social sciences (Evans, 2004; Kleibard, 2004; Spring, 2005). Combined with the private donations from the Ford Foundation and Carnegie Institute, plenty of cash was available for new school programs including curriculum projects inspired by the structure-of-the-discipline approach championed by Jerome Bruner (1960). Key to this idea was the notion that students of any age can learn the fundamentals of a lesson if those fundamentals are presented in an age-appropriate manner, meaning that the social studies curriculum was ripe for restructuring based on this radical new idea (i.e., constructing information in the mind of children). The methodologies that went along with this movement would be radically different from the recitation and lecture styles of previous generations (Evans, 2004; Gardner, 2001).

This new movement emerged as the New Social Studies; the name derived from the works of Ted Fenton in his book *The New Social Studies* in 1967. Finally, we began to have the emergence of new methodologies combined with controversial topics such as Civil Rights movement and the beginning of the Vietnam War: a new curriculum developed by social scientists to create classroom activities that could address social problems. Not all the New

Social Studies programs combined alternative methods of teaching with a desire to address critical social issues. The first wave of curriculum projects were mostly structures-of-the-disciplines curriculums that may or may not have dealt with controversial topics. These would include Fenton's work on historical inquiry as well as Tada's work on the spiral curriculum and Shaftel's roleplay curriculum (Bernard-Powers, 2010; Cude, 2010; Stern, 2010). However, there were a significant number of programs that scholars developed during this time which expressed a genuinely democratic education for social studies that emphasized exploring various perspectives through open discussion.

Of the NSS programs that are known, there were at least a few that combined alternative teaching methods with controversial topics for high school education. First, Oliver and Shaver's Harvard Social Studies Project, developed between the 1960s and 1970s, was a series of pamphlets on historical events that had relevance to the public debate at the time. The Public Issue Series was revolutionary at the time with titles such as *The Rise of Organized Labor: Worker Security and Employer Rights*, *Negro Views of America: The Legacy of Oppression*, *Taking a Stand: A Guide to Clear Discussion of Public Issues*, and *Religious Freedom: Minority Faiths and Majority Rule* (Bohan & Feinberg, 2010). These pamphlets encouraged students to examine relevant topics from multiple perspectives, learn about the history of the common man rather than just the Great Men, participate in games, have debates, form opinions, and make value judgments.

Another example of CPIs combined with alternative methodologies during this time was Engle and Ochoa's (1988) decision-oriented curriculum. Whereas the Harvard Social Studies Project focused primarily on policy decisions, the decision-oriented curriculum was focused

more on the individual learner (Evans & Saxe, 1996). Students were encouraged to examine persistent problems in social studies and make decisions based on what they could gather from evidence. Arguably the most significant difference between this decision-oriented curriculum and the standard recitation and lecture style was the assessment. Ochoa-Becker (2007) mentioned how students decision-making should be assessed based on the following skills:

1. Being able to size up an issue and identify the central conflict or the main issue including underlying values that are at stake.
2. Being able to select the information that is relevant to the issue and to relate it logically to proposed solutions.
3. Being able to judge the reliability of various sources of information, including both firsthand experience, reasoning and research-based information;
4. Being able to see an issue, in its proudest possible context, include the value considerations involved.
5. Being able to create a scenario of likely consequences regarding any proposed solution to an issue. and
6. Being able to make reasoned judgments about where the evidence is conflicting or where there is a conflict between desired values. (pp. 252-254)

This form of assessment moves beyond the classic question-and-answer recitation exercises that were dominant and have remained so in 21st century social studies classrooms. This assessment schedule is more emergent and student-centered, and it provides the opportunity for not only multiple perspectives to be heard, but also for multiple solutions to be found. Engle and Ochoa (1988) emphasized how conflicting values and controversy were critical components

of this curriculum, as a heterogeneous population of people with different values cannot come to a consensus on significant public issues without some disagreement.

This movement towards a student-centered methodology to examine contentious issues can also be seen in the work of Massialas and Cox (1966). Their Social Studies Inquiry Model emphasized the importance of students generating hypotheses which could be tested and examined with evidence. In their model, students moved from orientation to hypothesis generation, to identifying definitions, to exploration, to discovering evidence, and finally to generalization. The goal of this activity was to have students deal with “disruptive racial, religious, ethnic, social prestige, and other cleavages” (p. 21). This model was designed to deal with the differing cultural views of modern society so that students could reflect on their values as they related to specific issues. In particular, having students at the center of the lesson who are encouraged to conduct their own explorations can bring students’ social, emotional, and cognitive dimensions to the discussion at hand. Through this process, students are able to clarify their own values in relation to difficult social topics including racial issues and family dynamics.

Arguably, the most controversial of the New Social Studies curriculums would be Bruner’s (1960) *Man: A Course of Study*. The M:ACOS project was a structures-of-the-discipline inquiry-based curriculum. Based on the work of key anthropologists at the time, the curriculum had students examine primary source materials and films to get a deeper understanding of what was human about humans (Johnson, 2010). Students followed a process in which they would observe a situation, describe what they observed, perform some form of thematic analysis, identify common characteristics of groups, label the groups they formed, and recombine items together to create new groups. Students were doing the work of social scientists,

examining controversial topics and practices using science (though they were likely unaware of the controversial nature of what they were doing). Though the results of the M:ACOS project did not show much improvement in terms of academic achievement, students who participated in the program stated that they had a much more favorable view of social studies overall (Johnson, 2010). The project also helped students develop more critical thinking skills.

The earlier developments of the New Social Studies focused on the methodologies of social scientists and did not focus on the needs of the people. The “newer” NSS projects would later include more social issues, no doubt fueled by the ongoing civil strife and problems of the day. The women’s rights movement, the assassination of four critical public figures (Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, John F. Kennedy, and Robert Kennedy), and the ongoing and unpopular Vietnam War fueled the need and drive for students to express themselves and learn about what was going on around them (Evans, 2004). As society became more divided over sensitive topics, students looked for spaces to express their feelings. Students felt restricted in their home life, unable to express their feelings with their more conservative parents.

Despite the new curriculum movements of the New and Newer Social Studies, there is little evidence that these new methodologies received much attention outside of a few places. In a comprehensive study of the decades leading up to the 1970s, students in social studies courses were still participating in lessons dominated by recitation, textbook use, and question and answer format (Cuban, 1984). That is not to say that teachers, during this time period, did not want to change or that they did not like their students, but the social forces that govern school life did not break under the effort of the NSS projects. The Problems of Democracy course, the first real

integrative social studies course that aimed at addressing significant issues in American democratic life, was all but gone by the end of the 1970s (Evans, 2004).

Eventually, this movement would fall out of favor similarly to the progressive era movement. It was both criticized by conservatives and challenged by the new emerging federal bureaucracy surrounding education. While president, Lyndon B. Johnson pushed for his War on Poverty agenda, a comprehensive social welfare policy that included not only programs to help the poor, but also programs to improve education. He signed the Vocational Education Act into law in 1963, shortly after the death of John F. Kennedy. This new law provided jobs skills training for high school students. Two years later, Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, which funneled federal money toward the funding of elementary and secondary schools throughout the country. It was the farthest-reaching federal education law of the time. In tandem with the increased focus on these programs was the need to evaluate whether they were living up to expectations (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011), including many of the NSS programs that were receiving federal funds. Since many of these programs could not produce quantitative proof that they led to an improvement in student achievement or the betterment of the lives of students, much of the federal funding disappeared. The ineffectiveness was due to many factors (Previte, 2010), but primary among them was the issue of implementation (Evans, 2004; Hoge, 2010). It would appear that the increased bureaucratization of education will eventually lead to more social controls in classrooms, more administrative power of school curriculum, and less teacher autonomy.

Standards-based Curriculum and Social Efficiency in the 21st Century.

Continuing with the work his father began over a decade earlier, George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) into law in 2002 (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). NCLB, a recertification of the ESEA, set strict standards for schools and teachers, emphasizing that American education would achieve the highest of standards. This new focus on educational standards led to an increase in state control of education as well as the increased use of standardized testing (Au, 2009; Spring, 2005). President Obama would later recertify NCLB, which would remain in effect until 2015. By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, teachers of all grade levels began to feel the pinch of testing on their time and practice because of these laws and the corresponding testing (Ravitch, 2010; Goldstein, 2014). As teachers and school evaluations became dependent on the results of these tests, many educators believed it to be necessary to “teach to the test” to keep their jobs, abandoning teaching relevant controversial topics to ensure that the standards were unpacked in enough depth to get students to pass.

Review of the Literature

Having provided a review of the history around the issue of teaching controversial public issues with alternative methodologies provides a basis for the following review of the relevant literature about the use of CPIs and alternative methodologies at the time of the present study. The goal of the historical review was to illustrate the difficult social context under which teaching controversial topics with alternative methods have come and gone. Although there were movements in the past to bring alternative methods and CPIs into American classrooms, the social forces outside the classroom continued to shape social studies teachers’ decisions, favoring traditional methodologies and avoiding difficult social topics. As controversy is socially

constructed (Hess, 2008), it is important to show how the development of CPI instruction has evolved with the changing times. The goal of the literature review was to delve into what is currently known about how teachers utilize student-centered methods with sensitive public issues.

Evidence of CPI and Alternative Methodologies in Social Studies Classrooms.

There are conflicting studies about just how much discussion of controversial issues are promoted in class. For example, Russell (2010) conducted a study of 281 secondary social studies teachers to describe their methodologies. Included survey items were dedicated to (a) controversial topics and (b) student-led discussion. The results indicated that nearly 47% of teachers stated that they participated in discussions of controversial topics, and a similar percentage stated that they have student-led discussions. However, observational studies that examine the use of controversy in the classroom have shown little evidence of any significant discussion (Hahn, 1996; Hess, 2008). Other surveys of students and teachers about the prevalence of controversial-issue discussion in class have provided mixed results with anywhere between 27-73% of teachers addressing CPIs in class (Hess, 2008). Teachers gave lip service to the discussion of controversial topics in class, but provided students with few opportunities to authentically interact with the material. Possible explanations for why teachers only provide this superficial examination of important topics include the idea that teaching is primarily about knowledge transmission, the emphasis on a broad social studies curriculum, low expectations of students, the large size of some classrooms, a lack of teacher planning time, and a culture of teacher isolation (Wilén, 1996). Ochoa-Becker (2007) stated, “From many systematic classroom observations, it is fair to characterize social studies classrooms as knowledge-centered, textbook

dependent, often supplement by teacher-lecture with regular tests that require memorization” (p. 146). Little attention is paid to controversial topics, and students rarely even get to the present opinions in their history classes. Prior movements to introduce alternative methods have been largely unsuccessful (Evans, 2004) and students have not been encouraged to engage with material in a way that fosters them to understand democracy in the future, as adults (Leahey, 2014).

There has been a push from some individuals to introduce these types of discussions more and more into classrooms (Sharp, 2009), at least in international contexts. Oulton, Day, and Grace (2004) examined discussions of citizenship education in the United Kingdom and discovered that that controversy itself had become a controversial topic within school systems. Other international examples include the work of Misco (2016), Misco and Tseng (2018), and Copur and Demirel (2016), who examined the use of controversial topics in South Korea, Taiwan, and Turkey, respectively. In all four cases, increased social and bureaucratic pressure was making open discussion of controversial topics difficult. This social pressure to avoid controversy and teach a popular narrative has been seen within the U.S. as well, especially within the design of history textbooks (Loewen, 2007; Romanowski, 2009).

Limited evidence exists of alternative methods being used in social studies classrooms, but this is limited. A popular sentiment among teachers has been that Socratic Seminars are used as an alternative to lecture-based lessons, but there has been little evidence that teachers are using them large scale (Copeland, 2005). Other alternative methods such as Oliver and Shaver’s Public-Issues Model, Massialas and Cox’s Social Studies Inquiry Model, or the Engle-Ochoa Decision Making Model for Citizenship Education have been shown in studies to be used with

some effect (Hahn, 1996; Hess, 2002). Again, however, their implementation has not been on a large scale. These alternative models, and others like them, have repeatedly failed to penetrate into schools. Traditional methods have continued to dominate, partly because educational traditions of previous years create a social constraint on the next generation that can only be undone with the deliberate action of teachers (Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017). Parents, school administrators, and the dominant hidden curriculum found in schools create social conditions that favor curriculum and pedagogy that reinforce the social order. Teaching controversial topics with alternative methods involves students examining multiple perspectives that may challenge that social order, and therefore these methods and topics have often been seen as disruptive.

CPIs in Social Studies Standards and Classrooms.

As mentioned along with the definition of controversial public issues in Chapter 1, there is at least some agreement about which topics are considered controversial. Though one might be able to debate *how* controversial a subject may be, there can be little doubt that certain subjects are considered controversial in schools. Controversy is born from varying perspectives on social issues, and exists wherever disagreements may be had about what people see as important topics. Evans and Saxe (1996) provided a list of some topics considered to be taboo in American schools by Hunt and Metcalf (1968) and Oliver and Shaver (1966). Noddings and Brooks (2017) similarly discussed taboo and neglected topics in schools today, and Rogers et al. (2017) provided a short list of topics that teachers and students have described as being difficult to discuss just within the Trump presidency (e.g., immigration and gender rights). These topics were cross-referenced with state social studies standards to show that at least some topics taught

in the State of Florida can be seen as controversial (Florida Department of Education [FDOE], 2018). This cross-reference can be found in Appendix A.

Several provisos must be addressed with this cross-reference. First, due to the socially constructed nature of controversy, this cross-reference of controversial topics with required Next Generation Sunshine State Standards only applies within the social context of Central Florida. Second, this cross-reference is not exhaustive, and only aims to show that at least some of the topics required in each high school social studies class could be controversial, depending on how those topics are taught. Third, it is also assumed that the associated examinations for these different courses treat each required content standard with fidelity and test each of them, which may or may not be the case. Fourth, just as controversy is socially constructed, and society is apt to change with the times, it should be expected that these topics will also change with the times (Journell, 2016). For example, the relationship between social media and politics could not have been a social topic that Hunt and Metcalf (1968) or Oliver and Shaver (1966) could have predicted; thus, it has not appeared on their lists of general problem areas. Despite the limitations this created for the generalizability of this study, the cross-reference did show how the participants in this study were required to teach some controversial public issues during the academic year.

Benefits of CPI Use in the Classroom.

There has been a significant amount of research done in the field of CPIs and how they relate to learning and engagement. Mild controversy in the classroom is seen as a method that teachers can use to engage students, so much so that it was included in the evaluation framework for teachers in the majority of states in the U.S. (Marzano, 2018). Some of the earliest results

dealt with the use of democratic education and improvements in critical thinking capacities (Quillen & Hanna, 1948). Student participants of the Stanford Social Education Project made use of Dewey's method of reflective inquiry to examine areas of public concern. Senior participants showed growth in the areas of critical thinking, study skills, research skills, and social studies knowledge. The Harvard Social Studies Project (Oliver & Shaver, 1966) saw similar benefits using a public policy approach to examining controversial public issues. Though these methods were highly demanding of teachers, these practices led to heightened thinking abilities in students.

Discussing controversial topics in school has been seen as a vehicle for other long-term democratic goals (Hess, 2009). The discussion of controversial topics in class tie to democratic goals including increasing student's comfort with the nature and ubiquity of conflict in the world outside of school (Hibbing & Theisse-Morse, 2002), enhancing the sense of political efficacy (Gimpel, Lay, & Schuknecht, 2003), and facilitating understanding of democratic values (Oliver & Shaver, 1966).

Behaviors associated with civic attitudes have also been shown to increase under proper conditions while teaching using CPIs. Open-classroom environments that foster civil democratic debate give students the opportunity for higher political participation and sense of civic duty and lower levels of cynicism (Ehman, 1969). Those who participated in social studies classrooms in a traditional format became more cynical and were less able to see how the decisions they made could affect the outcome of our democracy. Increased political engagement also came from those who were able to experience a variety of perspectives (Ehman, 1980). Students exposed to alternative teaching methods and CPIs have also shown increased levels of tolerance for diverse

groups, cosmopolitanism, and global mindedness (Avery, Bird, Johnstone, Sullivan, & Thalhammer, 1992; Blankenship, 1990; Mitchell, 2018). Unsurprisingly, students instructed in a more global and empathetic fashion displayed evidence of global mindedness, and those who were taught in an autocratic, dogmatic style showed evidence of that dogmatism, revealing a crucial tie between discussing controversial public issues and democratic involvement.

According to Sheppard et al., students who engage critically and emotionally with course content will be more motivated to learn because it becomes tied to personal relevance and well-being. However, when engaging in controversial topics, it is vital that students do not feel attacked or threatened; this could activate a fight or flight response in students and shut down their learning. Alternative teaching methods that properly reduce stress in the classroom by de-emphasizing test events and other grade and performance-related measures and instead focus on empathy and understanding can aid in engagement and learning (Massialas & Allen, 1996). Controversial public issues should be approached carefully and deliberately in order to prevent an adverse reaction from students. When handled ethically and methodically, discussions of controversial topics can lead to great benefits for students.

Testing, School Administrations, and Bureaucratic Control Over Classrooms.

Standardized tests are used as administrative controls to ensure that schools, teachers, and students are meeting the standards set by the state. Although, as stated, it can be assumed that at least some social studies standards include controversial topics for social studies teachers to teach, the methods for doing so do not. Administrators know that tests such as the U.S. History End-of-Course assessment are used to determine school grades; therefore, they have encouraged teachers, implicitly or otherwise, to teach so that students perform as well as possible on these

tests. The methods needed to get higher scores on the multiple-choice assessments used on standardized tests are not the same methods for having students explore the complexities of controversial public issues. Multiple choice questions, which have been common on End-of-course assessments, are convergent by nature; they test a student's ability to identify a single answer that has been agreed upon by experts. However, controversial topics are divergent by nature, as there are no straightforward answers where controversy is involved. Therefore, standardized tests, as currently employed have not been designed to explore multiple perspectives on controversial public issues. Standardized testing restricts teachers' autonomy in the classroom, favoring positive test scores in lieu of discourse (Au, 2009).

Leahey (2014) took this discussion further, noting the impact of teachers aligning instructions with the content and form of the test:

When teachers align instruction to reflect the content and form of the test, quality instruction may indeed be compromised. Standardized tests generally test historical knowledge in a simplified, decontextualized manner where a single item is used to represent student's knowledge of an entire event or era. (p. 61)

Leahey also observed that social studies curriculum limited to merely what is tested removes students' opportunities to determine and assess the historical record. Even when students have the opportunity to examine primary sources and document-based questions (DBQs), they may only select from sources that are provided on the examination. This distorts the relationship between the curriculum, the teacher, and the assessment (Leahey, 2014).

Taylor (1996) mentioned several cases involving academic freedom in classrooms, noting that teacher autonomy was "more limited in public schools than in colleges, universities, and

private schools because of greater regulation of the public school curriculum by state and local school boards.” (p. 17) This regulation takes several forms, but requiring that social studies teachers meet specific content standards is the most limiting. Social studies teachers, especially at the middle and high school levels, typically have so many content standards that are required by law to be taught that there is little time to delve in depth into the subject. For example, an analysis of standards documents examined by Marzano (2004) revealed that 32.6% of all terms that students were required to learn (2,579 of 7,923) were history terms. Mainly this is because history standards have been content specific, focusing on certain individuals, events, and places that students are expected to know. When there is so much breadth to the curriculum, there is little time to go into controversial topics, many of which take significant amounts of time to explore sufficiently. It should also be noted that exploring topics in enough depth to uncover possible controversies goes well beyond what has been required of most social studies content standards.

Along with content standards are required tests that constrain teachers. In a case study conducted by Monte-Sano (2008), a teacher who taught an elective humanities course had higher success implementing alternative teaching methods (e.g. inquiry methodology) when compared to a similar teacher in an AP U.S. History course. The history teacher had to prepare his students for a high-stakes test at the end of the year. The primary reason the APUS teacher gave for not using alternative methods was that it did not fit with testing. Apple (2004), Kelly (2009), and Fielding (2011) similarly argued that the school curriculum has become preoccupied with a culture of effectiveness and efficiency, more concerned with teaching as much content as quickly as possible rather than reflecting deeply on critical topics. Accountability and testing have

transformed social studies classrooms into spaces in which learning happens despite the assessments (Mueller & Colley, 2015); a successful social studies teacher is one who is able to teach despite the limitations that testing has created in the classroom.

Teachers may also fear repercussion from the community or administration. Often schools and school boards value smooth running and a lack of administrative problems, an administrative model that imposes authority over teachers (McNeil, 1986). Administrators may feel ill-at-ease with teachers dealing with controversial issues, wishing to avoid upsetting the community, either because they wish to avoid possible legal implications or because they may even see controversy as a political threat. An extreme version of this can be seen outside the U.S. in countries such as Taiwan and Turkey, where authoritative national political pressures discourage any controversy from being taught in schools (Copur & Demirel, 2016; Miso & Tseng, 2018), though it is undoubtedly true that political pressures can also affect teachers' pedagogical decisions in the U.S. as well. This feeling of restriction and a lack of autonomy occurs even when there are no official bureaucratic controls. Teacher perceptions as to their level of control in the classroom are also an essential factor, with many teachers steering away from CPIs and alternative methods because of the beliefs they have about what may happen if they veer from expected norms (Ochoa-Becker, 2007).

Teacher Training, Pedagogy, and Alternative Methods.

One reason for the lack of alternative methods seen in high school social studies classrooms may be the lack of teacher training in using methods outside of teacher-driven lecture. Bittman et al. (2017) examined teacher preparation programs for social studies teachers in the United States, noting that there was often little coursework in classroom management or

pedagogy. Even if teachers have received formal training in alternative methods, they often resort to what Lortie (1975) referred to as the apprenticeship of observation, using their previous experience as students to inform their teaching practices. They do this because they find the practice more comfortable and familiar, resisting using newer, unproven methods. Ochoa-Becker (2007) proposed that teachers lack the required training on using alternative teaching methods to teach controversial public issues, citing a study performed by Goodman (1988). Goodman found that teacher preparation programs rarely included pedagogy on democratic education. Additionally, the FDOE only requires that prospective social studies teachers have a degree in a field related to social studies (or any bachelor's degree with up to 30 credit hours of social studies credits) and have passed a content-area examination (FDOE, 2018). This collection of circumstances illustrates that when teachers do venture into controversial topics, they often have little, if any, formal training in how to do so effectively or ethically.

We should, therefore, expect that few social studies teachers have had instruction on how to teach controversial topics. Teaching controversial public issues is difficult, and teachers are often unprepared to deal with them. Discussions of sensitive topics such as immigration and gender function better when teachers have received training in how to maintain a healthy and civil climate and how to foster meaningful classroom debate. Teaching CPIs well takes time, practice, and training. It is not an endeavor to enter lightly, and it can end disastrously for both students and teachers if handled improperly.

Perceptions of Roles of High School Social Studies Teachers

The perceived role of social studies teachers influences their pedagogical choices. Teachers will only employ alternative methods if doing so meets their teaching philosophy as to

how they see the teacher's role in class. The traditional history teacher exists as the purveyor of all knowledge in the classroom, a wise sage that pours information into the minds of students as if they are buckets to be filled (Freire, 1970). Those who resist this image may instead prefer the role of facilitator, in which they foster debate and discussion in class. Teachers may view not only their positions as instructors differently; they may differ as to how involved they should be in the talks themselves (Evans, 2011). Some have argued that it is best that teachers remain neutral to allow students to develop moral faculties within themselves rather than have them imparted by teachers (Kohlberg, 1968). This advice is well received by some school administrators, who would rather avoid teachers abusing their power and treating classrooms as political platforms. However, others have stated that social studies teachers should demonstrate valid moral reasoning and participate in the democracy about which they teach (Apple, 2004). This idea then sparks a debate about which role the teacher should have in society: facilitator, teacher, lecturer, or something else entirely. This role is determined by the social context of not only the region, but also the time.

Summary

High school social studies teachers have avoided teaching controversial topics using alternative teaching methods. Although attempts have been made to modify historic teacher behavior, the continued push for social efficiency has led to few teachers embracing CPIs and alternative teaching methods. Teachers may believe that the standardized testing regime is controlling their pedagogical decisions; whether this is true or not is irrelevant so long as it is believed to be true. There are also conflicting beliefs about the proper role of the high school social studies teacher concerning teaching controversial topics and the best approach to use when

teaching. There are also more practical concerns related to how social studies teachers make pedagogical decisions regarding teaching CPIs, namely the pre-service training they receive and if they have enough experience in using alternative methods. Due to teacher certification laws and a lack of required pedagogical training, few social studies teachers receive formal training in alternative methods, and many rely on the apprenticeship of observation, personal experience, and trial-and-error to inform their teaching practice. If controversial topics are taught in the high school social studies classroom, it is often through a direct instruction format, relying heavily on lecture. By not utilizing student-driven methods, lessons are falling short of the participative democratic ideal.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter contains an explanation of the methodology used to conduct this study. The framework and philosophical assumptions of the study are presented, and the overall design of the study is discussed. Additionally, the role of the researcher, the sampling method, the instrumentation used, the data collection and analysis procedures are detailed along with the important ethical concerns of the study.

Research Design

This qualitative study employed a grounded theory design, which is a research design based on inquiry in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the perspective of participants (Charmaz, 2006). Though the theory generated helps explain information found in the review of the literature, the theory must be produced only from the participants of the study. The process involves the researcher gathering data by asking open-ended questions of participants, analyzing the data to form categories, looking for patterns, generalizations, or themes, and finally relating those generalizations to past experiences that help illustrate the theory. Grounded theory is abductive rather than inductive or deductive; the researcher gathers data up to a point when a puzzling finding emerges, after which an imaginative leap is used to find a well-informed theory that explains the finding (Reichert, 2007).

Grounded theory was the ideal choice for this study because its purpose was to understand the decision-making process of social studies teachers. Because the end goal was to

create a conceptual model of how decision-making occurs, the conceptually and socially determined grounded theory format was chosen as the most appropriate to respond to the research questions which guided the study. Through systematically researching this phenomenon and analyzing the data, a substantive theory about how and why teachers decide to teach controversial topics could be determined. The theory in the present study was developed keeping context and conditions in mind to develop categories of data that were linked together within the grounded theory.

Framework of the Study

This study had a social constructivist framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Glasersfeld, 1988). Through this framework, knowledge can be viewed as being actively constructed by those who use it through social interactions with the world. The mind organizes information it encounters by either assimilating information into understood schema or accommodating that information into a new schema. This framework does not preclude the possibility of an objective reality, although it does hold that knowledge is “a collection of conceptual structure that turns out to be adapted, or viable, within the knowing subjects range of experience (van Glasersfeld, 1988, p.4). Though reality may be objective, our understanding of it is constructed from our subjective experiences from it. In the context of this study, the experiences in question were the perceptions and decision-making processes of high school social studies teachers.

The researcher examined the complexity of teacher perceptions in order to develop a theory about how teachers make pedagogical decisions. The meanings of topics associated with education are understood socially and historically, with those meanings being recursively

adapted to organize information from new social experiences. The goal of social constructivist researchers has been to rely on the reports of study participants as much as possible to generate the theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Teachers do not make pedagogical decisions in a vacuum; decisions are developed and constructed through interaction with others. Among these topics are the cultural norms of American democracy, which include the participation of well-informed citizens in a free society where they can affect change.

The focus of this study was on how teachers have constructed the meaning of democratic education for themselves, and how they see the use of controversial public issues (CPIs) and alternative teaching methods within that framework. In order to grasp the full complexity of teacher responses, interview questions were developed to be broad and general enough to allow for divergent and emergent responses.

Role of the Researcher

As the primary researcher in this qualitative grounded theory study, it was essential to identify the aspects of my role not only in the research but also in the research setting. As I conducted the research and chose methods, I filtered the data through my perspectives and experiences to determine which methods were most appropriate and which categories of data emerged. I was the primary analyst, though there were two additional analysts involved in the final analysis of data. This study used two inter-raters to confirm the codes that emerged from the data analysis and to counteract possible bias on my part. These inter-raters were graduate students in a social studies education doctoral program.

My role also was influenced by the framework of the study. The framework of this study was social constructivism, meaning that the phenomena that were studied were the knowledge

created by study participants through the experiences they had when deciding how they would teach controversial public issues. This means that not only were the results gathered from study participants the result of realities they had constructed through interaction with one another but also that the conclusions that I drew came from my social interactions with them.

In addition to this, the study took place within a setting where I, the researcher, worked. Some of the interviewed teachers were colleagues and peers. Care was taken to protect study participants from possible recourse in both the collection and storing of the data. Off-site locations were chosen by study participants to ensure that they felt secure and that administrators were not present. Pseudonyms were employed to protect the identify of study participants. Data from the study were stored on a password-protected laptop. Finally, data from the study were deleted at the conclusion of the study.

Population and Sampling

This grounded theory study used a convenience sample of high school social studies teachers from high schools in three eastern Central Florida school districts: Seminole County, Volusia County, and Orange County. This region included all high schools within the school district of the primary researcher (Seminole County), as well as nearby high schools of two adjacent school districts (Orange and Volusia Counties). This region contained as many high school social studies teachers within a 20-mile radius from the primary researcher's home that could be reached through publicly-available means. The purpose for using this research location was that study participants needed to (a) be relatively close to the primary researcher so that they could be easily reached after school hours and (b) be relatively close to a convenient location of

the study participant's choice. The goal was to maximize the number of willing teachers by making participation in the study as easy as possible.

Invitations to participate in this study were sent to 150 high school social studies teachers found in Seminole, Orange, and Volusia counties. These were the high school social studies teachers that (a) taught within the 20-mile radius described above and (b) were able to be contacted through publicly available email addresses listed on the website for their school. High school social studies teachers were selected as the ideal population for this study because (a) their content includes controversial topics that can be discussed, (b) these teachers are evaluated on their ability to teach that content, (c) high-school students are at an appropriate age and maturity level to discuss controversial topics, and (d) social studies teachers are expected to prepare students for citizenship. More specifically, high school social studies teachers with certification to teach social studies grades 6-12 were chosen, as their jobs included their ability to teach controversial social studies content standards. Of the 150 study participants that were contacted, a total of 14 high school social studies teachers from the identified research area agreed to participate in this study.

Due to the social-constructivist framework of this study, it was preferable to obtain as many perspectives as possible from participating teachers. Because teachers have different experiences from operating in their particular social contexts, they had each developed unique knowledge that could be examined through study. Therefore, I avoided any further limitations on recruiting to increase the chance of exploring as much of these uniquely constructed perspectives as possible. Participants were not limited to those who frequently used controversial topics in

class, as was the case with the grounded theory study conducted by Hess (2002). There were also no limitations on recruitment based on demographics such as age, race, income, or gender.

Study participants were asked to describe their roles in their school or organization through interviews; their background and credentials; how much experience they had in teaching; and which courses they taught. A summary of participant characteristics is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Participant Characteristics

Participants	Educational Preparation	Years of Experience	Social Studies Courses Taught (by Level)
Mrs. Beda	Education	7	Honors/Advanced Placement
Mrs. Secia	Education	5	Standard/Honors
Mrs. Freya	Alternate Certification	5	Honors/Advanced Placement
Mr. Owen	Alternate Certification	17	Honors/Advanced Placement
Mrs. Lois	Alternate Certification	31	Standard
Mr. Harvey	Alternate Certification	7	Advanced Placement
Mrs. Ragna	Alternate Certification	13	Honors/Advanced Placement
Mr. Patton	Education	22	Honors/Advanced Placement
Mr. Humbert	Education	28	Standard
Mr. Kearney	Alternate Certification	8	Advanced Placement
Mr. Sloan	Alternate Certification	7	Standard/Honors
Mrs. Rosabella	Education	1	Standard/Honors
Mrs. Ritza	Education	20	Advanced Placement
Mrs. Heloise	Education	26	n/a

Teachers were asked to provide background information to understand what type of formal training they had in pedagogy. Teachers were not asked their ages in order to preserve anonymity and confidentiality. Because there were few high school social studies teachers in the Central Florida area, it would be relatively easy to identify them using only their age, gender, and subject area. Although participant age was not gathered in this study, participants were asked

which classes were taught and how long they had been teaching them. These data were gathered to see if a trend emerged in how teachers of different subjects defined controversy, how teachers of different courses decided how they taught controversy, or to see how overall teaching experience influenced pedagogical choices. Gathering these data allowed for an understanding of how age can be a factor, without explicitly asking for it, and possibly breaking confidentiality.

An important note must be made as to the different levels of courses described in this study. Roughly speaking, three different levels of courses were mentioned by teachers and administrators in this study: Standard, Honors, and Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate [AP/IB]. Teachers in Standard classes are expected to teach material specified in state content standards and students are expected to complete work that is considered to be appropriate for high-school level students. Honors classes focus on the same material, but include additional exercises, enrichment activities, more projects, and a larger workload than Standard courses. Honors courses also often offer students the potential for a higher overall, grade point average by giving them a bonus. AP and IB courses are designed to match the rigor of undergraduate college courses. All AP and IB courses end in some sort of high-stakes assessment, unlike Standard and Honors courses, where only certain courses yield such benefits.

When teachers mention that they have to meet state standards, they are specifically referring to the state content standards that are required by law for teachers to teach. In Florida, this includes the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (FDOE, 2019). These standards apply to all standard and honors level courses. AP and IB courses also have standards, but these are created by non-government entities. However, if one is not careful, it is easy to confuse how the term “standard” is used throughout this study. To avoid confusion, I have used the capitalized

“Standard” to refer to Standard courses, and the lower case “standard” to refer to the specific content standards. Course titles (e.g. U.S. History, Government, Economics) have also been capitalized in the results to avoid confusion.

Instrumentation

This study used two primary instruments to gather data from participants: interviews and focus groups. The study was divided into two different phases and each phase used a slightly different research instrument. The study began with gathering interview data to start generating a working theory from the emerging data from the teacher interviews. Once the original theory was developed, the study moved onto a second phase which included focus group interviews. The purpose of using the focus groups was to test the theory generated from the individual interviews and see if adjustments were needed. Participants in the first phase were not used in the second.

Interviews are the typical method used in grounded theory studies (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviews were used to gather rich data from participants who have experienced a process to identify a theory explaining how that process works. Questions for the interview protocol were chosen by synthesizing a similar grounded theory study dealing with controversial topics (Misco, 2016). These questions were chosen because (a) they were already part of a peer-reviewed study within the subject area and (b) they addressed different perspectives on teaching controversial topics in a social constructivist manner. However, Misco designed questions for teachers in South Korea rather than Central Florida and they were not broad enough to generate a substantial grounded theory for deciding which methodology teachers select. Thus, Misco’s questions were supplemented with others put forth by Charmaz

(2006), because of her prominence as one of the founding theorists in constructivist grounded theory. Broad ranging questions were designed to allow for a detailed discussion of the topic. They included several sub-questions that were informed by the literature review. In particular, questions about teacher training, the role of teachers in teaching controversial topics, the benefits and disadvantages of their chosen methodologies, and how methods have changed over time were added. The final interview protocol was sent to the dissertation committee for approval. The complete interview protocol can be found in Appendix B.

As it was important to confirm the information gathered from the individual interviews, focus groups were also employed. Focus group interviews were utilized because grouping participants together may yield advantageous results. In this research, interviewees were similar to one another (i.e. in the same profession), and the time for gathering information was limited (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, focus groups were used to determine if answers to the interview questions would vary significantly if teachers could respond to one another. Because the focus groups were used to confirm the information from the individual interviews, the questions used in the focus group protocol were purposely similar to those which had been posed in the individual interview protocol. I removed some items, however, because I expected that the focus group interviews would last longer.

The first question that was removed for the focus group protocol required teachers to describe controversial topics in their field. Although I believed this was necessary for the individual interviews, it was clear from the individual interviews that (a) teachers were able to at least mention some controversial topics and (b) that teachers would need to recognize at least some controversial topics in order to answer the other interview questions. This second point

aligns with the social constructivism, emphasizing that in order to have different forms of knowledge (i.e., ideas about controversial topics versus non-controversial topics), people must recognize different social experiences. The second question involved the training that teachers had with CPI pedagogy. This question was deleted due to time constraints, but a follow-up email was sent to teachers after the focus group meeting, and all focus group participants responded. Focus group questions were validated using the same method as had been used in validating the interview protocol.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection began in January of 2019 and continued until March of 2019. Study participants were contacted by email and invited to volunteer as part of this study. The email included the invitation as well as a summary explanation of the research. Email addresses were obtained through publicly available school websites. As shown in Figure 2, those individuals who accepted the invitation were divided into two groups: one for individual interviews and one for focus group interviews. No teacher participated in both phases. As a result, the interview and focus group sample, when combined, created a study sample of 14 study participants.

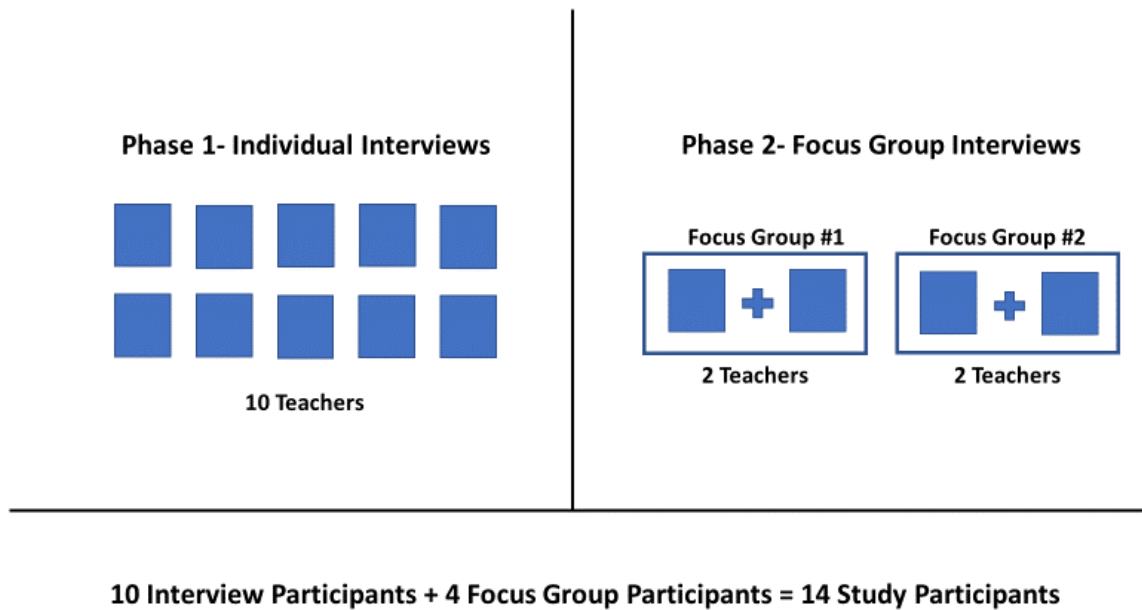


Figure 2. Grouping of study participants by phase

The first phase of the study began with gathering interview data from ten teachers. Teachers were placed into the first phase if they were only available to meet earlier in the study or if they could not meet with other teachers at a convenient location. Time, date, and locations for interviews were determined at the convenience of the interviewees, though the time was set either before or after school hours per the IRB stipulations. Sites were limited to public locations outside of school which were selected by the interviewee. Once a meeting was scheduled, a summary explanation of the research was emailed to participants to inform them of the purpose of the study, that their responses would be recorded, and to inform them of their rights as a study participant. Once the summary explanation of research was received, and consent for the interview had been obtained, the interview commenced. Individual and focus group interviews were audio recorded and transcribed at a later date. Notes were taken during the interview to track common trends and unique data that emerged between different interview participants.

These notes were added to a research journal to be used in generating open codes for the grounded theory.

The focus groups constituted the second phase of the study. The second phase of the study included the remaining four members of the sample whose data was used to generate the final grounded theory of this study. The focus group participants indicated that (a) they would be able to meet towards the end of the study in March, (b) they would be comfortable being interviewed with other teachers, and (c) they could agree on a convenient central location. There were two separate focus groups with each group meeting for one session. Each focus group included two participants who were social studies teachers in the same district who could meet in a central location. Because only four study participants were willing to be part of the focus groups, they were divided into two smaller groups to allow some interaction between group members. Focus group interviews were conducted after the phase one interviews were completed and continued until all four volunteers had participated in a group.

A convenient location for the focus group meetings was determined by the researcher, but later agreed upon by the focus group members. Focus group participants were emailed prior to meeting with a summary explanation of the research to inform them of the purpose of the study, that their responses would be recorded, and to inform them of their rights as study participants. The focus group interviews began by obtaining consent from participants to be recorded. Otherwise, the data collection process was the same as that followed in the individual interviews. Notes were collected during the focus group in a research journal to check the theory generated by the initial open codes and adjusted it as necessary.

Participants were asked to bring to their interviews or focus groups any relevant documentation relating to their lesson plans, classroom activities, or policies that relate to either controversial public issues or alternative teaching methods. I also shared my email with participants, providing them with the opportunity to send documents later. Documents were compiled as evidence of teacher's decision-making processes. These data were used for analysis and triangulation.

Study participants were offered a \$10 Starbucks gift certificate to compensate them for their time.

Data Analysis

Audio recordings from both the individual interviews and the focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim. Once transcribed, the original transcripts were then edited to remove unnecessary filler words (e.g., "um", "like", "so") not related to the study. The transcripts and qualitative data from the interviews and focus groups were analyzed systematically using initial coding (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data were inserted within an analysis framework established in Excel 2016 to facilitate identifying categories of data. In order to increase its reliability, the data, were independently coded by two additional analysts who discussed discrepancies in order to reach a consensus and apply a final code (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This independent coding also included reducing or eliminating redundant codes. These two analysts were graduate students in a social studies education doctoral program and former social studies teachers.

Codes were generated and combined to identify common themes. The methods used to gather and organize codes included initial coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding

(Charmaz, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The initial coding began with examining common themes found from the notes taken during interviews that were useful in establishing general categories to help summarize the data. Once the general categories were identified in the initial codes, focused coding was employed to show how details from the transcribed interviews fit within the initially coded framework. Using abductive reasoning (Reichert, 2007), a connection between the general categories and the fleshed out focused codes was identified by examining trends and connections among the data. This final theoretical code was then organized into a conceptual map used to generate a theory of change model to display the result. According to Knowlton and Phillips (2013), the purpose of a theory of change model is to “display an idea or program in its simplest form using limited information. These models offer a chance to test ‘plausibility’” (p. 5). Finally, a narrative description, written for each major category, was used to develop a grounded theory to show how the data were conceptually linked.

Document analysis was employed as a triangulation of the data for analysis, using lesson planning materials and evidence of activities provided by teachers in the study. Most of the items gathered were materials used in class or lesson plans, although some other ancillary classroom documents (e.g., calendars and a permission slip for covering sensitive materials) were also reviewed. Documents obtained from participants were compared with data gathered in the interviews to determine if there were any issues relating to the reliability of participant answers. Of the 14 study participants, 11 provided some form of documentation for either their lesson plans or activities. A summary of these documents, as well as samples provided by teachers, can be found in Appendices C-F. These documents were analyzed using the same coding structure as

the interviews (i.e. initial, focused, theoretical). Their primary use was to confirm categories developed in the initial and focused coding.

Reliability and Validity

Several methods were utilized to ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument, process, and results. Teachers were interviewed off-site to ensure that their responses would be less inhibited by the close proximity of an authority figure in the school. Interviewees' information was also kept confidential, (i.e., pseudonyms were used instead of participants' real names). Participation was entirely voluntary; participants were not coerced to participate.

Questions for the interview protocol were chosen by synthesizing a similar grounded theory study dealing with controversial topics (Misco, 2016) with generic questions provided by Charmaz (2006), a founding theorist in constructivist grounded theory. The final interview protocol was sent to the dissertation committee for approval before being used in the study.

Data were independently coded by two analysts besides myself who discussed discrepancies in order to reach a consensus and apply a final code to increase the reliability of the interview and focus group results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These two analysts were graduate students in a social studies education doctoral program and former social studies teachers. Each analyst provided inter-rater reliability by examining the data independently and generating an initial code as well as organizing the focused codes. The codes of the separate analysts were compared with those of the primary researcher; redundant or superfluous codes were removed, and a final theoretical code was attained through consensus.

Ethical Considerations

Because the researcher was a teacher employed in the research setting, and study participants also worked within the same setting, it was vital to protect the identity of all research participants. Care was taken to ensure that the identities of participants remained confidential, and that the focus group did not include any administrative personnel. Specific demographic data were not collected from teachers to further protect their identities. All individual interviews were conducted after school hours without the presence of students or administrative personnel at locations of the interviewees' choice. Study participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity further. Data from the interviews, including transcriptions and audio files, were stored on a password-protected laptop, and no data from the interviews or focus groups were shared over school emails because of Florida's public records law. Focus group participants were informed in advance of the nature of the topic and were informed that other teachers would be discussing how they teach sensitive controversial topics in the classroom. To compensate participants for giving of their time for this study, they were offered a \$10 gift certificate. Finally, all audio from this study was deleted upon completion of this final report.

Summary

This study utilized a grounded theory methodology based on the framework of social constructivism. The researcher conducted interviews and focus groups with high school social studies teachers between January and March 2019. Documents were gathered to supplement data from the interviews. Study participants were chosen from the eastern Central Florida area (i.e. Seminole, Orange, and Volusia Counties) and constituted a convenience sample. Study participants were asked about their experiences with teaching controversial public issues in high

school social studies classrooms, the purpose of which was to develop a theory based on data gathered from this study. Notes were taken during the process to initially develop and then later refine the theory as it was developed during the study. Several steps were taken to ensure not only the safety and confidentiality of the participants but also the reliability and validity of the data. The data were analyzed thematically by generating varieties of codes to identify the decision-making process of teachers. Data from the focus groups and document analyses were used to verify the reliability of information gathered during interviews and check the robustness of the grounded theory. In addition to the primary researcher, two additional analysts provided inter-rater reliability of results. These analysts were graduate students in a social studies doctoral

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter contains the findings from the interviews and materials gathered in the present grounded theory study, the CPI Decision-Making Model. The chapter begins with an examination of how the background of the different participants helped to shape the particular pathways that participating teachers made towards their lesson plans. Next, the three phases (recognition, intention, and planning) of the CPI Decision-Making Model are presented and explained, followed by a discussion of how context and intervening conditions influence the different pathways that teachers take towards the delivery of their instruction. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the unique data outliers that did not correspond with the model and possible explanations for their existence.

Evidence of Traditional and Alternative Pedagogy From the Study.

Before getting to the central research question in the present study, it is important to identify the phenomenon upon which it was based. The purpose of this study was to examine why teachers decide to utilize specific methodologies when teaching controversial issues, and it is essential to initially identify those methodologies within the study itself. When asked to describe their method for teaching controversial topics, teachers in this study gave descriptions that fit within one of two models: the traditional methodology and the alternative methodology.

The characteristics of these models are summarized in Figure 3.

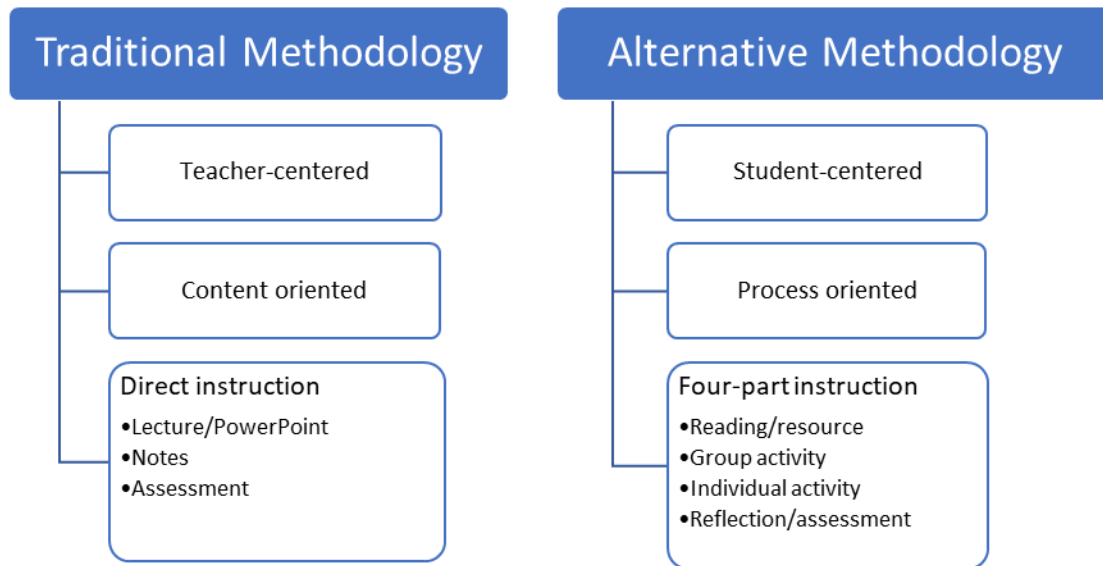


Figure 3. Summary of differences between traditional and alternative methodologies with controversial public issues (CPIs) as described by study participants.

Six of the 14 study participants described using what can be categorized as traditional pedagogy, though often they referred to this as being “old school.” This label is fitting, as most of the study participants who described using traditional methodology (five of the six) have been teaching for more than a decade. Their lessons were teacher-centered, dominated by direct instruction, focused on delivering content rather than teaching skills, and typically have been assessed using multiple choice. For example, Mr. Patton described his typical lesson format as follows:

How I would introduce it to them is the PowerPoint [sic]. The PowerPoints are created every year. I see what works or did not work. I see if it’s clear to them, and I just introduce it to them. I don’t think much about it. I just stay on course. I don’t go off onto

a different avenue, especially with religion. I don't put my own beliefs into it. I spell it out for them, this is what it is. I don't do much. I just present it to them...My style is that they copy everything that's on the screen. It gives them a chance to be more reserved, more disciplined, so they copy the notes.

Later, Mr. Patton mentioned that he likes to "have an audience" with his lessons and that his PowerPoint driven lessons provide a simple structure that is easy to follow. He stated that he addressed more social issues in the past with more open discussion, but now he focuses purely on the content. This is partially due to a bad experience with parents, although he also feels that he has matured. "Maybe I've become more wiser, more tolerant because of what is being said or being done." Whether because of fear of parents or simply the passage of time, Mr. Patton has chosen to use a traditional methodology.

As opposed to the "old school" teachers, eight teachers claimed to adopt a more alternative methodology. These teachers had less experience, with six of the seven having less than a decade of total experience. Their lessons were more student-centered, focused more on developing skills rather than just mastering content, and typically had a four-part format. They described their lessons as typically starting with some stimulus such as reading or video. Next, students are given some independent work to interpret the information for themselves. Following that, the lesson shifts to some group activity so that students can experience different perspectives on the reading. Finally, the students are given either an assessment or reflection activity, which can either be a writing assignment, journal, or another test. A good example of this came from Ms. Beda:

Once I have a plan in place, I find at least two resources per side or opinion that I have previously vetted: primary source documents, speeches, any type of research-based support, because in high school they are still very much developing their ability to research. I then provide them all of the sources that I've found from both perspectives. I make students read through them, analyze them, take notes on what I've given them, and then I tell students "Alright, based on that, what perspective would you pick and then you have to find additional support I have not given you." They go through and I try to get students not to use Wikipedia and all those sources. I usually tell students "If you go to Wikipedia, scroll all the way down to the bottom and look at those sources and go to those." I make students get at least two pieces of additional evidence so, when it does come time to supporting an argument, they'll have four different pieces of evidence in order that they can back up why they think what they think about the topic.

The different teachers using an alternative methodology had slight variations between them. Mrs. Beda's lesson plan involved a significant amount of source analysis with a small focus on group discussion to compare perspectives. Mrs. Lois, a U.S. Government teacher, sometimes skipped the group assignments if she does not have enough time in class, preferring to have students write a reflection in a personal journal after a short in-class discussion. Mrs. Secia provided documentation for a four-part lesson plan (Appendix D) on gender dynamics for her sociology class. Of note with regard to Mrs. Secia's lesson plan is that it incorporated multiple group sessions during the week, but had only small writing assignments as assessments. Despite any minor differences, these student-centered lessons of the alternative methodology group of

teachers stand out when compared with the lessons described by their traditional teacher-centered counterparts.

From the descriptions of the lessons provided by teachers, I used the common traits of traditional methodologies versus alternative methodologies mentioned in Chapter 1 to create Table 2, which displays the study participant teachers by the dominant methodology they professed to use in class. More specifically, this table was created from teachers' descriptions of their lessons involving controversial public issues. Most teachers, nine of the 14, mentioned that they teach controversial topics differently than non-controversial ones. For example, Mrs. Ragna stated that for non-controversial topics, she mostly uses direct instruction and note-taking. This was confirmed by examining her unit calendar (Appendix E). Within it, although she did have activities based on exploring student perspectives and interpretations of historical events, the calendar was dominated by PowerPoint lectures and AP Test Preparation. In contrast, Mr. Kearney stated that he would be more willing to do projects and student-centered learning with non-controversial issues. However, as the focus of this study was on how teachers chose to teach controversial topics in class, I used the information to document how teachers of different methodologies decided to teach controversial topics in class.

Table 2

Teacher Participants by Dominant Methodology When Teaching Controversial Public Issues (CPIs)

Methodologies	
Traditional	Alternative
Mr. Owen	Mrs. Beda
Mr. Harvey	Mrs. Secia
Mr. Humbert	Mrs. Freya
Mrs. Ritza	Mrs. Ragna
Mr. Patton	Mrs. Rosabella
Mr. Sloan	Mrs. Lois
	Mrs. Heloise
	Mr. Kearney ^a

With the two main pedagogies within the study identified and how teachers were associated with them, I addressed the central question, “What is the process that high school social studies teachers use to decide which methods to use when teaching controversial public issues?”

The Controversial Public Issue (CPI) Decision-Making Model

Data gathered from teacher interviews were compiled and coded to find relationships among the responses. The result was a non-linear theory of change model (Knowlton & Phillips) that I have termed the CPI Decision-Making Model (Figure 4). Evidence from teacher responses indicated that there was a three-phase conceptual process that teachers utilized to determine which methodology they will use in teaching controversial public issues.

The first phase identified was the Recognition Phase. In this phase, teachers use various means to identify which content is controversial. The second phase is the Intention Phase, where teachers determine their motivation for teaching a controversial topic or not. The third phase is the Planning Phase, where teachers determine how they will utilize the tools and expertise at

their disposal to teach the controversial topics that they have identified. It is important to note that these phases are conceptually linked rather than being chronologically linked. Teachers who participated in this study exhibited evidence of all three phases, but there was no indication that any one phase must occur first. For example, though one might assume that it is necessary to acknowledge the presence of a controversial issue before planning a lesson for it, some teachers begin planning any lesson with an assessment of classroom management. That being stated, because each teacher demonstrated evidence of each phase of this decision-making model before deciding on their preferred method of instruction, it is still informative to organize information in this manner.

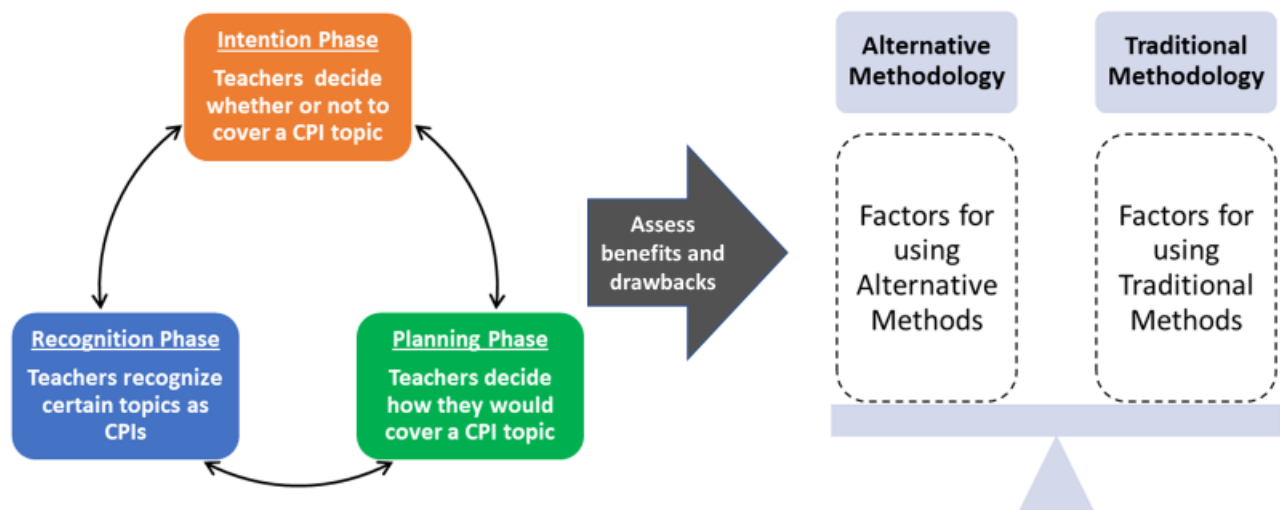


Figure 4. The Controversial Public Issues (CPI) Decision-making Model

The example contained in Figure 5 may help illustrate the model. Mr. Owen, one of the teachers within this study, was a high school social studies teacher who had to decide how to teach a controversial topic. As he moved through the three phases, he weighed the different benefits and drawbacks of teaching the topic using traditional versus alternative methods. He emerged from this decision-making process with several factors having influenced his decision, each of which is colored corresponding to the phase from which that factor emerged. In the Recognition Phase, he identified that although there were several controversial topics that he needed to teach, he also needed to teach many more content standards; thus, he was encouraged to cover as much as possible quickly, and to rely more on traditional methods. In the Intention Phase, he decided that it was important for students to learn about controversial topics as part of a democratic education, a factor that contributes to more alternative methods. Within the Planning Phase, because he wished to focus on teaching skills as well as content, he decided that the limited time and the need to maintain classroom order were more important, leading him to traditional methods yet again. As a result, Mr. Owen's methods tended to rely on traditional methodologies, with notes, lecture, and worksheets being his typical teaching tools.

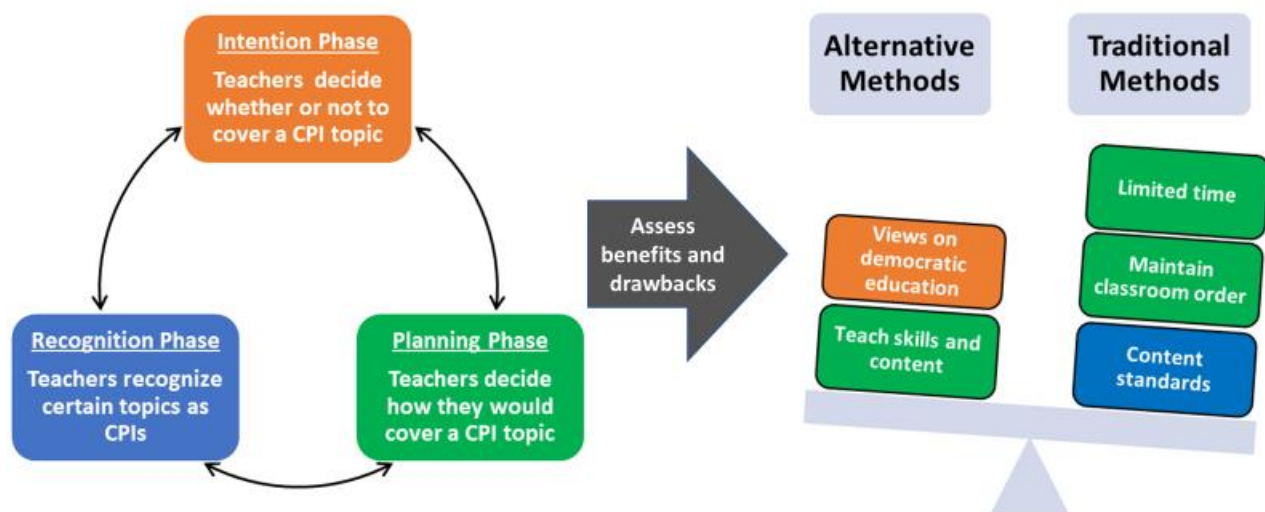


Figure 5. Example of teacher decision-making using the CPI Decision-making Model

The Recognition Phase

The Recognition Phase includes those factors revolving around how teachers identify the controversial topics within their course of study. As controversy is a social construct (Hess, 2008), teachers identify controversial topics in numerous ways. Although some teachers are content experts with specialized background knowledge on controversial topics in their field of study, many learn through more informal means. Despite their source, these factors help shape the topics that some teachers treat with special care.

Required State Content Standards

Teachers were asked, "What provides the most control over your decision-making process?" The most common answer given was state standards and, by association, standardized testing. This also extends to the standards and benchmarks used by the College Board for those

teachers who teach AP courses. The majority of teachers indicated that standards guided their instruction and that certain topics within those standards were considered controversial. Although the controversial topics varied by course and course standard, each teacher was able to mention at least a few topics that were contentious for classroom discussion. U.S. History teachers, such as Mrs. Ragna, Mrs. Heloise, and Mrs. Beda, mentioned slavery, civil rights, and America's role in the world as controversial topics. Government teachers, such as Mr. Humbert and Mrs. Lois, mentioned political philosophy, immigration, and political parties as controversial topics that they were required to teach. Teacher participants either stated that controversial topics were required or, as Mr. Owen stated, that the topics they taught could become controversial "if you dig deep enough." These statements were cross-referenced with the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards to confirm if they were in fact required content standards.

The most common controversial topic with World History teachers was teaching Islam. Ms. Secia, who taught Standard World History, had this to say:

In history, it became a controversial topic to teach Islam, the practice of Islam, how it developed, but it is in our state standards. It is an entire chapter in our textbook, and they contributed a hell of a lot to our world that we know today like algebra and Roman numerals. Some teacher got in trouble at another high school a couple years ago. I noticed on our district exams they have no question on Islam or Muslim civilization, so I kinda took that as "read between the lines." It's not made a priority.

This is not the only time that Islam was mentioned as a controversial topic, and this issue has been revisited in Chapter 5. However, Islam is not the only required topic that is controversial. Psychology teachers also have to contend with certain topics that may be

perceived as contentious. Mr. Harvey, who teaches AP Psychology, mentioned that in his field, "we have to talk about some controversial studies." These studies include the Stanford Prison Experiment and the Milgram Experiment, both of which deal with ethical issues in scientific research. Other required controversial topics in the standards include political philosophy, debates over capitalism and communism, religion in school, civil rights, and slavery, all of which are listed within the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards.

Some teachers expressed a sort of lassitude when describing their relationship to the state standards, indicating that some courses allow for more discussion of pivotal social topics. Ms. Secia expressed her frustration with the World History curriculum as being too limited; "We don't really touch on Asia or Africa. We have one chapter on Africa and ancient Aztecs or whatever. For World History, I have to follow the curriculum." Mr. Kearney, an AP World History teacher, felt similarly, but had more to add:

I don't feel like I have a lot of choice in the topics that I can cover because we have standards that have to be met, and those standards are tested on. Most of the time, at least for the AP curriculum, the standards are created by college professors who don't have to worry about controversial issues to the same degree that a high school teacher would. Whether or not I'm going to cover these controversial issues I don't think is an issue because it's in the standards.

Despite feeling limited in their scope, both Ms. Secia and Mr. Kearney still expressed that there were some controversial topics in their field that are identified by the standards. The consensus among the majority of interviewed teachers was that they teach controversial topics

“as often as they appear in the standards,” although this is certainly not the only reason they are taught.

Teaching Experience

Awareness of the state standards is not the only means that teachers use for identifying controversial topics. Teachers who have taught the same topics year after year learn which ones can be contentious, and also gain an awareness about where they can fit in additional time to explore controversial public issues in more depth than what is merely required. Mr. Owen has taught both AP and Honors Economics. He mentioned that he was new to teaching AP Economics and that the rigorous nature of the course and testing has prevented him from veering outside of requirements. However, he stated, “For Honors, I have been teaching that for four or five years now, so I know where I can step off for a little while.” By stepping off, he said he meant that he could have informal discussions with students about the lesson or topic at hand, though it is difficult to determine if these discussions were more teacher-centered or student-centered from his description. When planning for his course, he reported having a greater awareness not only of the required topics but of the time needed to teach those topics.

Mr. Humbert, who taught in a manner to his professors, professed something similar. Having taught for 28 years, he indicated he relies on his experience rather than strict planning or awareness of the standards to understand which topics will be more contentious:

If I were set out to do lesson plans...(controversial topics) are not like something that I would definitely put in my lesson plan, but it's something that I know we're going to cover the information during class, so I know it's something that's bound to come up. You can kind of see what's coming down the line. It's one of those things where, if it did not

come up, then I won't address it, or maybe I'll just briefly mention it. If they ask, then we'll go into it. If we have a discussion, great. Otherwise, we don't.

Mr. Humbert described using his experience to identify difficult topics that may arise. In particular, he mentioned religion in schools, immigration, and the policies of the President. These are topics that “hit home” for students, ones for which they have a personal connection. Mrs. Heloise, with over two decades worth of experience in education, similarly mentioned that controversial topics can be identified as those that have the most relevance for students.

Experience outside of the classroom can also help teachers identify controversial topics or even unique perspectives. Mrs. Lois was a government teacher with extensive teaching experience and prior experience in corrections and with juvenile delinquency. Her professional experience has provided her with a unique perspective on how topics in the classroom may be addressed:

Having been in corrections, I did in-home detention and went into kids' homes when there was trouble. The number of homes I went into where there was not a piece of reading material anywhere, kids who had never been read to as a child... Things like that stick with me in the classroom; and the kids, I do know about the conditions they're living in when you start hitting some of the controversial things, welfare and healthcare programs and cutting that, they can walk away hurt, and I don't want that.

In Mrs. Lois' case, experience was used to identify the perspectives of students that may be revealed when discussing topics rather than just the topics themselves. Part of recognizing the controversy, for her, was identifying those vulnerable groups in class that may be harmed or made uneasy by discussing sensitive issues in class. Mr. Harvey, an AP Psychology teacher,

shared similar thoughts, observing that his experience as a mental health counselor shapes his practice in the classroom. He used what he knows about student well-being to shape how he approaches sensitive topics. He stated:

I'm in my profession while teaching about the subject. You take something you know a lot about, both on the working end of it and on the academic end of it, and make it mechanical, which is the standard-based stuff that academia wants you to do.

Mr. Harvey emphasized the importance of being “authentic” with students, and often mentioned the importance of being sensitive to their unique perspectives. Without the extended experience of other teachers, and with a background in psychology rather than education, Mr. Harvey has had to use what he knows to identify sensitive topics in his classroom.

Teacher Formal Training and Background

Participating teachers were queried about the training they received with the method they used. They were unanimous and stated that they received no training about how to teach controversial public issues. Teachers indicated that they either developed their method over time or adopted another lesson plan idea from a different lesson. Although teachers stated they received no training with CPIs, they did indicate having learned from other forms of training and professional development. Mrs. Beda used experience from her master's degree program to develop a website about history topics. Additionally, she shared, “I've gone to a few different PDs on strategies for utilizing different sources.” This training helped her with what she referred to as “perspective-based teaching,” an idea that is a critical aspect of teaching controversial topics. Mrs. Freya reported using methods adopted from her background in art history to teach perspectives in world history: “Art history is essentially history, but the history of the things that

people leave behind. It's history of objects, which speak to emotions, gender roles, and society.”

This method emphasizes how students must interpret the art for themselves, similar to the document-based questions found on the AP test.

All of the teachers within this study were certified to teach social studies in the State of Florida. However, of the 14 teachers who were part of this study, only six had degrees in education. The majority of teachers interviewed received alternative certification in order to teach in public schools. Most of those alternative certifications involved the teachers enrolling in courses over a three-year period, none of which addressed how to handle controversial topics in the classroom or contained any methodology courses. This is not to say that teachers who were education majors were more likely to use alternative methodologies, as there was no indication of this being the case in this study. However, it does demonstrate that the methodologies that are being used in classrooms have often come from somewhere outside of formal teacher preparation programs. As a result of their alternative certifications, many teachers taught courses for which they did not have a formal background: Mr. Kearney's degree was in Creative Writing, but he taught World History. Mr. Sloan had a degree in History but taught Psychology. Mr. Harvey did have a Psychology degree and was teaching Psychology, but he also spent half of his day teaching English. Mrs. Freya had a degree in Art History but taught World History.

This mis-match between teacher preparation and the courses they taught is both a benefit and an issue. It is a benefit for teachers such as Mrs. Freya, who could bolster her World History class with unique methods. For her, adopting new methodologies has been a natural extension of the work she did as an undergraduate student. However, Mr. Harvey was more reticent to move beyond a traditional methodology. Having never been exposed to any training or experience

using alternative methods, he instead relied on the familiar and what he knows. The lack of formal methodological training for these teachers means that there is both increased variety in the methods used, but also a perpetuation of older systems that are deemed familiar.

Without having formal training to fall back on, several teachers described using smaller professional developments to help fill the gaps in their understanding of how to teach using alternative methods, though these were limited. Mrs. Freya mentioned having to find additional training outside of what her county offered. Mrs. Beda mentioned that she had gone to training for document-based questions [DBQs], but that there was little else beyond that. Mrs. Heloise, who helped organize professional development for primary and secondary social studies teachers in her county, mentioned how teachers often were frustrated with professional development because there were few learnings they could use the next day.

Peer Learning

In the absence of formal training, informal discussion seems to have filled the gap. When Mr. Owen was asked how he developed his teaching methods over time, he stated, "It's just talking to other teachers." Teachers in this study demonstrated being part of an informal network that discusses controversial topics that emerge from their curriculum. Mr. Patton mentioned, "I hear the stories every day. This is what an educator has done in this school. I hear about it and think, 'Do I do the same thing?'"

This was particularly evident in the World History curriculum on Islam. Mr. Harvey taught at a school where there was an issue with a teacher who covered Islam in a controversial manner:

We had a teacher who left a few years ago who brought in something about Muslim prayer. It was in a World History class, the kid got offended, the parents called the school, but it's in the state standards. We had that to back us up, but the teacher left on “emotional exhaustion.”

This instance of a teacher being terminated because of teaching Islam was mentioned again and again by World History teachers, despite these teachers not being in the same school, meaning that informal conversations between teachers were identifying at least one controversial topic shared among these history teachers. The controversy over teaching Islam was already mentioned by Mrs. Secia in discussing having to teach controversial content standards. However, she was not the only teacher in Central Florida who had heard of a teacher losing a job over teaching Islam. Mrs. Freya, who taught both Honors and AP World History, seemed exasperated when she stated, “I don’t consider many things controversial, but I do teach topics that most mainstream parents consider controversial, most notably being Islam. That’s the big thorn in a history teacher’s side.” Mr. Kearney also aired his concern over discussing Islam in class, though his response was a bit more measured. He said:

Islam is a hot button topic recently. How I’ve approached Islam is something I’ve had to think about. Islam is fairly central in world history, so it does come up fairly often...

There’s a number of teachers who have been fired in Seminole County for teaching Islam incorrectly according to the officials, school board, etc. I would be very hesitant to give an assignment that asked students to look at an Islamic ritual because I feel that could cause problems.

This awareness of Islam being a controversial topic extends to administrative actions as well, though the two administrators within this study did not mention it. Mrs. Secia mentioned that, even though Islam is within the state standards, she did not see it within the actual assessment at the end of the year. Mr. Kearney later confirmed this, stating, “I’ve been at the meetings about standards at the county when I watched a world history teacher being told to stand down about adding Islam standards to the assessment.” He continued, revealing his frustration with the difficulty in getting resources related to Islam because of the heightened status the topic had received. “Even when I asked the school to purchase some study guides,” he stated, “the school board noticed that there was a World History text and emailed my boss about it because they were worried about how I was presenting it.” No other topic in World History received this level of attention from teachers in this study.

Controversy Depends on Subject Area

Teachers said that some topics were less controversial than others. This fact should come as no surprise, as controversy is, itself, a social construct. It exists in the minds of different teachers, and if there is agreement among those teachers, then there is no controversy. For instance, there has been little debate over the character of Adolf Hitler in World History classes. Mr. Kearney had this to say when discussing the Holocaust, “I don’t have to be as caged in my vocabulary when I don’t teach controversial issues. I can approach Hitler very easily. ‘Hitler was bad, guys’.”

Some social studies courses do not have many controversial topics within their content standards or teachers can approach those content standards in a manner that does not provoke controversy. Both AP Psychology teachers expressed this regarding their curriculum. Mrs. Ritza

credited the multi-frame approach of psychology as a tool for diffusing controversy before it happens: “There’s no black or white, right or wrong. I’d say the most controversial person is Freud, but they just accept that everything that I say about him is true, so there’s no controversy in the students.” Similarly, Mrs. Secia mentioned that some World History is so old that “It’s hard for me to get the controversy out of it.” In both cases, the controversy in the classroom is determined by how students relate to the topic, and some topics are either too far in the past (i.e. history) or too idiosyncratic (i.e. psychology) for them to worry about any possible differences in opinion.

For other courses, such as government or some social studies electives like humanities or sociology, there are ample opportunities to deal with controversy in the classroom, so finding CPI content isn't an issue. “In government, we talk about that stuff every day since it’s current,” Mrs. Ritza said of her AP course. “In U.S. History, there's an emphasis on historical argumentation, so we look at controversial topics at least two or three times a week.” In her case, the standards put forth by the College Board emphasized an approach that focuses on controversy. This is not the case with all of her U.S. History content, however. For the less controversial content, she said she focuses mostly on notes and lecture.

Personal Research and Current Events

The final tool that was mentioned by interviewees for identifying controversial topics was personal research and staying up to date with current events. For some teachers, such as Mrs. Lois, this personal research was a necessary component of teaching her course. The standards indicate certain areas or ideas that students need to substantiate with examples. Because she teaches government, her examples change with the changing political landscape and public

agenda. She conducts research so that students can apply what they have learned to the real world. Mrs. Ragna does something similar for her U.S. history course: “We focus on current events, so news. For History, through secondary sources like textbooks and biographies, but also primary sources, too.”

Mr. Owen and Mr. Humbert also discussed the importance of staying up to date with current events. For example, Mr. Owen stated, “If I’m going to bring one up, I have to do the research through different resources: the internet, magazines, or books. I’d have to pick and choose which topics would be covered and then do the research for that topic.” Some teachers, such as Mrs. Beda, indicated that they perform this research to identify resources for students to use in class. Others, such as Mr. Patton, indicated they conduct personal research for their own purposes. Regardless, they were using personal research to identify perspectives on current events to get a deeper understanding of the controversy surrounding these topics.

Teachers evidenced not only an awareness of controversial topics within the school district but also an awareness of controversy within national political discourse. Just as past events shaped the controversy of their time (e.g., Red Scare, Vietnam), current events have seeped into the classrooms of Central Florida social studies teachers. This controversy often revolves around the Trump presidency, especially in government courses. Mrs. Ragna, who teaches Government as well as U.S. History, said, “In government, anything Trump-related is typically controversial...I’m more painfully aware of things that I say in the classroom now than I was two years ago.” Even when describing this, she seemed uncomfortable. She continued, “With current events, with the controversy of the current President, the vitriol of him and the cult-like support of him, the students ask for my take and get frustrated when it’s not given.”

Similar to the debate in the Cold War about having to choose a side between the U.S. or the communists, teachers reported that students continually asked them what their take was on current topics. This atmosphere has made teachers in this study aware of controversy surrounding the President.

Students are not the only group that has teachers aware of the controversy around current events. Mrs. Lois mentioned how a previous principal at her school told her to avoid discussing issues related to the Black Lives Matter movement when it was in full swing.

Additionally, Mrs. Lois also discussed rumors she heard from a colleague:

It's interesting because my intern has friends who are interns at other high schools, and her friend is at Random High school, where I used to teach, and the principal made a blanket demand that Trump not be discussed in any class because of the inflammatory nature of talking about him, which totally surprised me because I don't know how I could teach government without mentioning the president's name!

This statement helps to illustrate two important factors. First, it demonstrates that, as with the issue of Islam with World History teachers, administrators do influence which topics social studies teachers in Central Florida recognize as controversial, causing teachers to have to think about how or why they would teach such issues. Second, this statement also helps reinforce that teachers learn about controversy in public schools through peer relationships.

Summary of the Recognition Phase.

Participating teachers relied on a variety of factors to identify controversial topics in their courses. These factors included being aware of the standards, formal training, personal research, peer relationships, past experience, and an awareness of current events. Recognizing which

topics are controversial could pose an issue in the classroom teachers to (a) decide if and (b) how they will teach that topic.

The Intention Phase

The Intention Phase includes those factors that would motivate a teacher to teach a controversial topic in class. After having teachers identify controversial topics in their field, teachers were asked (a) Describe your decision-making process for covering these controversial public issues, (b) What provides the most control over your decision-making process? and (c) Has this changed over time? These are extensions of the factors identified within the Recognition Phase. Though I have placed the Intention Phase as following immediately after the Recognition Phase in the description of this study, there was no strict indication from the data that one must precede the other. Though I am addressing the Intention Phase as the next conceptual link in this decision-making process, teachers may begin at any point within the CPI Decision-making Model.

Learning Goals and Meeting Content Standards

For nearly a third of teachers, six of the total 14 in this study, awareness of the state standards was mentioned as the primary factor for identifying controversial issues. Correspondingly, meeting those standards was teachers' primary motivation, and they linked the standards to their classroom learning goals. For instance, Mrs. Lois mentioned, "Is it relevant to my curriculum? Does it relate to the standards? Is there someplace that I can tie it in at?". Similarly, Mrs. Ragna observed, "The College Board is my overlord," referring to standards within the course articulation for her AP United States History course. She continued:

If it's in the standards, I have to cover it. I don't use personal or religious reasons. I know there's teachers who teach AP Bio and still refuse to teach evolution because they were Catholic or whatnot. But that did not affect me. If it's in the standard, it's going to be taught.

Some teachers indicated that this motivation was not merely about satisfying the needs of superiors. Mrs. Secia, Mrs. Ragna, and Mrs. Freya indicated that staying true to state-mandated learning goals and standards also helped protect them from parent reprisal. Mrs. Freya mentioned that she was able to diffuse a situation with an upset parent by indicating how the College Board standard emphasized exploring different perspectives concerning Islam. She stated, "Some parents want me to do lecture all the time, but if I can show that a standard requires students to discuss, then I can't do that in a lecture." The standards are seen by teachers as a shield against parent or administrator blowback, and ultimately guide teacher lesson planning.

Teachers' Personal Interest

A few teachers indicated that they let personal interest guide which topics they teach in class. Both Mr. Sloan and Mrs. Secia taught a social studies elective course; thus, they did not have the stringent guidelines that teachers who taught either required or AP courses had. The latitude in their curriculum allowed them to veer off when they like, allowing them to plant interesting, controversial topics into the course. Mr. Sloan stated, "I like the controversial subjects myself. I like the tightrope. It keeps me on my game because you have to be clinical, sanitary, whatever you want to say. I think it's more interesting to me." He later clarified that by "clinical," he meant that he has to play a neutral role. He stated that he finds gender and social issues interesting to discuss in his Psychology class and brings them in when he can. "There was

an (end of course exam) about ten years ago,” he continued. “I have a copy of it, and I try to base my final exams on that. Not that I can play fast or free, but it does give me some latitude.” Since the examination is no longer required, he could veer off course, and it did not affect the daily operation of his class. Mr. Sloan did not provide a copy of this test.

Mrs. Secia described a similar relationship with the standards for her sociology course. When talking about which topics she chose to teach, she stated, “This is just me. Is it right or wrong? Who the hell knows, but I want to teach real sociology.” She reported typically ignoring the standards, focusing instead on unusual sources that she gathered for the course. “We have so many standards in sociology. I just do what I want. No one comes to my classroom anyway, so who cares.” She later mentioned that there is an End-of-Course examination for sociology, but it did not count towards the final grade. Because the examination did not count, and her administration mostly leaves her alone, her interests can guide her curriculum decision-making. It should be noted that, in both of these instances, the courses were elective courses. The End-of-Course examinations in required courses have been regulated much more stringently, and therefore have greater impact on teachers’ curriculum decisions.

Benefit or Relevance of Controversial Public Issues (CPIs) To Students.

Though adhering to standards was the most prevalent answer to why teachers teach CPIs, teachers also indicated that they sometimes chose controversial topics because it was beneficial or relevant to students. Some teachers, such as Mr. Harvey or Mr. Owen, indicated they are careful to consider the demographics of the classroom when deciding on teaching a controversial topic. Mr. Harvey mentioned that standards are less of a concern for him than creating lessons that are “in the best interest of kids.” He continued by stating:

If the kids need to have an open discussion about it, we're going to have an open discussion. If they need a worksheet because they can't really talk about it in class, I need to find something for them to write about.

This desire to create a welcoming environment for students extends from his recognition of their needs and background. Similarly, Mr. Owen mentioned weighing his options when relating economics to sensitive race issues:

The first thing I'm going to look at is, "What is the demographic of my class?" For instance, if I'm going to talk about immigration, do I have a large number of Latin American kids in my class? It could hit very close to home for them, so I have to be cognizant of who is in my class. For instance, I have to be careful with the African-American protests that are going on. How many kids like that do I have in my class? It can be good for discussion, but it can also become very sensitive.

These two teachers, saw a need to balance the required course content with the sensitivity of students. Other teachers were concerned with creating lessons that will be impactful and beneficial to students as they mature and become adults. I want it to be more related to them," Mrs. Secia mentioned, when asked why she chooses gender issues in history. "I want (students) to see that this s###t happened in history, and it could easily happen now. If you don't want it happening in history on your terms, maybe you should consider the world around you." Mrs. Secia stated several times that her goal is to get students to think more critically about the world they live in, ideally so that they can change their own behavior. Mrs. Beda echoed this, and pointed out a tip she uses to determine which content she will teach in her history class:

If it is something that I think will just turn into screaming and arguing with each other, then it is something I'm going to avoid. If it's something that I think might open up their minds to looking at one topic in a very different way than they would have naturally on their own, then it is definitely one that I will probably continue to push towards.

Mrs. Beda and Mrs. Secia have chosen topics because they believe it is in the students' best interest to be exposed to them, whereas Mr. Harvey and Mr. Owen have concentrated on being more cognizant of student needs within the classroom so they can determine if they should avoid a topic. Both situations (a) illustrate how the perceived benefits or impacts on students guide teacher pedagogical decision-making in teaching CPIs, and (b) are extensions of recognizing the backgrounds and needs of students.

Teachers' Views on Parents or Administration

Teachers in this study often cited parents as an important consideration when choosing to teach controversial issues in class. Some teachers expressed fear that parents might complain about what was taught in class and might cause an issue (e.g., the Islam issue). Of all the teachers involved in this study, none expressed this fear more than Mr. Patton, a World History teacher with over two decades of teaching experience. He anxiously mentioned:

The biggest thing is parents. For most teachers, that's what is in the back of your mind.

We've met good parents. We've met bad parents. It's not worth it to go through the controversy. I don't want to be called down to the office because of something I've said.

Many of Mr. Patton's answers involved the issue of parental involvement in class, regardless to the question that was asked. The fear of backlash from the community was first in his mind, and guided his decision-making process from recognition of the topic to his intention

for teaching to the planning of his lessons. Mrs. Freya also mentioned the issue of parents, though she differentiated between the parents of her AP World History students who were very involved versus the parents of her Honors World History students who were not. In her case, the issue involved a parent of a student in her AP World History class who did not like her method of teaching Islam.

Beyond dealing with religious issues, interviewed teachers also cited parents with strong political leanings as a potential problem. For instance, when Mrs. Beda was asked about the major difficulties with covering controversial topics, she replied, “Pre-conceived notions about a topic, religious and morality issues with certain topics, and 100% political views of parents. It’s very easy to tell the political views that are spoken about at home when you start talking about specific issues.” Mr. Humbert, who taught government, expressed a similar idea: “To me, the kids could take it negatively or personally and complaining [sic] to their parents... They may take it too personally.” Mr. Kearney mentioned how, in the analysis of benefits and drawbacks of teaching these issues and dealing with parents, it simply was not worth the hassle:

I think that the biggest issue that I have when dealing with controversial issues is you can't really delve into them. I teach at a public high school. I'm not going to delve into controversial issues, even if I think it will benefit the students if I feel like it would threaten my job. The most important thing for me is to pay my mortgage. If it comes down to “Do I want to teach a controversial issue?” If I feel like it’s going to put me in hot water, I’m not going to do it. It’s not worth it!

Despite these cases against teaching CPIs because of parental involvement, several teachers stated that they chose to teach controversial topics because they either believed that

parents ignored these topics at home or doubted that parents were discussing these topics fairly.. Mrs. Beda and Mrs. Secia both mentioned this as a motivating factor for them. Mrs. Beda took a stand on addressing religious and political issues in the classroom, stating, “I do feel it's very important for teachers to cover these issues because, no offense to parents, I don't think that parents are as willing to look at the other perspective that a teacher might be.” Mrs. Secia's opinion was much bolder:

I think it kind of sucks that everything is put on us. What about the parents? How about society? What about social media, or the people who run social media? ... We have to pick up the slack. I want (students) to know that they can talk about things that are confusing or that they don't understand. If no one else is willing to do it, I guess I f#####n' have to.

Thus, parents were viewed by teachers as both a hindrance to teaching controversial topics and the reason for doing it. Although some teachers indicated that they believe they are taking a personal risk by covering controversial topics in class, others indicated that it was their duty as citizens and teachers to talk about topics that were not discussed at home.

On the other hand, there was a surprising but persistent result in regards to feelings over administrators. Even though teachers demonstrated concern about upsetting parents, there was no specific concern about being evaluated by administrators. Teachers did not express any special concern over how evaluations affected their use of controversial issues in the classroom. When asked if she was concerned about being evaluated when teaching controversial issues in her sociology class, Mrs. Secia stated that “no one ever comes in here.” When describing how she discussed sensitive gender issues in her she stated, “We have a very laissez-faire administration,

which is great and not great. They probably have zero idea what the hell I'm doing." Mrs. Ragna reiterated this, mentioning of her own school "The administration here is just like 'Do your thing'. If we're not getting tons of calls or bad feedback, they just leave you alone. I'm assuming they're not getting any calls or feedback because I'm not getting any from them." It was clear that many social studies teachers believed they were not being observed when they taught controversial topics.

Teachers in this study expressed what they felt the ideal role for administration was for handling how CPIs are taught in schools. They said they wanted administrators to understand and acknowledge the difficult nature of discussing controversial topics democratically. Mrs. Freya, in discussing her relationship with her administration, stated, "Administrators need to understand that (alternative methods) may not go as smoothly as a PowerPoint would. They need to support us in our decision to teach with a variety of methods." Fortunately, she believed she had good rapport with her superiors. Mrs. Beda also discussed the importance of a trusting relationship between teachers and administrative staff:

I think it's really important for schools to work with their teachers in creating a relationship where the school trusts the teacher with the ability to broach these topics in an appropriate manner. I think that if the school did not necessarily have that trust already established, that they should try and create that type of environment where controversial issues are celebrated rather than shunned.

Interestingly enough, the notion of trust even came from a few teachers who typically use traditional methodologies, possibly indicating that their methods would change under different social circumstances. Mr. Owen, who reported often relying on lecture, had this to say:

Our schools and our administrations have to be willing to let teachers have the sessions where they cover the hard topics as long as they're taking account of everyone's opinions. Don't stop teachers from doing that. Encourage them to take time and talk about social topics with the students because if we're going to prepare students to go out into the real world, they need to be prepared for that.

Common themes among teachers were that (a) teaching controversial topics is hard, (b) teachers need training and support to be effective in teaching controversial topics and, (c) teachers should not be punished for trying out new methods or ideas in the classroom.

Role of the Teacher in Democratic Education

A persistent response from some teachers indicated that they believed it was their duty to teach these issues for the sake of democracy itself. Mrs. Freya discussed the importance of showing students how to examine different perspectives: "It is necessary for us to model how to have (conversations about) controversial topics and that discourse that is fundamental to a democracy functioning. You cannot have a democracy if you don't have controversy and discourse." Mrs. Beda also discussed the importance of having students examine multiple perspectives, stating "If a teacher is not presenting every avenue to the story, (students) might not have the ability to form their own opinion about something." These teachers alluded to students' need to work through controversial issues in school before they developed into full adults. Mrs. Ragna summarized this point rather well:

Especially in the area of civic education, it's obviously so important, especially with our low voter participation and the fact that democracies have to be supported by an educated citizenry, we can't shy away from controversy. It's our role to make students aware of

these issues and be active thinkers and realize that the decisions that government makes in the past, present, and future impacts them.

Mr. Owen echoed this defense of democratic education, adding that it is more important that students experience opinions other than their own. He mentioned, “They don't change their mind, but they can see the bigger picture...even though they say ‘I can't support that kind of thing.’ I'm trying to get them to become more informed citizens overall.” These teachers hinted that they sensed that democracy itself was under attack, and that it was their job to defend its integrity.

Not all teachers held this same opinion, however. Mrs. Lois and Mr. Humbert, both veteran teachers who have 50 years of experience between them, held a more traditional stance. Mrs. Lois stated that, as far as the role of teachers goes, “They have as much of a role as the state legislature tells them that they need to cover as part of their curriculum.” Mr. Humbert stated that it was the role of parents and religion to cover social issues, not teachers:

Maybe I'm old fashioned in how I think, but I think you have to use some [controversy] to generate attention to get them going, but schools shouldn't be teaching societal views. That should be left up to the parent's religious beliefs or morals. Tell them what the rules are, and then they've got to make their own decisions.

This notion of teacher neutrality in which the teacher should not be advocating a certain position is important, as it later shaped the methods that some teachers used in the classroom. As opinions of the appropriate role of teachers changed, so did the description of their methodologies. For example, Mr. Humbert described taking a neutral stance, only addressing

controversy when necessary. Mrs. Freya, in contrast, described taking a more prominent role in discussing CPIs in the classroom.

Summary of the Intention Phase.

Numerous factors can either persuade or dissuade teachers from teaching CPIs in their classroom. The most frequently factor cited by teachers was standards; teachers believe they must teach certain content in their standards that are considered controversial. Study participants said that they have emphasized the standards, not because of personal belief that the standards are good in-and-of themselves, but because that is how the course is assessed. Beyond standards, personal interest, perceived benefits for students, views on parents and administration, and their perceived role in democratic education also motivated some teachers to teach controversial public issues in their classes. Additionally, the motivation behind teaching CPIs may also influence *how* those topics are taught. How topics are taught is integral to the third phase, Planning, of the CPI Decision-Making model and is addressed in the following section.

The Planning Phase

The Planning Phase occurs when teachers decide how they will address controversial topics with their students. In this phase, teachers weigh the different goals they have with the pedagogical tools at their disposal to craft a lesson on their chosen topic. For most, this process is reflexive and the product of years of experience. Some teachers were not able to present lesson plans for the lessons they use because they indicated they did not use lesson plans. Many teachers simply were not planning. However, for several of the teachers involved in the present study, lesson planning was an essential and deliberate step in deciding how to teach controversial

public issues. The following are the most common factors that shape teachers' decisions to adopt a traditional or alternative methodology.

Classroom Management Issues With CPIs.

When considering how to teach controversial topics in the classroom, many teachers first consider how to guide, model, or control classroom behavior. Classroom management was mentioned by five of the 14 teachers as being a primary concern. If order cannot be maintained in the classroom, the lesson is either avoided entirely, or a more traditional methodology is used. Mrs. Lois described this sentiment best: "I try to maintain a little more control because I don't want anything happening. I'm worried about somebody being offended or something being said that comes back to bite me." When teaching controversial topics, teachers consider addressing classroom management as critical. Mr. Harvey alluded to this in regard to the unique cultural backgrounds in the classroom, "Before you address the issue, the class itself has to have a strong bond or a good set of rules that are established...You have to be really comfortable in your own classroom and in the face of controversy."

Mr. Harvey's concept of control was different from Mrs. Lois's. For Mr. Harvey, controlling the environment meant providing a safe place for students to express themselves freely. He confidently mentioned establishing this rapport with students early on in his course by being "authentic" with them. Reflecting on his own style, Mr. Harvey stated, "(students) know that I wouldn't do anything that would be uncomfortable for them...They would say 'Mr. Harvey, we can't do that,' and I would give them something else to do." In contrast, Mrs. Lois focused more on controlling the content and moving the class away from overly controversial topics. She employed a reflection journal in class to have students complete individual writing when debates

get too heated. “(The journal) is there if there’s something I don’t want to address.” In a sense, it was her safety valve for the classroom, to be used to diffuse the built-up pressure from classroom conflict.

As described by teachers, this control over student behavior was accomplished in several ways. One was by being transparent with students about the form of the discussion. The discussion must not be, as Mrs. Beda described, a contest over who wins each argument: “We’re not arguing with each other; we’re looking at the text. Our focus is, ‘How do we get information out of the text?’ not ‘I’m right, you’re wrong.’” She described trying to make all of her classroom discussions text-based or image-based so that students can focus their conversation in that direction. Part of designing the lesson for Mrs. Beda was focusing student attention on the appropriate task of discussion, rather than on the more combative task of debating.

Modeling proper behavior was another method described by teachers to manage their classroom environment. Mrs. Freya described her actions, using herself as the prime example for addressing bias and not taking content too personally:

Right off the bat, I’m very open with my students about my own cultural background. I let them know that I’m of a Cuban immigrant background. I’m a practicing Roman Catholic. I try to model when I’m talking about my own religion that I’m using neutral vocabulary... I want to show them that you can be true to your own cultural and religious beliefs and still have dialogue with others. I try to be that example to them.

Modeling was also mentioned by Mr. Owen and Mrs. Ragna. Mr. Owen shared his views as to how civil conversations should work with his students. Mrs. Ragna emphasized the importance of decorum when conducting her Socratic Seminars. She described a more

formalized discussion than that employed by Mr. Owen and some of the more traditional teachers. She observed, “Students have to indicate that they want to speak by raising a finger, so when the student speaking is done, they will indicate the next student who shows that they want to talk.” She also mentioned the requirement that ‘Thank you’ precede each response as a sign of respect. By illustrating the proper behavior, these teachers focused not only on social studies content, but also on the process of discussion in a democratic space.

Another issue related to modeling proper behavior in the classroom is related to teachers’ presentation of their own opinions. A common concern among teachers of both traditional and alternative methodologies was teacher bias. Participating teachers repeatedly expressed the need to remain neutral in the classroom. Some teachers referred to this as being “cold,” “clinical,” or “sanitary.” Regardless, the idea that teachers should not impose their beliefs onto students was prodigious in the data. Mr. Humbert had this to say about students asking him his opinion during his government class:

In fact, the majority of things that we get into like that, they don’t want you getting into so much because you’re choosing sides as far as political parties and those kinds of things. They don’t want you walking that fine line, which I can see people do. Me, personally, with my government classes, I try, because the kids always try to ask “Coach, which way do you lean” which I say “Number one, It’s really none of your business how much I vote, but why don’t we finish the class and see if, at the end, you can figure out where I am.” At the end, if I’ve done my job, they won’t be able to see which political party I am, because I teach both sides. I want them to get the information and decide for themselves.

The concern over teacher neutrality seemed to be a combination of several factors. First, teachers mentioned that they felt it inappropriate to sway students in the classroom, such as with Mr. Humbert. Similarly, Mrs. Lois mentioned that she always pairs negative and positive statements together to keep her lessons “balanced.” Other teachers connected this with the fear of parent or administrator reprisal and believed that remaining neutral was the best way to avoid community backlash. Mr. Owen cautioned with this statement:

I think that any teacher needs to be careful about bringing their own personal side to it.

I'm a Conservative, so when I talk about economic issues I tend to lean that way, but when I bring up a social issue, I need to dial that back a little bit, put that out there, and guide the discussion not one way or the other.

Just as some teachers were using content standards as a shield against stakeholders outside the classroom, some seem to adopt the guise of neutrality to perform the same task.

Beyond modeling, there was also evidence of teachers utilizing a social contract with students. Whether formal or informal, some teachers established an agreement with students that participation in discussions was permitted only if they followed established rules. As typically described, these agreements were informal. Mr. Owen had this to say about establishing the rules of debate with his students:

I'll tell them “This is what we’re going to be discussing today” or I’ll say “This is what we’re going to discuss tomorrow. I want you to think about it, and when you come back, you have to understand it and that there is no demeaning someone for their opinions. We have to accept everyone’s thoughts and opinions if we want to do this. If not, then we won’t have that discussion.”

Some students take the discussions seriously and teachers have found they can continue addressing similar issues in the future. However, teachers who reported having significant discipline issues in class indicated they might not even begin discussing any controversial topics. Mrs. Rosabella, who taught several Standard World History classes, reported struggling with getting students on task. Even with a structured and planned lesson on the nuclear arms race and America's role in world politics, she has decided to avoid teaching controversial topics. "In every class, some aren't going to take it seriously, and I have these kids that just want to be funny rather than actually take it seriously." In her case, a social contract involves a level of student buy-in to the lesson, and students' completion of the tasks with fidelity. Because her expectations were lower for her Standard World History classes, she has avoided these types of lessons. Mrs. Rosabella reiterated, "I don't even know if I would bother trying in my Standard World classes considering the level of maturity there." Mrs. Freya, who has taught students at all performance levels, concurred: "I would never bring up with Standard because, not just because they're controversial, but because it would take such a long time to get there are some barriers where it might not be beneficial for our time." Mr. Humbert believed the discussion of sensitive issues was more appropriate for Honors or above and that students in Standard classes needed a narrower focus. These teachers described only addressing the controversy when necessary. They treated discussion on controversial topics as a privilege for those students who exhibit good behavior. They avoided controversial topics if they believed their efforts would be unappreciated or that the lesson would negatively impact behavior in the classroom.

This was especially true of teachers who taught elective courses, such as Mrs. Ritza in her AP Psychology course. When discussing the connection of psychology principles to social

dynamics, she stated: “If I can see that they're going to have very strong opinions on either side (of an issues), I'll say, ‘Here's a different example.’” This result was one of the more pivotal from this study and will be explored further in Chapter 5.

Although most of the examples of this sort of arrangement were informal, there was at least one example provided involving a formal permission slip that one teacher used to filter out students. Mrs. Freya, who taught both Humanities and AP World History, used a formal agreement that illustrated the content of the courses she teaches that must be signed by parents (See Appendix F). Although this consent form was primarily used prior to showing R-rated films, it also mentioned the likelihood of adult topics of discussion permeating the classroom. She stated: “If someone isn't comfortable with that, we tend to move them out in the first week.” Once again, this example demonstrates that discussing controversial public issues in classrooms is treated as a privilege for those who can behave.

Assessing Student Perspectives and Backgrounds

After classroom management considerations, teachers considered different student perspectives and backgrounds. A common theme expressed by interviewees was that addressing controversial topics meant exploring different perspectives surrounding an issue. Teachers referred to methods for dealing with multiple perspectives in the classroom. One such method was informal roleplay, which was described by several teachers, including Mr. Owen and Mrs. Lois. Mrs. Lois shared an example of students examining the impact of a law:

One of the things, having them do roles “Ok, you're a 65-year-old business owner versus you're a 21-year-old college student. In this situation, which way are you going to lean?”

We take how different demographics, age, gender, religious background, employment,

will filter their reactions. How would this person feel? How would that person feel? So that they're trying to look at it from somebody else's eyes.

Exploring different perspectives was described as difficult to accomplish if students did not buy into the lesson. Mrs. Rosabella, a relatively new World History teacher, discussed this as being an issue with her class. Mrs. Lois said she used informal roleplay because it was the easiest for her, requiring less preparation than a more involved debate.

A frequently cited method for dealing with multiple perspectives in the classroom was "playing devil's advocate" in which regardless of students' positions, teachers adopt an opposite opinion. The goal is to have the students flesh out their arguments more by having to defend against another interlocutor. Mrs. Rosabella, the novice teacher among the group of interviewees, mentioned, "Here's a student who is clearly from one side or the other, so I'll kinda play devil's advocate: 'What if you were in this situation? How would you feel about that?'" Mr. Sloan stated that he likes to go into these debates a bit more and that he has made a bit of a game from it:

I do like getting asked my opinion. It's so fun, playing devil's advocate, and teaching government is phenomenal. I can be as left as Lenin and as right as Attila the Hun, and it would drive the kids crazy. I could point out, "You're forgetting about this and this. You can't poo poo the Moral Majority just because they go to church and you don't. That's their beliefs, and you can't dismiss over here just because you don't believe the same." It's best that the kids wonder "Hey, I wonder what Mr. Sloan thinks?"

Whether using devil's advocate or merely just being reserved in sharing their own opinions, teachers commonly reported that they model not just the appropriate method of discourse, but that the modeling also involves playing a neutral role in the classroom. However,

despite the desire to use devil's advocate to remain neutral, a notable result emerged from the descriptions of how different teachers utilized the devil's advocate technique. It became apparent from the descriptions that several teachers, though expressing their affinity for playing devil's advocate to maintain a neutral stance in the classroom, nonetheless gave an impression of bias. Many teachers in this study even discussed frustrations they had with other teachers being biased and not maintaining a neutral tone in the classroom, not knowing that other teachers were saying the same thing about them. Mr. Owen, Mr. Humbert, and Mrs. Lois, in particular, all taught seniors in the same school, resulting in shared students. Mr. Humbert discussed having to discuss sensitive issues in this government classes:

I'm trying to stay in the middle. I try not to take one side or the other in whatever the argument is, whether it's religion or immigration or rights or whatever. I just try to say "Whatever you're feelings are, this is what the law says" and base it on the law. If you don't like the law, then change the law.

Later, when I interviewed Mr. Owen and Mrs. Lois, they described how the other teachers at their school were not being as fair-minded as they thought. Mrs. Lois described some conversations with students, stating, "I have a number of students [who say] 'I know this, my teacher told me this' and with highly bigoted perspectives. Whether liberal or conservative, that was the only information they gave out." Mr. Owen made a similar statement, discussing the need for teachers to maintain a neutral stance so as to not influence students.

It is possible that some teachers may have overestimated either their impact or their ability to remain neutral in the classroom using a devil's advocate strategy. Exactly why this occurs is uncertain, as it was a unique finding that emerged from the data. Speculatively, it is

possible that students leave the classroom with whatever impression they have received from the teacher in the classroom, regardless of whether the teacher was playing devil's advocate or not.

For example, Mrs. Secia talked about how she addressed Islam, stating:

When I do teach Islam I don't completely skip it over, I just say "Oh my God, look at all of the great things we have from them!" I try to be extremely positive, which it should be anyways. We focus a lot on the Golden Age accomplishments and how we have hospitals and irrigation systems. I try to really focus on the achievements and the things we have from them that we use in 2019 rather than the practice or even the leaders or how it came about.

Although she did not necessarily hold these beliefs about Islam herself and was playing devil's advocate, students may pick up on her "extremely positive" tone and detect a bias in her lesson. Along similar lines, students may be picking up on the bias of teachers by examining the types of lessons or topics that are taught. This phenomenon may be similar to determining the political leanings of a newspaper by seeing the kinds of stories that they run. Mr. Owen's description of his lesson on the effects of immigration provided a good example:

You can take the immigration issue and look at the economic impact of that. Any of the issues with immigration can be looked at with economic impacts. What are the impacts of protests? If there's any looting, for instance, what is the impact there? How are businesses affected by that kind of thing? There's always some sort of economic impact, so that's what I'd look at.

Whether or not Mr. Owen maintained a neutral tone when discussing these topics is irrelevant. By the time the students completed this lesson and made their way to Mr. Humbert's

or Mrs. Lois's classes, they believed that the lesson was biased. By being exposed to a lesson about the negative impacts of immigration protests, students may have believed that Mr. Owen was against them. Teachers' self-efficacy and their ability to maintain a neutral tone is a topic worthy of further research.

Another method for having students examine multiple perspectives involves forcing them to provide support for their perspective and examining the support for other perspectives. The process described by Mrs. Beda provides a good example: "I don't force them into a belief, and then I make sure they bring certain factual evidence to the table with them. Just because they believe it...did not necessarily make it relevant to what we're talking about." Examining multiple perspectives was a common theme among teachers who described using alternative methodologies. The focus for these teachers was as much about having students learn a process for evaluating information from primary and secondary sources as it was about their learning content.

Mrs. Beda also mentioned that it is important for students to re-evaluate their arguments as they progress through the lesson. For example, she described a lesson that she used for determining if the United States should have dropped the atomic bomb on Japan:

I start with going through the lesson, we look at the perspectives, and then I say "Pick a side of the room, and that's where you're going to argue." And then I'll pause and say "Has anyone's opinion changed? If it's changed, move around! Why has it changed? What perspective drew you away from what you were originally thinking?" It's never a "That's what you picked and that's where you're staying" scenario. It's more of a fluid

process the whole time. I want to be able to understand where all of the perspectives are coming from in a situation.

This recursive process was absent in the descriptions of lessons from the teachers who utilized traditional methodologies. Different perspectives might be acknowledged, such as when Mr. Owen had economics students look at the impact of riots on nearby businesses, but did not emphasize the need for students to re-examine their own positions. Mr. Harvey, though sensitive to students needs in the classroom and in his professional life, largely ignored the kinds of topics that students could re-examine, and instead has them take notes on a whiteboard. Mr. Humbert's description of his process provided the clearest example. He stated, "if they ask, then we'll go into it. If we have a discussion, great. Otherwise, we don't." He mentioned that his primary focus was on completing the necessary coursework on time, not on focusing on debates or discussions. Though teaching required content was important for most teachers, those who favored traditional methodology treated it as the sole focus of their teaching.

In tandem with addressing multiple perspectives was addressing the unique backgrounds that different students bring to discussions on controversial topics. Some teachers mentioned this as being a critical issue in how they developed lessons, adjusting their methodology accordingly. Both Mrs. Beda and Mrs. Secia mentioned carefully selecting the shared reading used in their lessons to ensure students were informed with the same credible background information. Mrs. Secia indicated carefully chooses her terminology in class when addressing the shared reading so that students did not take the information personally. She mentioned, "Making students think that we aren't generalizing them to the entire population and thinking that their group is wrong. That's why I do a lot of the 'can be this' or 'could be that'." These methods do require more planning and

effort on the part of the teacher, so it is not surprising that most teachers stated that they did not have the time necessary to teach lessons in this manner.

Timing and Lesson Planning

Teacher respondents mentioned the time-consuming nature of dealing with controversial issues as being a severe drawback. Even though many teachers expressed a willingness to teach controversial topics, five of the 14 mentioned significant issues with scheduling. Mr. Owen shared the variables that he considers in his lesson planning.

What materials are available for me to use? What is my timeframe? How in-depth do I want to go? What is my end goal in that discussion? Am I looking for any kind of feedback from the kids? Do they need to write a paper about it?

Despite having strong feelings about how important it is to teach controversial topics in school for our democracy to flourish, Mr. Owen described a class that follows a traditional format. He mentioned that he simply did not have enough time to veer far from his curriculum, especially in his AP Economics course. Along similar lines, Mrs. Ragna stated, “I never have enough time. I could use a year for Government, and I could definitely use two years for AP U.S. History.” She mentioned using alternative methods very sparingly, and only with those controversial topics that have unique perspectives to explore. Otherwise, she opted to teach using a traditional format. Mr. Beda mentioned the issue of standardized testing, saying, “I do focus more on controversial topics in AP than in Honors because Honors is such a rigorous, state-mandated curriculum.” Most teachers expressed the opposite opinion, saying that their AP courses required more time for test prep and therefore less time to explore complex social issues.

Teachers mentioned planning time as the most significant drain on their time. Though the lessons themselves may only take the same amount of time, alternative methodologies require more planning to account for different scenarios and find resources. “The drawback is that it's a lot of work on me because it's not something that I can just do on the fly,” Mrs. Beda said about planning for her atomic bomb lesson. “If a question comes up in class naturally, it's not something that I'll be necessarily able to come up with these sources for them to research. It definitely requires more planning on the teacher's part.”

Mrs. Beda was not alone in measuring the opportunity costs in lost instructional time. As much as teachers may want to discuss relevant social issues, those issues are not addressed on end-of-course examinations. Mr. Humbert discussed this issue explicitly, mentioning how students in his senior Government and Economics classes have so little time to deal with the required material that they could not move beyond them. A review of Mr. Humbert's schedule (Appendix F) reveals that his time is already divided between his required course teaching and the required online content that he must teach. Mr. Humbert has relied heavily on traditional lecture and note format because he perceives it to be more efficient, and he is more comfortable with it.

One final factor with timing discussions on controversial topics is how best to pace them. Mrs. Freya mentioned that the impact of a good lesson could diminish if the methodology is overused. She gave an example with her use of Socratic Seminar: “I typically do them with controversial topics, but I don't want them to become rote. If you do a Socratic Seminar every week, then it's not going to be exciting anymore. I try to sprinkle them throughout for when I

have something that would be perfect for that particular topic.” This idea was not mentioned explicitly by any other teacher.

Selecting Appropriate Activities and Content

Teachers were asked, “When you teach controversial issues, how do you do it?”

Naturally, their answers varied significantly from teacher to teacher. However, there were some common themes among teachers who used traditional methodologies versus teachers who used, alternative methodologies.

Teachers who described using traditional methods tended to do so because that was how they themselves best learned (i.e. apprenticeship of the observed). They described having an influential teacher in their past and emulated their style. Mr. Harvey described his experience with his psychology degree as shaping his current style: “I had some great professors, and watching them, you learn the mechanical side of it, and because I walked into my teaching career without an educational background, I kinda learned as I went.” Mr. Humbert shared a similar story about the degree he earned out of state and his own learning preferences: “When I went to college, my teachers were all lecture and I liked it. I learned better that way...Outside of that, I teach basically the same way I have for years and years.” Both gentlemen described methods that typically involve a lecture, notes taken from either a whiteboard or PowerPoint, occasional use of informal discussion, and finally some form of a test as a culminating activity. This was also how Mr. Owen and Mrs. Ritza described their typical classroom methods.

The methods described by the other teachers embraced a more alternative pedagogical format and were quite varied. Mrs. Ragna provided a description for what she called a “dibussion,” which has the formal format of a debate but the informal atmosphere of a

discussion. Mrs. Freya started with the standards themselves, deriving her method from there. She elaborated, stating, “A standard might be ‘Evaluate the extent to which the Civil Rights Movement in the United States was successful.’ That’s how they phrase the standards versus ‘Be able to describe the Civil Rights Movement.’” According to Mrs. Freya, because evaluation requires more effort and understanding than merely being able to describe something, the lesson needs to reflect that additional effort. Evaluation also implies comparing different options and understanding why one may be better than the other. When these types of standards are combined with controversial topics, Mrs. Freya used alternative methods to teach them.

The other examples of alternative methods can be categorized using a four-part format: (a) teachers begin with a stimulus of some sort, such as Mrs. Beda using sources from the Stanford History Education Group; (b) students have an individual assignment where they must develop some argument about what they feel about the topic; (c) students convene with the teacher and have a group activity; examples include Mrs. Ragna’s “dibussion” or Mrs. Freya’s Socratic Seminar; (d) the lesson ends with a reflection or assessment activity that typically involves writing, such as with Mrs. Lois and her journal. Mrs. Lois was unique within this study as a teacher with decades worth of experience who utilized alternative methods.

One element that both traditional and alternative methodologies did share was a careful consideration of source material. Teachers from both camps were still navigating the difficulty of addressing content standards and avoiding parental ire; thus, they spent additional time worrying about the content of with controversial topics. Mr. Harvey adjusted his content to make sure it was age appropriate. He describes his thought process:

I'd say it's material management... Make sure you have the material in the way of "can they acquire it?". Don't teach too much, for example. I may be excited about it, but I can't do that to them. They don't have that level of excitement yet or that capacity in their brain yet to take all that in at once. I have to break it down for them and break it down into smaller chunks.

This aligned with Mr. Harvey's previous response of being sure to select content that would not adversely harm students. His primary goal was to create an environment that was inviting, which includes approachable and unintimidating material.

Other teachers managed material differently. To avoid upsetting parents and potential claims of bias, several teachers mentioned identifying authoritative primary and secondary sources. Mr. Kearney, who mostly teaches AP students, had this to say: "I also try to find authoritative examples of professors in the field and the perspectives they take. Then, as long as I have that authoritative backing, I feel more comfortable." By leveraging the authority of the source, he believed he could potentially diffuse any issues he may have with a sensitive topic. This encouraged Mr. Kearney and other teachers, to seek out material beyond a textbook. Mrs. Ragna did the same in order to make her lessons more student-centered. By having students draw their conclusions using primary sources and removing her interpretation as much as possible, she has tried to avoid issues with parents.

Summary of the Planning Phase

Within the Planning Phase, high school social studies teachers decide how they will teach lessons involving controversial public issues. Of the factors that weigh on teachers' decisions on delivery of content, classroom management concerns were the most frequently discussed.

Teachers expressed their concerns regarding maintaining both control of the class and the appropriate environment to discuss controversial topics. Common classroom management tools mentioned by teachers included playing devil's advocate, modeling appropriate behavior, using a social contract with students, or simply shutting down discussion before it could begin.

Beyond classroom management, teachers also discussed exploring student backgrounds and perspectives, selecting content and activities appropriate for the students they teach, and dealing with limited time. When combined with the deciding factors from the previous two phases, teachers had the information they needed to make a decision about which methodology was, in their opinion, best for their students.

Differences Among "Old-School" Teachers and Alternative Method Teachers

Teachers were categorized by traditional and alternative methodologies (as shown in Table 2) based on their descriptions as to how they taught controversial topics in their classes. With the results gathered from this study, a cross-examination of traits among those teachers that select different methodologies can be made.

Teachers who selected traditional methodologies appropriately referred to themselves as "old-school," as a majority of them have been teaching for longer than a decade. Several of these teachers mentioned learning their style of teaching from influential professors or teachers in their past. These teachers also reported relying on their experience, awareness of required content standards, and information from other teachers to identify controversial topics. As with other teachers, these teachers' primary focus was on teaching the required standards for the end of course examinations. However, more of these teachers expressed concern over parent reprisal than did alternative methodology teachers. "Old-school" or traditional teachers also commonly

stated that there was not enough time to teach the necessary content, let alone to teach students how to debate properly. Mrs. Ritza, in particular, mentioned that she had moved away from debate over the years to a more informal discussion with students because it was easier to manage. Traditional pedagogy teachers expressed a belief that it is vital to acknowledge the different student backgrounds and perspectives in teaching controversial topics. However, these teachers expressed less concern over having students develop these perspectives in a formalized manner. They frequently mentioned the issue of needed time and planning and said they relied more on informal discussion on topics because they required less planning. Classroom management was a primary concern among teachers who focused on traditional methodologies, with these teachers emphasizing the need to maintain control in the classroom. In summary, teachers who selected traditional methodologies to teach controversial issues did so because it focuses students on the content standards quickly, with as little classroom disruption and as little additional planning as possible.

Teachers in this study who reported using an alternative methodology to teach controversial issues had less teaching experience overall, with most having been in the classroom less than a decade. None of these teachers explicitly mentioned learning their methods of teaching from influential teachers or professors in the past, although they did indicate help from either professional developments or formal background training in other disciplines. Their backgrounds included a mix of formal education, personal research, and “making it up as I go.” Similar to traditional teachers, teachers who used alternative methodologies mentioned aligning their classroom with the required course standards. However, these teachers reported more often that the standards required students to examine different perspectives, and therefore encouraged

more student-centered methods. These teachers were more likely to report that parents were not addressing important topics at home, and therefore, they needed to step in and make sure that students were learning about these topics. These teachers reported the difficulty of having to plan additional time and find additional resources to allow students to examine different perspectives on these topics. They also expressed that they believed it to be the role of teachers to train students to become democratic citizens. Classroom management was a concern for these teachers, but their focus was less on maintaining control and more on how best to model correct behavior during the process. Their pedagogy was reported to be as much process-oriented as it was content oriented, and they selected content and materials that would best allow students to explore different perspectives and allow them to reassess their own arguments.

These distinctions are not absolute. As mentioned previously, data were gathered specifically in the context of teaching controversial issues. Several teachers mentioned that they utilized more student-centered methods when teaching non-controversial issues. They reasoned that they did not have to worry about maintaining control in that situation or have to be concerned about upsetting a parent. There was also evidence of some traditional teachers having one or two of the described qualities of alternative teachers. For example, although Mr. Harvey was a self-described “old-school” teacher who models his class “as if we're in the 70s,” he employed the same four-part lesson plan that was more common with alternative pedagogies.

Given these exceptions, understanding the different decision-making factors of these teachers does shed light on why controversial topics might be taught in one format or the other. If, for instance, a teacher had a rigorously-tested course with students who frequently have discipline issues in a course that is only a semester-long, that teacher will likely choose to adopt

a traditional methodology. In contrast, if a teacher had a year-long elective course with no end-of-course examination and honors students, that teacher would have more latitude to use different methods.

Summary

This chapter contains the results of the analyses of data gathered interviews with teachers and administrators. A total of 14 teachers participated in this grounded theory study. Teachers described their decision-making process for choosing methodologies when teaching controversial public issues. Though there were differences in the exact processes reported by different teachers, an overall pattern emerged in which teachers complete different phases, which are conceptually but not strictly chronologically linked, in their decision-making process in regard to these issues.

The first phase was the Recognition Phase, in which teachers demonstrated awareness of which topics were controversial and explained how they identified them. For six of the 14 teachers, awareness of the required content standards in their field helped identify potential controversial topics. For the remainder, a combination of formal teacher training, personal interest, research and current events, and informal discussion with peers helped identify possible controversial social issues they may encounter.

The second phase was the Intention Phase which included those factors that motivate teachers to teach or not teach issues. The central question for teachers in this phase is, “Why should I teach this topic?” Many teachers mentioned meeting content standards as the primary factor, corresponding with the Recognition Phase. Teachers either stated that they were required to teach topics they considered controversial, or that topics they were required to teach could

become controversial if they delved deeply into the material. Beyond the required content standards, teachers also mentioned that the perceived benefits for students, personal interest, views on parents and administration, and views on the role of teachers in democratic education were also motivating factors that led them to choose either traditional or alternative methods in teaching CPIs.

The third phase was the Planning Phase, in which teachers decided how they are going to approach the identified controversial topic. Classroom management was the most prominent factor mentioned by teachers, with most teachers showing concern about how to maintain order in the classroom and model appropriate behavior when discussing sensitive topics. Most teachers reported that it was important to maintain a neutral role in class discussions so as to not sway students or incur parental reprisal. Also, teachers discussed factors relating to selecting appropriate content, assessing student perspectives, and timing.

After examining the CPI Decision-Making Model, common traits among teachers of the two pedagogies were examined. Teachers who adopted a traditional methodology with CPIs typically claimed that their focus was on teaching the content standards, maintaining order in the classroom, and having informal discussions that did not require excessive planning. Teachers who adopted an alternative methodology with CPIs claimed their focus was on the associated skills as well as content standards, focusing on having students explore perspectives in class, and finding multiple sources for students to examine.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter contains a discussion of the results and implications of those results from this grounded theory study. The chapter contains a brief overview of the original problem statement and research questions followed by a summary of the findings from the study, a discussion of how the results are interpreted through a social constructivist framework, and a discussion of how the results of this study fit within the extant literature. The limitations of the study are presented, and the implications of this research for both researchers and practitioners are discussed, with a focus on enhancing democratic education.

Problem Statement

High school social studies teachers are avoiding teaching controversial public issues (CPIs) using alternative teaching methods. Doing so deprives students of the authentic democratic experience of tackling problems of democracy in authentic ways within the classroom. When controversial issues are taught in the high school social studies classroom, it is often through a direct instruction format relying heavily on lecture. There are several issues with this mode of instruction. First, it fails to acknowledge that there is disagreement about the events of history and their importance (Loewen, 1995; Metro, 2018; Paxton, 1999). Second, it privileges some perspectives over others and fails to acknowledge that conflicting views exist (Anyon, 1979). Third, it undermines the democratic goals of citizenship education by providing a pedagogy of consumption that students are not to challenge (Freire, 1970): This form of learning

is more autocratic than democratic. Fourth, it has failed to show long-term benefits for students who fail to find the relevance of such a pedagogy (Ochoa-Becker, 2007).

If one accepts that it is the role of social studies teachers to instill in students the values and skills demanded by a democratic education (Dewey, 2001/1916; NCSS, 2013; Ochoa-Becker, 2007), it is clearly an issue that, by not utilizing student-driven methods, lessons are falling short of the participative democratic ideal. Researchers have speculated about the process that teachers use to decide whether to use alternative methods to teach controversial social issues (Noddings & Brooks, 2017; Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Zimmerman & Robertson), but it has not been the subject of a specific study.

Research Questions

1. What is the process that high school social studies teachers use to decide which methods to use when teaching controversial public issues?
2. What challenges exist for high school social studies teachers to teach controversial public issues in their classrooms?
3. What factors dissuade high school social studies teachers from using alternative methods to teach controversial public issues in their classrooms?
4. What role do high school social studies teachers serve in covering controversial public issues?

Review of Methodology

This qualitative study employed a grounded theory design, which is a research design based on inquiry in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or

interaction grounded in the perspective of participants (Charmaz, 2006). Though the theory generated helps explain information found in the review of the literature, the theory must be produced only from the participants of the study. This process involves the researcher in gathering data by asking open-ended questions of participants, analyzing data to form categories, searching for patterns, generalizations, or themes, and finally relating generalizations to past experiences that help illustrate the theory. Grounded theory is abductive rather than inductive or deductive; the researcher gathers data until a point when a puzzling finding emerges, using an imaginative leap to find a well-informed theory that explains the finding (Reichert, 2007).

This study used a social constructivist framework, meaning that the meanings of the various study results were interpreted through the experiences of teacher participants. In order to gain rich data about these experiences, the researcher used a two-phase approach. In the first phase, 10 teachers were interviewed individually to understand their processes for teaching CPIs. In the second phase, four teachers were divided between two focus groups and interviewed. None of the participants participated in both phases.

Information was gathered from the 14 study participants to develop a theory of change model. According to Knowlton and Phillips (2013), the purpose of a theory of change model is to, “display an idea or program in its simplest form using limited information. These models offer a chance to test plausibility (p. 5).” This tool is helpful in developing a model illustrating how social studies teachers decide to approach controversial public issues in the classroom. In this study, the theory was developed primarily from the data gathered from the individual interviews with teachers. Focus group interviews and document analysis were used to confirm or challenge the data gathered from the individual interviews to help make the final result more

robust. The end product was a model grounded solely in the information gathered from this study.

Study Findings

This study began with several research questions designed to examine how social studies teachers choose how they teach controversial public issues. With the information gathered from this study, I can now respond to these questions. Because this study employed a social-constructivist framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Glaserfeld, 1988), the answers have been framed in the context of teacher perceptions, as they were the principal source of data. Though this study also used administrator interviews and document analysis, that information was used to triangulate the data and account for discrepancies between perceived phenomena among participants.

Research Question 1

What is the process that high school social studies teachers use to decide which methods to use when teaching controversial public issues?

The process that teachers used to choose their methodology was complex and diverse. However, it can be described as operating within a three-part model that I call the CPI Decision-Making Model. This model illustrates the three conceptual phases that teachers described using as they contemplated the implementation of their lessons. This model represents the “reflective abstraction” (van Glaserfeld, 1988, p.7), as teachers reflected on their past experiences to construct a plan for how they teach controversial public issues (CPIs). This model is not chronological, as individual teachers demonstrated beginning at different stages. However, as the

actions performed in one phase affect actions taken in the other phases, they are interdependent. This interdependent nature is illustrated in the model by the circular flow between stages. Once teachers have completed the three phases, they use the information from their decision-making process to weigh the benefits and drawbacks of different methodologies to teach the CPI lesson to ultimately decide upon a preferred methodology. This analysis of the advantages and drawbacks of different methods is intentional for some teachers but is reflexive for others.

The first phase, the Recognition Phase, occurs when teachers identify those issues in their subject that may be controversial. Teachers identified controversial topics through various means by which they experienced controversy in their social contexts. As described by study participants, teachers used awareness of the required course standards, formal teacher training, teaching experience, peer learning, or personal research as the primary tools used to differentiate CPIs from normal social studies content. Within this study, all teachers were either able to identify controversial topics in their subject or were at least able to identify material that could be considered controversial if they delved deeper into the content material, meaning that they had gained relevant insight through interactions with content considered controversial by their peers or the greater social realm. It also showed how background was used to shape interpretation of events, another key feature of social constructivism (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Evidence that controversy is socially constructed (Hess, 2008) was confirmed by the discussion of Islam by various teachers because of rumors spread and the ongoing debates over the Trump presidency. For both of these topics, teachers indicated that it was the relationship between themselves and society, whether local or national, that made these topics controversial.

The second phase, the Intention Phase, is primarily concerned with what motivates teachers to teach those topics that they have identified as controversial. At its heart, the Intentional Phase illustrates how social studies teachers understand their relationship to the material that they teach and how that relationship is developed through interacting with others. Social studies teachers reported their intention to teach controversial issues for various reasons, including meeting required content standards, personal interest, benefits for students, views on parents and administration, or their perceived role as teachers of democratic education. Of these factors, meeting required content standards was the most substantial influence for either teaching controversial topics or avoiding them. This result confirmed the belief that standardized testing impacts how teachers shape their pedagogy and planning, regardless of the topic taught. Teachers' views on parents influenced pedagogical choices in two distinct ways: fear of parental reprisal and the notion that parents did not handle these issues at home. The first of these was confirmed within the literature review (Evans, 2011; Ochoa-Becker, 2007), whereas the second point presented a more novel finding. Some teachers reported that they were motivated to teach controversial topics with alternative methods because it is vital for democratic education, and the teachers believed that it was their role to model democratic education for students. This aligned with the notions put forth by Zimmerman and Robertson (2017), Hess and McAvoy (2015), and Dewey (2001/1916) that social studies education in the U.S. must prepare students for the work of democracy, and must not only teach necessary content; it must also address the necessary skills of democratic debate.

The third phase, the Planning Phase, focuses on how teachers choose to address these issues. Teachers demonstrated in the previous phases that they could use their experiences to

differentiate CPIs from other content. They also indicated that, in their operational contexts, they would be more motivated to cover CPIs in one way or another. Using reflective abstraction, teachers used the schema they had developed for how CPIs operate within their schools to reflectively predict how a lesson would operate. In this process, the Planning Phase, teachers decide if they will use traditional methodologies or alternative methodologies. Factors influencing teachers in this phase include classroom management issues, assessing student perspectives, timing, and selecting appropriate content and activities. Teacher decision-making is thus grounded in which actions are most advantageous in their classroom. Though the methods selected varied, general trends could be observed. Teachers favoring traditional methodology employed more controlling classroom management styles, acknowledged but did not explore student perspectives, focused time on delivering content rather than developing student skills, and tended to rely on the experience and the models of previous teachers to select teaching methods. This result aligns with the findings of many prior researchers (Apple, 2004; Cuban, 1984, 2016; Fielding, 2011; Kelly, 2009; Lortie, 1975; Ochoa-Becker (2007). Teachers favoring alternative methodologies described classroom management styles that encouraged a sharing environment, explored different student perspectives, planned activities, and time to explore those perspectives, and selected a variety of sources for students to examine. These methods were similar to those described by Copeland (2005), Hess (2002) and Oliver and Shaver (1966).

Research Question 2

What challenges exist for high school social studies teachers to teach controversial public issues in their classrooms?

Teachers reported that parental reprisal was a significant factor in determining if and how they would teach a controversial issue in class. Much of this fear of reprisal appeared to come from informal discussions that teachers had with one another rather than top-down policy frameworks, though there was some evidence of that as well. One study participant discussed a verbal reprimand for discussing a sensitive topic, but others mostly talked of rumors from other teachers. In either case, there was a sense among teachers that they would not be supported if they chose to discuss CPIs with their students.

Other significant issues included dealing with a lack of time to cover topics in the necessary depth, dealing with student bias and sensitivity, maintaining order in the classroom, and having access to enough resources to identify different perspectives. Despite information found in the literature review, there was little indication from teachers that evaluations from administrators were a significant factor deterring teachers from teaching sensitive issues. Whereas other researchers have found the intervention of administrators and government officials significantly impeded the discussion of controversial topics (Copur & Demirel, 2018, Misco, 2007; Misco & Tseng, 2018; Evans, 2004), it was minimally the case with teachers who participated in the present study.

Teachers stated that administrators were either unaware of controversial topics being taught in class or were merely reactive to inappropriate activities related to CPIs that were called to their attention. Teachers also identified some topics and subjects as being more controversial

than others, adjusting their decision-making process accordingly. Teachers of American Government mentioned how the controversial President made conversations about him difficult, a result similar to that of Rogers et al. (2017) in *Teaching in the Age of Trump* or Dimock (2017). World History teachers frequently mentioned Islam as a very controversial topic. These particular sensitive issues caused teachers in this study to be more cognizant of and concerned with their pedagogical approach. Whether administrators are telegraphing this sort of bureaucratic control is irrelevant, as teachers in this study interpreted the meaning of their actions, as well as the fears of their colleagues, as real. Teachers expressed concerns over bureaucratic control with the specific controversial topics of Islam in World History and the U.S. Presidency in Government. It should be expected that, under different social contexts, different taboo topics would be identified.

Research Question 3

What factors dissuade high school social studies teachers from using alternative methods to teach controversial public issues in their classrooms?

Teachers acknowledged that using alternative methodologies was more time consuming than using the traditional direct-instruction format. Specifically, identifying key resources for students to explore different perspectives, planning specific activities that require in-depth analysis of perspectives, and the time needed to instruct students on how to examine perspectives effectively and judiciously, were all considered to be time-consuming. These activities were seen as falling outside of the participating teachers' understanding of their required role. Some teachers indicated that this time constraint conflicted with their ability to teach the required

content standard. This, according to participants in the present study, was their primary motivation in avoiding controversial topics in the classroom.

Teacher training programs could help provide teachers the expertise and efficiency needed to discuss these issues. Moreover, explicit direction from administration that demonstrates trust and approval of teaching controversial topics could alter perceptions of teacher roles. However, only half of the teachers in this study had received initial formal undergraduate preparation in an education program, with the remaining half having entered education from outside fields of study by obtaining alternative certification. Teachers unanimously stated that they had received no formal training in how to deal with controversial topics, with or without alternative methodologies. This result confirms Bittman et al.'s (2017) findings that even though some teachers demonstrated that this cross-disciplinary training aided in their pedagogical decision-making, many indicated that the lack of training made choosing to teach controversial issues with alternative methodologies difficult. Though some teachers indicated that they have received professional development in alternative methodologies, this was not the case for all. This result does not necessarily mean that teachers who receive education degrees will use more alternative methodologies or that alternative certification teachers will not. When CPI methodologies were cross referenced with educational background, there was no indication of any relationship between those two factors.

Research Question 4

What role do high school social studies teachers serve in covering controversial public issues?

Most teachers interviewed in this study confirmed the belief that social studies teachers should embrace the role of democratic education. They stated that it is the job of social studies teachers to provide an authentic democratic education so that students can become well-informed citizens, and that teaching controversial topics in class should be part of students' education. These teachers held views similar to those of social meliorists such as Engle and Ochoa (1988) or to pragmatists such as Dewey (2001/1916). Some teachers believed that it was part of this role to teach students what they were not learning at home, and that parents were not discussing controversial topics with their own children.

Not all social studies teachers in this study held this belief, however. A few teachers believed that they should not be addressing social topics in school unless the topics were unavoidable, and that parents and other groups should be responsible for addressing these issues with students. These few teachers had been in education longer than most of those who believed that democratic education should be their primary focus.

This difference in the perceived role of teachers informed pedagogical decision-making. Teachers who believed it to be the role of schools to address controversial topics exhibited more fervor for teaching them in class. Teachers who believed that parents or other groups should teach social topics described actively avoiding them when possible. For these teachers, it was the content, not the controversy, that was their responsibility. Though true, to some extent, this

means that exploring different perspectives, and utilizing the methodologies that allow one to explore different perspectives, is not made a priority.

Limitations of the Findings

There were several issues in both the design and implementation of this study that must be addressed before considering the implications of the findings. This qualitative study based on grounded theory methodology utilized a relatively small number of participants. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that the ideal size for a grounded theory study is approximately 20 participants, but this study had only 14 teachers. Although this is smaller than ideal, other investigators in this field of research have found significant findings with either smaller or similar sized samples (Hess, 2002; Misco & Tseng, 2018; Monte-Sano, 2008). Regardless, it is likely that a larger sample size within the same region would have added more nuance to the data set and aided in saturation. Having only four participants in the focus groups also limited in triangulating the data. Although the document analysis was able to account for some triangulation as well, it would have been preferable to have a larger sample size with larger focus groups.

This sample was comprised of volunteers who were both able and willing to participate. It is likely that the study was skewed to only those whose opinions were stronger or to those who had the availability to meet for the study, and participants may have responded to questions with what they thought was the correct answer rather than being truthful. As the researcher is also an educator and colleague of several of the study participants, and though he was careful and thorough in attempts to avoid bias, there may have been some issue with bias in how the data were collected and interpreted. For example, an assumption of this study was that democratic

education is the primary goal for American social studies education. This assumption may not have been held by participants, and, therefore, I may have misinterpreted their responses.

Also, the study was primarily focused on collecting interview data about teacher perceptions and experiences teaching controversial public issues in the classroom, and these behaviors were not observed as part of this study. It should be noted that this study was primarily focused on the decision-making process leading up to the delivery of the lesson and not the reality of how it was delivered. Because the decision-making process is challenging to observe, interview data were gathered to gain the best understanding possible as to why teachers chose to teach controversial topics in the manner they did. This was the most fitting within the social constructivist framework, as the focus was to show how teachers abstracted the process by which they choose to cover controversial social issues. The documentation of lesson planning materials and activities was used as the evidence of this decision-making, and was used as a substitution for observations. Teacher fidelity in executing CPI lessons with alternative methodologies is an important topic that should be explored next.

A significant portion of the study participants came from the same school and were colleagues. This occurrence was both a benefit and a hindrance. It benefited the study by pointing out a potential issue with playing devil's advocate, namely that teachers may overestimate their ability to maintain a neutral stance in the classroom. This feature may not have been identified if these teachers were not close to one another regularly. However, this also means that the opinions expressed by teacher participants in this study came from one small geographic area. These teachers also tended to occupy schools in suburban areas. It should be

expected that urban or rural high school teachers will have at least slightly different thought processes, as they encounter different experiences in their social contexts.

It should be noted that the results of this study should be considered as progress toward a common theory grounded in the data but are certainly not generalizable in all contexts. To account for this, the CPI Decision-Making Model was developed to be broad enough to allow for different contexts beyond those used in this study, but the generalizability of the CPI Decision-Making Model is quite limited. One should expect that it is not applicable beyond the context of the Central Florida school districts in which it was developed or beyond social studies education, although modifications could be made to allow this to be so.

Part of the data collection process for this study involved gathering documentation from teachers about their lesson plans and activities. The aim was to examine documents to understand how teachers reached decisions on teaching controversial topics and the sorts of activities they imagined using. However, not all teachers had these sort of documents, mostly because they did not create formal lesson plans. This setback was due primarily to another factor that had been mentioned in the interviews—teachers were not regularly being observed by administrators, and administrators were not asking these teachers to provide lesson plans. Of the 14 teachers in this study, 11 provided documentation of some sort of lesson planning, activities, calendars, or contracts used with students. However, some teachers provided little to no documentation, providing little to no verification. The examples of teacher lesson plans or teaching materials are provided within the Appendices C-F.

Discussion and Implications

Expected Findings

Most of the results that came from the study were unsurprising and corroborated research that had been conducted previously (Cuban, 2016; Evans, 2011; Hess, 2008, 2009; Misco, 2016; Misco & Tseng, 2018; Ochoa-Becker, 2008). Teachers have been complaining about the influence of content standards and standardized testing for decades (Apple, 2004; Evans, 2004; Fielding, 2011; Kelly, 2009; Monte-Sano, 2008), so it was not surprising that they also did so here. For example, high school U.S. History teachers in the State of Florida have nearly 80 content standards that teachers must address during the year, not including separate benchmarks for specific content beyond that. Combined with the time lost to the testing administration itself and related review activities, teachers in this study believed that there simply was not enough time to cover CPI topics appropriately. Time is required to plan the activity, find relevant sources, teach students to use those sources, teach students how the activity works, and implement the lesson. Seeing as how traditional methods often require less planning time, as evidenced from participants in this study, it is no wonder that teachers look for methods that streamline their jobs and deal with as much content as possible. Hess (2009) aptly commented that teaching controversial topics is challenging to do well for individuals who are experienced and know what they're doing, but that it is especially difficult for novices. Considering the extra time and training needed to teach CPIs, it should be no wonder that many teachers decide to avoid them when possible and instead "teach to the test." (Au, 2009). Within this study, Mrs. Ragna, Mrs. Ritza, Mr. Owen, and Mr. Kearney specifically discussed feeling this kind of testing pressure.

It was also not surprising to learn that teachers have not been prepared to be skillful in handling controversy in the classroom. High school social studies teachers have received little training in the way of classroom management (Bittman et al., 2017), and therefore often rely on improvisation and trial-by-error. The advice given to many first-year teachers at my school is to “Just get through the first year. You're going to make every mistake in the book. Just survive.” To that issue, all teachers are, to some extent, just trying to get by and keep their jobs. In the climate of the 21st century, many teachers fear that discussing topics in more depth than necessary may place them in jeopardy. Classroom management issues related to discussing controversial topics, such as maintaining a lively discussion and maintaining order, have been mentioned by prior researchers (Hahn, 1996; Passe & Evans, 1996; Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017), so it was not surprising that so many teachers had this as a primary concern in planning.

Surprising Findings

A surprising issue that did emerge was that teachers chose not to veer off from content standards to discuss topics of personal interest. So prevalent was the focus on teaching standards that teachers often stated that they did not have time to explore topics that they found more interesting. This could be considered positive if one agrees with Mrs. Heloise that having teachers venturing off-topic and teaching whatever comes to mind is undesirable. Teachers need to be held accountable for teaching at least some information in each subject area that society has deemed essential for students to know. However, seeing so many teachers feeling constrained in their choice of appropriate classroom topics and methods is disheartening. Mrs. Lois admitted that she avoids teaching social issues because it merely adds to the drudgery of a job she already finds difficult.

There were other surprising and important findings from this study that should be explored further. The notion that teachers need more training to perform their jobs is not, by itself, a surprising finding in the study; more teacher training is a common solution for problems. However, the fact that none of the teachers in this study had received any training on how to handle controversy in the classroom was, given the mood in the U.S., a significant issue that deserves more attention. In the absence of formal training or direction from the school district, teachers must rely on either personal research or peer relationships to guide them through teaching difficult content. Teachers in this study had gained some experience about how to navigate controversial topics in their classroom, but that information did not come from a trusted or authoritative source. Teacher awareness of controversial topics seems to be a result of gossip rather than rigorous training and research, and their methods for dealing with controversy are a mix of personal experience, improvisation, and skills they learned through some other line of study. Left on their own, teachers work with the collection of knowledge and experiences that they have built to improvise a viable lesson plan. The critical example of this issue was the approach teachers in this study used regarding the topic of Islam. Although many of the teachers within this study described an administration that mostly left them alone, World History teachers held that Islam was a taboo topic and that they needed to be especially careful in teaching it. This was due, in part, to actions taken by the county in question, as a teacher did lose his job and the county did assert more control over the curriculum. However, even though this heavy-handed administrative action did not happen to the teachers in this study, teachers have learned from one another, with information spread by rumor. In short, in the absence of formal training, they have based some of their pedagogy on fear and rumor, choosing to teach using safer traditional

methods and avoid deeply examining critical topics that they believe could get them into trouble with administrators or the community (i.e., parents). To be clear, I believe there are excellent reasons for those rumors and fears to exist, and teachers should not be criticized for sharing information among themselves about factors that could impact their careers.

A belief held by most, though not all, teachers of this study was that they must remain neutral when teaching controversial social issues. Hahn (1996) Hess (2009, 2008), Kohlberg (1968) and Larson (1990) discussed the importance of teachers not impressing their viewpoint on students but instead, assisting them to form their own opinions by allowing them to wrestle with difficult issues.

Teachers in this study did not negate these ideas, but they seemed to over-estimate their ability to remain neutral. Several of the teachers in this study taught in the same school. Though this was a drawback for making the study generalizable, it did create the conditions for identifying this phenomenon. Often, a teacher would mention that it was vital to maintain a neutral role in the classroom because other teachers in the school did not. Mrs. Lois, Mr. Owen, and Mr. Humbert mentioned this issue, in essence, complaining about one another. This finding could be explained in several ways: (a) these teachers were not very good at remaining neutral, even when they wanted to, (b) these teachers were not actually attempting to be neutral and lied during the study or (c) teachers were judging the "neutrality" of one another through unreliable means. Regardless, if teachers behave in a neutral fashion and play devil's advocate in class so that others cannot determine their political leanings or so that they do not unduly influence students, they are failing. Enough of an impression is made on some students that they discuss it with others, regardless of whether or not that impression epitomizes the teacher's true feelings.

Of all of the results from this study, I would argue that the most significant result came from how teachers of students in Standard social studies courses (i.e. not Honors, AP, or IB) effectively avoid any discussion of controversial topics. Social studies teachers mentioned that certain subjects had more controversy than others and that CPIs emerge more frequently in Government than they do in World History. However, teachers also said that they vary discussion on controversial topics not just based on the subject, but on the perceived academic and maturity level of their students. This result comes from the combined effect of (a) the prevalence of standards, (b) lack of instructional time, and (c) the additional classroom management concerns that come with teaching Standard-level students. The consensus among teachers in this study was that AP students had too much material to learn for the AP test, and therefore they could not afford to lose time to discuss social topics in too much depth. Honors students could spend that time, so long as the topic discussed was associated with a required content standard. For Standard students, however, teachers actively avoided these topics. If this result is correct and applicable beyond the parameters of this study, its presence indicates that there is a severe issue with how democratic education operates in this region. If democratic education is a privilege of the elite few, then it is not the ideal citizenship education it is intended to be.

On this last point, I want to be clear that I do not believe that this is the fault of the teachers in this study. Teachers must contend with numerous difficult situations and decisions in their classrooms. They must decide what to teach, how to teach it, how to deal with parents and administrators, how to manage all of their materials, how to assess students, and how to organize all these activities into a feasible curriculum. Because of the social context in which teachers work and the experiences they have working in our schools, they are constrained and limited, to

some extent, in their decision-making. If these teachers are given an exhaustive list of required content standards, a room full of difficult students to teach, and a standardized test that will be used to evaluate their performance, there can be little doubt that teachers will avoid teaching anything that is not required or using methods that are more time-consuming.

Implications for High School Social Studies Teachers

High school social studies teachers can glean some important information from the results of this study that may inform their practice. Social studies teachers should decide if their role in education is to prepare students to participate in democracy. If so, and if they choose to not include students in meaningful lessons on controversial topics that allow them to explore different perspectives on their own, they are not preparing students adequately for the job of citizenship. Teachers who are debating about teaching sensitive topics may wish to use the CPI Decision-making Model to examine their own decision-making process to determine why they teach CPIs in one manner rather than another.

Teachers should know that the planning for student-centered lessons is difficult and time-consuming. It takes time to find credible and substantive examples for students to explore different perspectives. It also takes time to model for students how to hold a reasoned argument supported by facts. It would be much simpler to merely lecture, and that is the choice that many teachers in this study made. However, social studies teachers should know that the extra effort is worth the result. Open-classroom environments that foster civil democratic debate give students the opportunity to develop a taste for higher political participation and a sense of civic duty and to lower their levels of cynicism (Ehman, 1969). Ehman (1980) found students who participated in social studies classrooms in a traditional format became more cynical and less able to see how

the decisions they make can affect the outcome of our democracy. Increased political engagement also came from those who were able to experience a variety of perspectives (Ehman, 1980). Students exposed to alternative teaching methods and CPIs have also shown increased levels of tolerance for diverse groups, cosmopolitanism, and global mindedness (Avery et al., 1992; Blankenship, 1990). Students benefit when they have an authentic opportunity to share opinions on important topics, and teachers should support the use of controversial public issues in the classroom.

Teachers should be wary of their ability to remain neutral in class. As shown in this study, teachers may overestimate their ability to hide their political leanings. Teachers' hiding their true feelings on a topic does not mean that students will not be left with an impression from the lesson. For example, Mr. Owen, a self-described conservative, mentioned ensuring presenting both sides of an argument when discussing immigration. However, enough students made mention of his opinions to other teachers that his perspective was detectable in the other interviews. It is more important that teachers demonstrate how to hold a well-reasoned argument than to play devil's advocate. Simply bolstering the other side of an argument does not show students which arguments are better reasoned, nor does it prepare students for democratic citizenship. Teachers should investigate the use of regularized rules of discussion, such as Robert's Rules of Order, to conduct lessons on controversial topics rather than having informal discussions. Though informal discussions are easier to plan, they can lead to biased discussion and a soured classroom environment. Teachers looking for additional help should examine Passe and Evans' (1996) *Discussion Methods in an Issues-Centered Curriculum*.

Implications for School and District Administrative Personnel

Administrators should become more aware of the controversial topics that their teachers discuss in schools and how teachers prepare for them. This action should involve some additional oversight, in particular, to make sure that teachers are indeed modeling desirable behaviors and not unduly influencing students. This administrative action does not need to be accomplished through formal evaluation that may limit teacher autonomy. Rather, it may be performed through informal discussion that demonstrates joint trust and respect among educational professionals. The guiding principle of this increased oversight should be that the job of administration is to ensure the safety of the educational environment. This notion includes not only physical safety but also ensuring that schools are safe places to have discussions on sensitive issues. Of critical importance for administrator's consideration is the need to ensure a setting and conditions under which democratic education is possible. This includes supporting teachers in their quest to deal with controversial topics in their classrooms in meaningful and democratic ways. If a safe and open environment when democratic education can take place is desirable, then it must be tended to by all parties. Democracy operates like any other social construct; it exists in our minds and is shaped by the experiences we associate with it. For it to flourish, it requires a space where different perspectives can be shared so that people can learn from the experiences of others.

School districts and school administrations should provide additional training for teachers and students on effective means of discussing controversial public issues in school. In particular, the works of Evans and Saxe (1996), Hess and McAvoy (2015), Metro (2018), Ochoa-Becker (2007), and Zimmerman and Robertson (2017) offer helpful guidelines for how to both define

and address controversial topics using alternative, student-centered methodologies. Having well-trained teachers who are capable of addressing these topics will aid them in engaging students in the classroom. It should also be mentioned that having hundreds of teachers with no training on how to handle controversial topics in the 21st century political climate is hazardous to society (Rogers et al., 2017).

Implications for Researchers.

This study provides a small glimpse at a large and persistent issue in social studies education: how do social studies teachers teach? There are many more research threads to explore within this topic that were left unexplored due to the limitations of this study, and the results illuminate other avenues to explore as well. Researchers could search for evidence of teachers using the CPI Decision-Making Model in other populations, or perhaps with different levels of students. This study was limited to high school social studies teachers in the Central Florida area, which is primarily suburban. It would be informative to determine whether the CPI Decision-Making Model is applicable in science education as well as social science education, as both subject areas deal with controversial topics.

The present study could be extended by using observational data to see if teachers are indeed using alternative or traditional methods as they claim. A critical question that remains unanswered is the extent to which there are specific learning gain benefits from using alternative methods to teach controversial topics. There are controversial topics that are required by certain standards, and there are specific end-of-course examination items related to those content standards. Thus, there may exist a tool for examining the effectiveness of different methodologies when teaching CPIs. Though that did not apply to Islam, it may apply to

controversial topics in U.S. History. One last area that deserves further examination is teacher self-efficacy in maintaining a neutral persona.

Summary

This grounded theory study was conducted to examine the perceptions of 14 high school social studies teachers from three Central Florida school districts, namely Seminole, Orange, and Volusia counties. Participants were interviewed to reveal the decision-making process that social studies teachers used to choose methodologies when teaching controversial public issues. The result was a three-phase model, the CPI Decision-Making Model. This model is comprised of three conceptual phases, including the Recognition Phase, the Intention Phase, and then the Planning Phase. By working through this process, teachers analyze the costs and benefits of different methods of teaching controversial public issues. In this chapter, I examined the typical factors considered by teachers who chose traditional methods versus those who chose alternative methods and then discussed the implications of those results. Of particular importance was that, in the present study, (a) teachers of Standard-level students chose to avoid teaching CPIs in an authentic democratic manner, (b) teachers received little to no training on alternative methods and no training on how to deal with controversy in the classroom, (c) teachers overestimated their ability to remain neutral in the classroom, and (d) teachers were learning their methodologies for teaching CPIs through unorthodox means.

APPENDIX A
CROSS-REFERENCE OF NEXT GENERATION SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS
WITH COMMONLY ACCEPTED CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS

Table 3

Cross-reference of Next Generation Sunshine State Standards With Commonly Accepted Controversial Topics

Course	Possible CPI topic	Related FL State Standard(s) ^a	Cross Reference ^b
Economics	Valuing development over environmental sustainability	SS.912.E.3.4, SS.912.E.2.2, SS.912.E.2.11	Oliver & Shaver (1966), Noddings & Brooks (2017)
Financial Literacy	Poverty and Education	SS.912.FL.1.2	Hunt & Metcalf (1968), Oliver & Shaver (1966), Noddings & Brooks (2017)
Government/Civics	Safety vs. Security	SS.912.C.2.4, SS.912.C.1.3, SS.912.C.2.7, SS.912.C.2.6, SS.912.C.3.11	Hunt & Metcalf (1968), Noddings & Brooks (2017)
Humanities	Art and Feminism	SS.912.H.3.2, SS.912.H.1.5, SS.912.H.1.2	Oliver & Shaver (1966), Hunt & Metcalf (1968), Noddings & Brooks (2017)
Psychology	Psychology-based race and ethnicity research	SS.912.P.10.4	Oliver & Shaver (1966), Hunt & Metcalf (1968), Noddings & Brooks (2017)
Sociology	Distinctions and origins of social classes	SS.912.S.3.1, SS.912.S.3.2	Oliver & Shaver (1966), Hunt & Metcalf (1968), Noddings & Brooks (2017)
U.S. History	America's role in the World: WWI, Protectionism, and Nationalism	SS.912.A.In.e	Hunt & Metcalf (1968), Oliver & Shaver (1966), Noddings & Brooks, (2017)
World Geography	Cultural Imperialism	SS.912.G.4.4	Hunt & Metcalf (1968)
World History	Impact of the Nuclear Age	SS.912.W.9.1, SS.912.W.7.10	Hunt & Metcalf (1968)

^a The alignment of CPI topics with their Florida State Standards counterparts is not required by the State of Florida. Therefore, it could be possible to address a different topic with the same standard. However, because of the nature of the standard and how it relates to typical controversial areas identified by Oliver and Shaver (1966), Hunt and Metcalf (1968), and Noddings and Brooks (2017), it is likely that even an alternative topic would also be controversial.

^b There are more controversial topics than the ones that are listed between Hunt and Metcalf (1968), Oliver and Shaver (1966), and Noddings & Brooks (2017). If the CPI Topic were changed, we would expect that the specific standards that they are aligned to would also change. However, we should expect that the new topic would still align with some standard so long as the topic falls within the subject area.

APPENDIX B
INSTRUMENTATION FOR INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL- TEACHERS

- Please describe your job or role within your school
 - Years of teaching? Training? Courses taught?
- *What do you know about* controversial topics in your field?
 - How do you learn about these topics? (News, professional journals, internet, teaching materials)
 - Are you required to teach certain topics that you would consider controversial?
- To what extent do you broach these issues in the classroom?
- Describe your decision-making process when choosing to cover a social topic or not.
 - *What provides the most control over the process?*
 - How do you reconcile different cultural interests and beliefs about what should be relative to these issues and larger societal questions?
- When you teach CPI's, how do you do so?
 - Why do you do so? What benefits or issues do you see?
 - How do you decide which method to use? *Has this changed over time?*
 - Are these methods different from those you use when you don't teach CPIs?
 - What training did you receive on using these methods?
- What challenges exist to addressing controversial issues (society, curriculum, students, exams, etc.)?
- What role do teachers have in covering controversial public issues?
 - What role do schools have?
- Is there anything else you think I should know to understand your decision making process better in regards to how you teach controversial public issues?
 - Any factors relating to teacher evaluations?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: FOCUS GROUPS

- Please describe your job or role within your school
 - Years of teaching? Training? Courses taught?
- To what extent do you broach CPIs in the classroom?
- Describe your decision-making process when choosing to cover a social topic or not.
 - *What provides the most control over the process?*
 - How do you reconcile different cultural interests and beliefs about what should be relative to these issues and larger societal questions?
- When you teach CPI's, how do you do so?
 - Why do you do so? What benefits or issues do you see?
 - How do you decide which method to use? *Has this changed over time?*
 - Are these methods different from those you use when you don't teach CPIs?
- When interviewed, teachers identified several factors they consider when deciding when and how to cover controversial public issues. These factors include:
 - Beyond these, is there anything else you think I should know to understand your decision-making process better in regards to how you teach controversial public issues?

NOTES ON INSTRUMENTATION

Questions that have been underlined were in the original Misco (2016) article that the interview protocol was adopted from. Questions that have been *italicized* were adopted from Charmaz (2006). The remaining questions were adopted to meet the specific research questions of this study. Several of the questions are similar in all three interview groupings. This was done intentionally to maintain the validity of the original interview protocol from Misco (2016). Other adjustments were made due to the different audience:

- The first group of questions was for individual teachers and is the most like the original. Its primary purpose is to generate the categories of data and identify relationships between those categories;
- The second group of questions was for the focus group interviews and is intended for discriminant sampling and confirming categories identified in the individual interviews.
- The protocol for the focus group is shorter than the first since it was expected to take more time to ask questions of the entire group. However, in order to make up for lost information, focus group participants were emailed as a follow up to find any missing information.

Study participants struggled with the wording of the question “How do you reconcile different cultural interests and beliefs about what should be relative to these issues and larger societal questions?” For some, the alternative of “How do you deal with different cultural backgrounds or perspectives in the classroom” was used. This alternative preserves the intent of the original question, but makes it more appropriate for the context of Central Florida. The original question was utilized in a grounded theory study by Misco with South Korean students.

APPENDIX C
DOCUMENT ANALYSIS SUMMARY TABLE

Table 4

Document Analysis Summary Table

Participant	Document Type ^a	Document Title	Trad./Alt. ^b	Notes
Mrs. Beda	Lesson Plan	Dropping the Atomic Bomb	Alt	This lesson comes from the Stanford History Education Group [SHEG], and was mentioned multiple times by different participants. The lesson involves students receiving a short lecture on the atomic bomb, then examining sources, and then developing an argument to support an interpretation of those sources. The activity is student-centered, focusing on their ability to interpret documents for themselves and develop their own argument on a sensitive topic.
Mrs. Beda	Activity	Discuss the economics of slavery	Alt	This activity has students examining the controversial topic of slavery through a different perspective. Students are asked to compare the economic justification of slavery with the moral argument against it. The goal is for students to clarify their values in a manner similarly proposed by Massialas and Cox (1966). As such, the activity is student centered and encourages students to discuss controversial issues of morality and values.
Mrs. Freya	Activity	Religious syncretism and iconography	Alt	Students are presented with examples of early Christian art and are asked to make connections between what is seen and earlier works of Egyptian art. The activity is designed as an open discussion similar to a Socratic seminar (Copeland, 2005), and then leads into individual reflections that synthesize information from the class discussion. Discussion is generated from student interpretations of the art, including an examination of the importance of art to religious interpretation.
Mrs. Freya	Contract	Permission for students to engage with sensitive materials	n/a	This contract is sent home with students, who must then have their parents sign. Mrs. Freya uses this as a requirement for her Humanities course. Students who do not complete the contract are removed from the

Participant	Document Type ^a	Document Title	Trad./Alt. ^b	Notes
				course. This could be done because Humanities is an elective course. This is also an indication of how covering controversial topics in class is a privilege, not a right.
Mr. Harvey	Lesson Plan	AP Psychology Unit Planner	Trad.	Mr. Harvey said that this was what he uses for his lesson plans. Each AP teacher uses a similar guide. Although the guide does provide example student-centered activities to use, they are not required by the College Board. Therefore, Mr. Harvey's lesson plan is mostly a list of content that he covers in his lectures, following a traditional methodology.
Mr. Humbert	Calendar	Government and Economics calendar- 3/27/19-4/5/19	Trad.	Mr. Humbert did not provide any lesson plan materials as he does not make lesson plans. However, he did allow for a picture to be taken of his calendar (Appendix E). As described by him, his class activities involve mostly lecture and note taking, following a traditional methodology.
Mr. Kearney	Lesson Plan	Nanking Activity	Alt.	This lesson comes from the Stanford History Education Group [SHEG]. This lesson is similar to the Atomic Bomb activity, but instead examines how textbooks can have different perspectives. The activity is student-centered, focusing on their ability to interpret documents for themselves and develop their own argument on a sensitive topic.
Mr. Kearney	Lesson Plan	Dropping The Atomic Bomb	Alt.	This lesson comes from the Stanford History Education Group [SHEG], and was mentioned multiple times by different participants. The lesson involves students receiving a short lecture on the atomic bomb, then examining sources, and then developing an argument to support an interpretation of those sources. The activity is student-centered, focusing on their ability to interpret documents for themselves and develop their own argument on a sensitive topic.

Participant	Document Type ^a	Document Title	Trad./Alt. ^b	Notes
Mrs. Lois	Lesson Plan	CNN current event response sheet	Alt.	This lesson plan involves students examining a current event chosen by Mrs. Lois. They watch a short clip on the event, write about their interpretation of the event in a journal, and then share their journal with the class. If there is enough time to allow students to share their interpretation of events, then this lesson can be student centered.
Mr. Owen	Activity	Quotations from Adam Smith	Trad.	This worksheet is used by Mr. Owen to see if students understand the basic points of Adam Smith's work from <i>Wealth of Nations</i> . Though Mr. Owen mentioned how it is used to start a discussion, there is no evidence of it from this worksheet. As the questions only ask for a single interpretation, this activity follows a traditional methodology. If students are being asked to share opinions, there is no part of this activity in which they must evaluate them.
Mr. Owen	Activity	Financial literacy worksheet	Trad.	This worksheet is used by Mr. Owen to see if students understand budgeting and how credit cards work. This activity has students examining different scenarios to understand whether or not borrowing money is a good idea. Though this activity does allow for different interpretations, there is no indication that that is central to this activity.
Mrs. Ragna	Calendar	Unit 7 Calendar	Trad.	This calendar shows how Mrs. Ragna organizes what must be covered in a unit of her AP U.S. History course. Unlike her lessons on controversial topics, most of what is seen on the calendar involves lecture and notes, with periodic test preparation. This confirms what she had mentioned during the interviews, namely that she mostly sticks with a traditional format except when dealing with controversial topics.
Mrs. Ragna	Activity	Dibussion activity	Alt.	Mrs. Ragna's Dibussion is a synthesis of a Socratic seminar and a debate. Students take turns deliberating on a point made on a sensitive topic covered in class,

Participant	Document Type ^a	Document Title	Trad./Alt. ^b	Notes
				and Mrs. Ragna guides the discussion using probing questions.
Mrs. Rosabella	Lesson Plan	Dropping the Atomic Bomb	Alt.	This lesson comes from the Stanford History Education Group [SHEG], and was mentioned multiple times by different participants. The lesson involves students receiving a short lecture on the atomic bomb, then examining sources, and then developing an argument to support an interpretation of those sources. The activity is student-centered, focusing on their ability to interpret documents for themselves and develop their own argument on a sensitive topic.
Mrs. Secia	Activity	Sociology-masculinity and femininity in media	Alt.	This activity comes in several parts. Students begin with a central reading assignment, then complete an individual assignment where they answer questions to develop their own point of view on the topic. Students then have a group activity where they share perspectives, and finally there is a synthesis activity at the end where students must bring together all that they've learned. This activity covers a controversial topic using student-centered methods.
Mr. Sloan	Lesson Plan	Neurons and how the brain controls the body	Trad.	This lesson examines how the brain controls the body. Though there is reference to using dominoes as in interesting hook for the lesson, the primary method of delivering information is through lecture and PowerPoint.

^a There were four different forms of documents submitted. Lesson plans were documents used by teachers to organize their class activities. Activities were documents that were used within the class itself, and often included either handouts or worksheets for students. Calendars showed how teachers organized their activities throughout the year. There was also one contract given that had to be signed by parents.

^b Indicates whether these lessons followed traditional or alternative methodologies as described by the study participants.

APPENDIX D
FOUR-PART LESSON PLAN WITH ALTERNATIVE METHODOLOGIES

Here is an alternative methodologies lesson used by Mrs. Secia when teaching masculinity and femininity, which were controversial topics within her classroom. She described a four-part structure that was similarly described by other teachers in this study. She began this lesson by having students read *On Becoming Male: Reflections of a Sociologist on Childhood and Early Socialization* (Henslin, 2007). She then had students complete an individual assignment.

Ch. 14

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

What does masculinity or femininity depend on?

Provide an example of a mom and dad being cautious about their son's clothing.

Provide an example of gentle nudging into masculinity regarding toys.

What do boys use to test their parent's limits or tolerance levels?

Provide an example of boy's having greater freedom than girls.

What is the problem with being a sissy (according to the author)?

Since her class is an elective, students of all abilities are in the class. Therefore, she supplements the reading with additional worksheets for scaffolding.

Student

Name: _____

STUDENT HANDOUT: GENDER ANALYSIS

Directions: For each media item you are given, find three ways the product targets, stereotypes, or markets to males or females. Discuss and determine what messages this sends to young children.

Ways the product targets, stereotypes or markets to males or females:

Messages about gender being sent to children:

<p>Product: _____</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••	<p>Main Message: _____</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••
<p>Product: _____</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••	<p>Main Message: _____</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••
<p>Product: _____</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••	<p>Main Message: _____</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••

After her individual assignment, she moves onto group assignments that allow students to explore different perspectives.

- 1.) As a group, you need to write and illustrate a masculine male.

What is typical of being “masculine”—how would you describe it to someone who doesn’t know what masculinity is? How you illustrate it? What are some qualities a fraternity would value?

Draw an actual male illustrating masculinity and then describe characteristics around/beside/above/below/etc. it

- 2.) On your orange sticky note, write a paragraph on how masculinity *could* turn toxic. In what ways could it become negative? Tell me at least 4 different ways masculinity could be toxic.

At the end of the week, she finishes her lesson with a reflection writing assignment. Students have to summarize their own opinions and draw examples from the text.

Take out half sheet of paper.

Label your paper "**Being Feminine**"

Write a paragraph telling me how the standard of femininity can be toxic. How can it be negative for women/men/society? Provide at **least 4 ways** it can be negative.

APPENDIX E
SAMPLE CALENDAR: DOMINANT TRADITIONAL AND ALTERNATIVE METHODS
FOR CPIS

Weekly Lesson Plan Form: APUSH—Unit 7: 1890-1945

Unit Essential Question: *How did an increasingly pluralistic United States face profound domestic and global challenges, debate the proper degree of government activism, and seek to define its international role?*

AP Standards: Key Concept 7.1: Governmental, political, and social organizations struggled to address the effects of large-scale industrialization, economic uncertainty, and related social changes such as urbanization and mass migration.

Key Concept 7.2: A revolution in communications and transportation technology helped to create a new mass culture and spread “modern” values and ideas, even as cultural conflicts between groups increased under the pressure of migration, world wars, and economic distress.

Key Concept 7.3: Global conflicts over resources, territories, and ideologies renewed debates over the nation’s values and its role in the world, while simultaneously propelling the United States into a dominant international military, political, cultural, and economic position.

Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday/ Thursday		Friday 1/25	
				LEQ: What were the major goals and accomplishments of the Progressive era? TS: Students will complete a chart outlining the major achievements of the Progressive movement. Assign Progressives Recruiting Fair project.		Ch. 21 Reading Quiz LEQ: Who were the Progressives? TS: Students will work on Progressive Recruiting Fair Project	

Monday 1/28		Tuesday 1/29		Wednesday/ Thursday		Friday 2/1	
LEQ: Who were the Progressives? TS: Students will present Progressive Recruiting Fair Project		Ch. 20 Reading Quiz LEQ: What were the causes of American imperialism? TS: Students will be assigned groups to review several big ideas that shaped US foreign policy: 1. City on a Hill 2. Dec of Ind 3. GW Farewell address 4. Monroe Doctrine 5. Manifest Destiny Students will then view a video clip of the Spanish American War to learn the causes of the war.		LEQ: What justifications did Americans use to validate overseas expansion? TS: Students will research and then sort the major events of the Spanish American War and categorize them as economic imperialism, political imperialism, cultural imperialism, or military imperialism. 1. Protection of sugar production in Hawaii 2. Open door policy in China 3. Missionary work in China 4. Kipling’s “The White Man’s Burden” 5. Maher’s “ <i>The Influence of Sea Power</i> ” 6. De Lome Letter 7. naval base at Pearl Harbor 8. military base at Guantanamo Bay 9. explosion of the Maine 10. Platt Amendment 11. Teller Amendment		LEQ: What were the arguments for and against American imperialism? TS: Students will debate the views of imperialists and anti-imperialists. HW:	

				Students will then be randomly divided into two groups: Imperialists and Anti-Imperialists to begin researching their position for a debate to take place the following class period.			
Monday 2/4	Ch. 22 Reading Quiz LEQ: Why did the U.S. enter World War I? TS: Students will analyze primary source documents.	Tuesday	Vocab Quiz LEQ: Could the causes of WWI have been averted? TS: Students will engage in a simulation of the causes of WWI.	Wednesday/ Thursday	LEQ: Why did the Senate reject the League of Nations? TS: Brief lecture on the causes of WWI and Interventionists vs. Isolationists. Students will be divided into 3 groups to represent the varying viewpoints regarding ratification of the League—Irreconcilables, Reservationists, and supporters of Wilson. Using the documents from the 1991 DBQ, students will develop historical arguments presenting their group’s view of the League. HW:	Friday 2/8	LEQ: How was the home front impacted by WWI? TS: Finish lesson from previous day if needed. Discuss Ch. 14 from Zinn assigned the previous day for reading. Emphasis will be on the Sedition Act, the Espionage Act, Committee on Public Information and George Creel, the IWW, Socialist Party, Emma Goldman and the Soviet Ark, A. Mitchell Palmer and the Palmer Raids, and the Red Scare.
Monday 2/11		Tuesday 2/12		Wednesday/ Thursday		Friday 2/15	
Unit 7a Test		LEQ: To what extent did developments during the Roaring Twenties maintain continuity and foster change in American politics and society? TS: Review Unit 7A test. PowerPoint lecture, slides 1-21. Students will view documents to draw conclusions regarding the impacts of the Immigration Act of 1924.		LEQ: To what extent did developments during the Roaring Twenties maintain continuity and foster change in American politics and society? TS: Students will form partnerships to identify a new form of technology in the 1920s and design a marketing campaign that extols how it improved the standard of living for Americans, expanded greater personal mobility, and/or developed better communications systems.		Ch. 23 Reading Quiz LEQ: What is the significance of the Harlem Renaissance during the cultural changes of the 1920s? TS: Students will view primary source documents from the Harlem Renaissance in a stations activity	

<p>Monday</p> <p>2/18</p> <p>NO SCHOOL</p>	<p>Tuesday</p> <p>2/19</p> <p>Ch. 24 Reading Quiz LEQ: What caused the Great Depression and how did Hoover and FDR address those problems? TS: PowerPoint Lecture, slides 24-33.</p>	<p>Wednesday/ Thursday</p> <p>LEQ: What impact did the New Deal and the Second New Deal have on the US economy? TS: PowerPoint Lecture, slides 34-38 Students will form groups and assigned 3 agencies created during the New Deal. Each group will research their agencies and determine whether they represent relief, recovery, or reform. They will come up the the board and tape each agency card under the correct vategory and defend their placement. We will address whether each program was successful and/or challenged by SCOTUS.</p>	<p>Friday</p> <p>2/22</p> <p>LEQ: What impact did the Great Depression and New Deal have on women, Mexicans, Indians, Blacks, migrants, and labor? TS: Students will form groups and be assigned primary source readings from one of the groups listed in the LEQ. Students will determine how their assigned group was impacted by the New Deal and Great Depression.</p> <p>HW:</p>
<p>Monday</p> <p>2/25</p> <p>LEQ: Was the New Deal a success or failure? TS: Students will form small groups to examine primary source docs criticizing the New Deal. Each group will hold a live press conference in which one student will portray the New Deal critic from their assigned reading and the others will portray reporters asking questions.</p>	<p>Tuesday</p> <p>2/26</p> <p>Ch. 25 Reading Quiz LEQ: What were the causes of WWII and America's eventual involvement? TS: Students will form jigsaw groups to review U.S. foreign policy leading up to WWII. HW:</p>	<p>Wednesday/ Thursday</p> <p>LEQ: What were the causes of WWII and America's eventual involvement? What was life like for Americans on the home front during WWII? How did cooperation with the Allies lead to victory in WWII? TS: WWII PowerPoint lecture slides 60-68. Students will then form groups and be assigned one of the following groups to research changes and continuities on the home front experiences for these groups from WWI to WWII:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African Americans • Women • Japanese Americans • Jewish Americans • Mexican Americans • Government efforts to fund the war • Government actions to deal with opposition to the war • Government actions to build support for the war 	<p>Friday</p> <p>3/1</p> <p>LEQ: What factors led the Allies to win the war? TS: Students will be assigned to 3 groups—diplomatic, military, and technological—and brainstorm 2 factors considered the top reasons for Allied success in the war. PPT Lecture, slides 83-87.</p>

Monday 3/4		Tuesday 3/5		Wednesday/ Thursday		Friday 3/8	
Unit 7b Vocab Quiz LEQ: Was Truman's use of the atomic bomb ethical? TS: Students will answer a SAQ on the use of the bomb.		Unit 7b Test				LEQ: How did American foreign policy change and stay the same from 1898-1845? TS:	

Vocabulary: White Man's Burden, Social Darwinism, Progressive era, Prohibition, Initiative, Referendum, Recall, Muckraking, Company Towns, Wobblies, Niagara Movement, NAACP, Sherman Antitrust Act, Hepburn Act, Food and Drug Act, New Freedom, 16th amendment, Federal Reserve Act, Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914, Federal Trade Commission, Roosevelt Corollary, Monroe Doctrine, Yellow press, Open Door, Militarism, Imperialism, Allies, Committee on Public Information, Selective Service Act, War Industries Board, Liberty Bonds, Espionage Act, Sedition Act, Great Migration, League of Nations, Central Powers, Self-Determination, Irreconcilables, Versailles Treaty, Bolsheviks, Red Scare, Welfare Capitalism, Open shop, Volstead Act, Immigration Act, League of Women Voters, Great Depression, Bonus Army, New Deal, Fireside Chat, Emergency Banking Act, Tennessee Valley Authority, National Industrial Recovery Act, Social Security Act of 1935, National Labor Relations Act, Congress of Industrial Organizations, New Deal coalition, Dust Bowl, Court Packing, 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act, Blitzkrieg, Neutrality Act of 1939, Axis Powers, Lend-Lease Act, Atlantic Charter, War Powers Act, Operation Torch, Operation Overlord, D-Day, Battle of the Bulge, Eastern Front, Island hopping, Holocaust, Yalta Conference.

Differentiation: Students who are struggling to keep pace in class will be given teacher created notes to assist in their understanding of classroom content. Students are also given opportunities to work individually, in pairs, or small groups to complete classwork and projects. Groups are determined by the teacher and arranged according to student ability and reading level. In some instances, students are able to select which assignment they would like to complete based on topical interest. Assessments are differentiated using multiple choice, matching, and short answer formats to meet the needs of all learners. Technology is integrated throughout the course via Smart Board lectures, Socratic exit tickets, Remind 101, flipped classroom using my YouTube channel, and webquests to meet the diverse needs of learners.

Assessment (formal or informal) Summarizing strategies: Summative assessments are conducted through a unit test at the end of the unit. Formative assessments are conducted through the use of observation, questioning to promote higher level thinking, ticket out the door slips, and think-pair-share activities.

Re-Teaching, Enrichment or Acceleration: Data from Scantron assessments will be collected to determine which areas (if any) need to be re-taught. Generally, if any unit test question has a 60% or higher incorrect response rate, a remediation activity will follow. If necessary, review will be conducted through lecture, homework, warm ups, or enrichment projects including primary source readings. Test corrections are also administered for all students before and after school.

KEY: LEQ=Lesson Essential Question; TS=Teaching Strategy; HW=Homework

APPENDIX F
CONTRACT WITH STUDENTS AND PARENTS: CONTROVERSIAL CONTENT

This is an example of the sort of social contract that some teachers described having with their students. This is a rare example of a formal social contract and permission slip that must be signed by students and parents. The other times an agreement like this was mentioned in class (i.e. Mr. Owen, Mrs. Ritza, Mrs. Rosabella, Mrs. Lois), it was more informal.

Humanities I: Syllabus (18-19)
Mrs. [REDACTED]

This page is to be returned and signed.

Humanities I is an engaging, honors-level elective that requires student participation in discussions, multi-day projects, and other hands-on activities. Attendance is of the utmost importance for success (& fun!) in this course.

- I. I have read the above and understand the expectations, policies, rewards and consequences of my actions.

My student, _____, has read the class syllabus.

Student Signature _____ (dated) _____

Parent/guardian Signature _____ (dated) _____

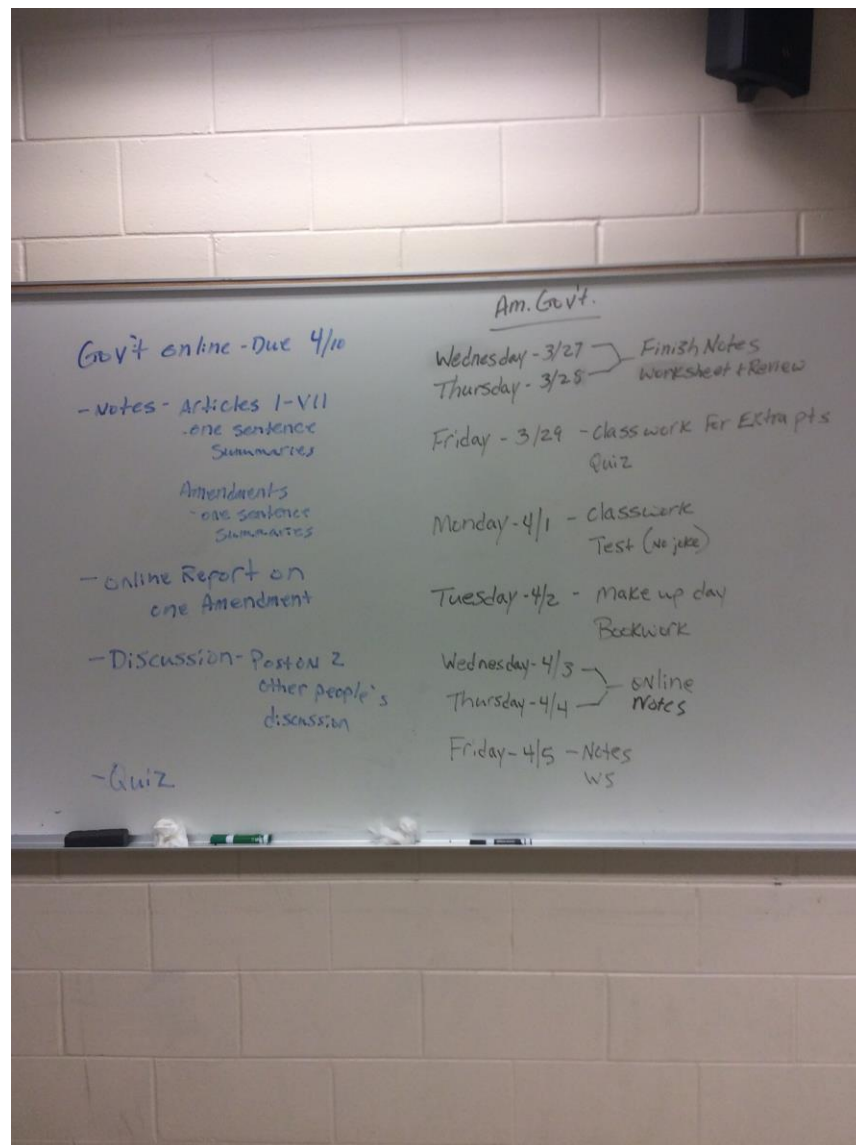
- II. Because of the nature of the mature subject matter studied in the honors Humanities I course, at times, students may be viewing clips from films or videos with a PG-13 or R rating. Please trust that I will not show or assign anything that is irrelevant, unnecessary, or inappropriate to the curriculum. The following full length feature films are scheduled to be shown in class:
- Quarter 1: *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*
 - Quarter 2: *Mists of Avalon*
 - Quarter 3: TBD
 - Quarter 4: *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1997)

If you grant permission for your son or daughter to view such films, please sign below. Your son or daughter is not, however, required to view these films, and will not be penalized if he or she must leave the room. For concerns, please contact me at jessica_furiosi@scps.k12.fl.us.

I grant permission for my student (name) _____ to view the material described above (sign) _____.

APPENDIX G
SAMPLE TEACHER SCHEDULE:
UTILIZATION OF ALTERNATIVE METHODOLOGIES WITH CPIS

Hardly any traditional teachers provided lesson plan materials to examine. However, this schedule does provide some insight into the methodology of one such teacher, Mr. Humbert. He mentioned how time is a significant issue with teaching his standard Economics and Government students, and that can be seen here. Additionally, one can see that his lesson plans for the week include only notes and lecture. The only discussion is to be found online (seen on the left side of the board), and only because it is required by the county.



APPENDIX H
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Determination of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Sean M. Loomis**

Date: **November 08, 2018**

Dear Researcher:

On 11/08/2018, the IRB reviewed the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Project Title: **SECONDARY SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS'
PROCESSES FOR SELECTING METHODOLOGIES TO
TEACH CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**
Investigator: Sean M. Loomis
IRB Number: SBE-18-14501
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

This letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gillian Morien", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Signature applied by Gillian Morien on 11/08/2018 11:53:07 AM EST

Designated Reviewer

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