

CONTROVERSY AND COUNTERNARRATIVE IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES

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This qualitative study sought to explore reasons why social studies teachers chose to teach controversial issues and counternarratives in their classroom in an era where doing so is dangerous for teachers and their job security, and how they go about doing so in their classrooms. The theoretical framework of this study encompassed the notion that the five selected teachers embodied and practiced elements of Foucauldian *parrhēsia*, which is teaching the truth despite the risk of doing so, despite not having explicit knowledge of this particular philosophy, and utilized counternarratives and controversial issues as a means of challenging dominant social norms to bring about a more just and equitable society. The existing literature suggests that their pre-service teacher education provided little influence on their decisions, despite the positive historical, personal, and democratic outcomes from teaching a curriculum exploring controversial issues and counternarratives. Five teachers were recommended for this study due to their reputations for teaching controversial issues and counternarratives in their social studies classrooms. After interviewing and observing these teachers, a number of interesting findings came to light, including a list of best practices for how to teach controversial issues in the classroom, reasons why the teachers taught controversial issues in the classroom, structures of support and barriers for teaching a critical social studies curriculum, and differences between those who believed they taught controversial issues in their classroom but did not, and those who actually did.

Patricia Rogan, Ph.D., Chair

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CHAPTER ONE: TEACHING THE TRUTH: A DANGEROUS PROFESSION

Currently, there is a danger that accompanies the teaching of historical narratives that attempts to dispel the notion of American exceptionalism by engaging students in critical thought concerning the atrocities that were committed in the past and other controversial issues (e.g., Ganim, 2015; Loewen, 1996, 2010; Massey, 2015; West, 2004). As a result, conservative groups, political movements, and blind adherence to “acceptable” curriculum have created and sustained an overly conservative narrative taught in social studies classrooms in the United States (Ganim, 2015; Loewen, 1996; Massey, 2015; Ravitch, 2010). Part of this movement is a result of the general malaise the general public feels in regards to the overall purpose of the social studies; Market and Mehlinger (1992) summarized the issues of this contention when they stated that:

[T]he apparent consensus on behalf of citizenship education is almost meaningless. Behind the totem to which nearly all social studies researchers pay homage lies a continuous and rancorous debate about the purposes of social studies should focus primarily on history and geography; others have argued that social studies should examine ‘*closed areas,*’ *topics that are more or less taboo in polite society* (Hunt & Metcalf, 1955), decision making (Engle, 1963), public policy (Oliver & Shaver, 1966), environmental competence (Newmann, 1977) moral development (Kohlberg, 1973, 1975), and adult social roles (Superka & Hawke, 1982). While a few think that the purpose of social studies is to make students astute critics of American society (Engle & Ochoa, 1988), others believe . . . that the purpose of social studies is mainly socialization into the values, habits and beliefs that permit youth to find a niche in adult society [Emphasis added] (p. 832).

Hence, the argument about what messages and what groups’ narratives and histories should and should not be taught in American social studies classrooms has been an established, continuous debate ever since the inception of the term “social studies” was coined by the National Education Association’s Committee on Social Studies in 1916 (Ross, 2001, p. 19). The approach was meant to “establish the principle that affective

concerns relating to significant beliefs, attitudes, and values [would] have a place in the social studies” (Beal & Bolick, 2013, p. 7). While a noble goal, the general social studies curricula taught in many states are still rife with white views and histories. Regardless of the call for a more balanced approach as to whose voice is taught in schools, more conservative narratives are the ones that are printed in textbooks and taught in classrooms (Loewen, 1996, 2010, Ross, 2001).

Without any tangible call for change, the conservative narrative in social studies, held in place by the neoliberal movement currently working to reform the education of students in the United States (which will be discussed in the following pages), and the same overwhelmingly white viewpoints and “safe” topics will be taught to students for perpetuity. However, Ross (2001) called for the establishment of social studies classes that encompass the “voice in our history, which reflect the struggle for social justice in and through education, often focusing on citizens in the midst of social struggle” and not classes that end up “highlighting a vested interest in the emergence of [any] . . . group” (p. 80). The group, in this instance, is the white majority in the United States whose history is lauded as the correct one that all American students should know. This is an issue of contention that will be explored in this dissertation, along with how some teachers are working to provide students with legitimate counternarratives. An alternative approach that emphasizes multiple voices and histories will establish, as Noffke (2000) stated, “alternative roots” for the field of social studies as a whole (as cited in Ross, 2001, p. 19). However, even with targeted reformation efforts aimed toward social studies curriculum within an age that is attempting to standardize the education of students, many teachers are “resistant to changes . . . [due to the] requirements for whole new scope and

sequences” (Lockwood, 1985, as cited in Beal & Bolick, 2013, p. 7). Even so, the establishment of these alternatives in this current educational landscape is dangerous if actors outside of the classroom disapprove of presented counternarratives. Despite this risk, some teachers choose to embrace such a message when teaching in their classrooms. By doing so, they are embracing the Greek notion of *parrhēsia*, speaking the truth despite the danger in doing so, to allow non-white voices into their classrooms.

***Parrhēsia* as a Framework for Pre-service Teacher Education**

Parrhēsia, in its simplest form, comes from the writings and philosophical ideals of Socrates in ancient Greece. As Foucault (2005) wrote, “*Parrhēsia* is a quality, or rather a technique, used in the relationship between [peoples]: it . . . ensures one’s ability to select from the field of true knowledge that which is relevant for [a person’s] transformation, change and improvement” (p. 242). The notion of *parrhēsia* and its history will be more detailed in Chapter Two of this dissertation. However, the philosophical stance needs to be mentioned here to establish its agency for creating classrooms for non-white histories, voices, and controversial curricular issues. That being said, *parrhēsia* alone cannot be seen as pedagogy (as it must be modeled and practiced between parties); a framework for teacher education that will utilize it must come from a dedicated pre-service teacher educator willing to foster and create spaces where *parrhēsia* can be practiced among pre-service teachers. In addition, pre-service teacher educators must include in their curriculum an examination of how societal structures influence pre-service teachers, schools, the communities where pre-service teachers will be teaching, and the field and practice of education itself (e.g., Apple, 1995). Such a framework will be detailed in the following pages.

A critical, relevant curriculum must be taught to pre-service teachers that examines social structures and issues of inequity that will impact children in schools, especially within urban areas. Revisiting the notion of truth and risk, forefront to these conversations with pre-service teachers, should be topics that are kept silent by the dominant narrative. Such topics, if raised in the classroom, could be deemed as clearly controversial. Namely, such issues include matters of power, race, language, ethnicity, poverty, sexuality, and racism. Each of these topics should be critically examined by how they are influenced by both society and education; once examined, these topics must be discussed in classrooms. Apple (1995) stated that teachers must show students the “structural relationships between the ways schools may function now and the reproduction of inequality” (p. 58). This is especially powerful for urban educators, as Brenner’s (2009) Critical Urban Theory avowed that a critical pre-service teacher education curriculum can allow pre-service teachers to create and engage in a “critique of power, inequality, injustice, and exploitation, at once within and among cities” (p. 199).

One such relationship that must be discussed within the college classroom is the massive neoliberal and neoconservative reform movement (and the large business interests supporting it) in the United States. Such economic and political reforms have impacted what curriculum is being taught to children in schools; such an examination must look at issues of standardizing testing, meritocracy, school reform, and how all of these practices harm the education of non-white students not served by the dominant narrative (Apple, 1986, 2004, 2013; Gelberg, 2007; Helfenbein, 2012; Ravitch, 2010; Shudak & Helfenbein, 2005; Sleeter, 2013). When they are confronted with these issues, students can understand how our society has created an inequitable social and economic

system advantaging whites. When pre-service teachers identify these inequitable practices, and then buy in to the message that critically-oriented schools of education are stressing, they can eventually become practitioners of social justice education and effective critics of the institutions that prevent equitable educational access and attainment for all students. This then fulfills the three roles of *parrhēsia*: frank and open speech, the importance of truth and accepting the danger that accompanies it, and the importance of knowing oneself. However, as stated previously, it must be delivered to students not as a mandatory classroom practice but as a reflective and positive modeling by the pre-service teacher educator. In order for such an interchange and model of teaching to occur, the teacher educator must create and maintain a safe classroom space for *parrhēsia* to be practiced by students when they choose to do so.

Safe spaces must be created so that all individual voices, not just privileged white male voices, are held in equal weight and given credence in American society. For example, hooks (1994) posited that in white dominated academic spaces, “many students, especially students of color, may not feel at all ‘safe’ in what appears to be a neutral setting” and that “It is the absence of a feeling of safety that often promotes prolonged silence” (p. 39). Within these supposedly “neutral spaces,” hooks observed that “Students of color and some white women express fear that they will be judged as intellectually inadequate by [their] peers” (p. 39). Boler (2004) had similar experiences with classrooms in universities that tended to function as “white men’s clubs”, which served to “empower those who already hold privileged positions within the real world” (p. 5). An unsafe space will not result in the creation of a dialog or even attract individuals to engage in a critical conversation. Instead, hooks (1994) averred that “If we really want to

create a cultural climate where biases can be challenged and changed, all border crossing must be seen as valid and legitimate” (p. 131). Spaces must be created by a facilitator that allow for the “uniqueness of each voice . . . [to] be heard because all [persons] are free to speak, [all individuals within the conversation know] their presence will be recognized and valued” (p. 186). It is within these safe spaces where change can occur, even if “progressive interventions that were made to change the academy, to create an open climate for culture diversity are in danger of being undermined or eliminated” (p. 33). Without safe spaces, the status quo will remain un-critiqued and unchecked. Once individuals know that such safe spaces exist, they must enter into and engage in a long-lasting dialog that has the potential to produce personal reflection and societal change.

Once safe classroom spaces have been created in pre-service teacher education programs, such spaces can allow teacher educators to engage in and moderate impactful dialogs concerning controversial issues with the pre-service teachers. Critical dialogs must allow frank and open speech from all parties, speak the truth about society (a truth that actively works to expose and subvert the dominant narrative), and allow students to undergo critical reflection that may change how they view themselves, knowledge, and education in general. Pre-service teacher educators must imbue *parrhēsia* into their teaching practice and philosophy. By doing so, they are able to model *parrhēsia*'s power to critique society while simultaneously encouraging students to engage with and then use its tenets. Literature regarding the teaching of *parrhēsia*, especially integrating its practice into teacher education, is limited. The work of Christine Sleeter (2013) and her discussion of anti-racist education is tangentially close. However, these three specifics were not discussed. The inclusion of *parrhēsia* into teacher education programs can allow

students to personally choose to undertake a critical stance on educative and social issues and engage in a discussion that will impact how they teach students in the future. As Gay and Kirkland (2003) stated, one of the best ways for pre-service teachers to “develop critical racial and cultural consciousness” is to have pre-service teacher educators present pre-service teachers with assignments and classroom situations that foster critical reflection (p. 185). When done side-by-side with the pre-service teacher educator, who makes themselves vulnerable by engaging in the same reflective methods as the rest of the class, pre-service teachers can see how critical reflection and constant evaluation of a teacher educator's praxis is acceptable and justifiable (p. 185). In short, the teacher educator must create safe spaces and facilitate appropriate activities that will engage students in critical conversations and self-reflection, creating an environment that fosters the continual use of *parrhēsia*.

The pre-service teacher educator, within this safe space, must understand that by enacting *parrhēsia*, they are creating a unique power dynamic in the classroom between themselves and their students. Foucault (2005) stated that utilizing *parrhēsia* will create a “series of intense, compact, and strong horizontal relationships within the group, which are relationships of friendship that will be of use in reciprocal salvation” (p. 390). This applies both between pre-service teacher educators and pre-service teachers and pre-service teachers between other pre-service teachers in the classroom. However, the pre-service teacher educator must understand that within the class, he/she is also a figure of authority, a master over disciples, which also creates a vertical power dynamic between teacher educators and pre-service teachers. Yet, correctly utilizing *parrhēsia* and allowing frank, free, honest discourse to occur at all times allows this mode of “*parrhēsia*

to be [to be] turned around, reversed, and becomes the practice and mode of relationships between the students themselves,” resulting in a finished classroom web of relationships and power where *parrhēsic* discourse “circulates [relationships] in [a] double, vertical, and horizontal organization” (p. 390). The power dynamic must be acknowledged within this framework in order for the process to properly unfold as pre-service teachers can speak to critique the words of the teacher educator, and vice versa.

It is necessary here to sojourn for a moment to discuss why this is an issue (as well as part of my rationale for conducting my dissertation). Despite these aforementioned issues, there are still teachers that enter the classroom and choose to teach controversial issues when most of the pre-service teacher education literature says that they should not (e.g., Hess, 2008). For example, Byford, Lennon, and Russell (2009) found that social studies teachers do find advantages to teaching controversial issues in the classroom, but are wary of any administrative punishments that may befall them for doing so if someone objects. Additionally, Washington and Humphries (2011), when examining the latter author’s teaching practices concerning controversial issues in the classroom, found that some personal experiences contributed to her decision to teach matters around race to high school students. Specifically, she took cues from her high school teachers, discussions she had in her political science classes in college, and personal readings. It is interesting to note that she does not discuss her pre-service teacher education to have been an influence on her decisions to do so; while she did teach matters of race (and, at times, did so apprehensively), the curriculum she taught did not utilize a counternarrative voice. Regardless, this research points to there being some influence on what makes a teacher decide to teach issues that may, politically, create issues with their

employment if enough parties object to the subjects being taught. Hence, I wanted to explore these matters and see why practicing teachers continue to choose to teach controversial issues and counternarratives in their classrooms. Additionally, I wanted to find out what, if any, impact their pre-service teacher education programs had on their decisions.

Returning to the notion of *parrhēsic* education, an issue arises with the possibility that students of color may become "tokened" by such an approach (e.g., Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000). It could be argued that many of the white students, during these directed conversations, may turn to their non-white classmates for answers, asking for them to become spokespersons for the respective races. However, this is not the intent of such conversations. Instead of "tokening" students of color, the telling of their stories should be seen as legitimate counternarratives that serve as experiences that contrast against the messages established by the dominant social order and white students' lived experiences. Such counternarratives, which will be discussed in the following section, are legitimate avenues to examine the realities of other individuals in society. Such discussion of counternarratives must also accompany deep reflection from white students; without additional reflection and critical thinking, if "tokening" were to occur, then *parrhēsia* is not being practiced. Instead, stereotypical thinking will feed into messages supported by the dominant discourse; there will be no change in how students think or act. Hopefully, the injection of counternarratives into these classroom discussions of controversial issues contributes to all three *parrhēsic* tenets as they are meant to be practiced.

Interestingly, Foucault did offer some suggestions for teachers attempting to use *parrhēsia* in their teachings (which runs countercurrent to his belief that was discussed earlier in this paper). Foucault (2005) stated that when teachers exercise *parrhēsia*, they are enacting a process where they “encourage, intensify, and enliven, as it were, the students’ benevolence . . . towards each other thanks to having spoken freely” (p. 389). However, it is essential that “There can be no teaching of the truth without the person who speaks the truth being the example of the truth” (p.406). If a teacher chooses to enact this method, they must fully commit to all aspects of *parrhēsia*. This modeling will hopefully spur students to continue speaking within the tenets of *parrhēsia*, and now that they have “spoken freely, that [the students’] reciprocal benevolence will thereby be assured and increased” (p. 389). He also stated that teachers must “answer questions willingly” while seeking out the students “who remain too quiet and do not ask questions,” realizing that the quiet ones “should be questioned” (pp. 384-385). Pre-service teacher educators must also correct “errors the student may make, but [this should be done] without acrimony” (pp. 384-385).

The final question that Foucault (2011a) asked regarding *parrhēsia* and education harkens back to how this method of speech should be taught. He asked the question: “Who is capable of the courage of truth? And what education is necessary? . . . [and] where, then, should the stress be laid in education?” (p. 306). As I have argued, the tenets of *parrhēsia* can allow pre-service teachers to dissect the dominant narrative by being confronted with the truth. Hence, I believe that within education, a focused examination must introduce stories and histories that run counter-current to the knowledge most trusted by the dominant narrative and discuss issues that mainstream society considers to

be controversial. Therefore, I propose that counternarratives and controversial conversations be taught within the classroom of both pre-service teachers and high school students as a way of exercising *parrhēsia* and as a way of subverting the aforementioned dominant narrative.

Critical Social Studies Education and its Ability to Subvert the Dominant Narrative

There is an existing body of literature that suggests how a critical social study curriculum can influence societal change. However, this exposure must be a targeted one that attempts to re-write a number of scripts that these teachers have learned as “true” knowledge learned in the past. Now, in order for pre-service teacher educators to pierce the veil of the white dominant narrative, and for students to understand existing structures of power that oppress numerous populations of people, pre-service social studies teachers must be forced to examine the actual history of the United States (e.g., Sleeter, 2013; West, 2004). Currently, social studies teachers transmit to students a curriculum rife with white exceptionalism and devoid of a critical lens that examines the contributions of non-whites to the American legacy and the atrocities committed by whites to enslave and control non-whites (Hunter, 1992). West (2004) noted that the United States has a “long and brutal history that we must confront”, and that if students and teachers want to “understand this imperialist nihilism that runs so deep in our culture, we should start by looking at [the history of the United States]” (p. 40). West continued, stating that the American history curriculum taught in high schools constantly “reviled and disempowered . . . the voices and viewpoints of . . . Amerindians, Asians, Mexicans, Africans, and immigrant Europeans . . . [that constantly] remind us of the profoundly racist roots of the first American empire” (p. 14). As West stated, “No other democratic

nation reveals so blatantly in such self-deceptive innocence, such self-paralyzing reluctance to confront the night-side of its own history” (p. 41). Leonardo (2009) went one step further, stating that the “White racial knowledge fails to ask why history worked out the way it did” (p. 125). By lifting the blinds from the pre-boxed, uncritical curriculum and shining light on this shadow, pre-service social studies teachers will understand the importance of speaking the truth to empower their students (particularly those of color) into civic and democratic action that will allow for the public check of persons in power. As Freire (2010) stated, in order to “surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes [causes rooted from historical precedent], so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity” (p. 47). To further critical examinations and discussions of American history to dismantle oppressive structures, pre-service social studies teachers must be exposed to the importance of Socratic democracy and why it is essential to teach to their students.

What, then, constitutes Socratic democracy? Returning to Foucault (2011a), the philosopher contributed a multi-layered explanation of this specific practice by stressing that Socratic democracy, “as opposed to and distinct from monarchy, aristocracy, and oligarchy; it is government by the *dēmos*, that is to say, by the body of citizens” (p. 150). While he did argue that this notion of Socratic democracy is unique, as its Grecian roots evolve out of the governance of multiple city-states, he did state that this type of democracy does not relegate power to a single individual who would wield power “despotically or tyrannically” (p. 150). Additionally, this type of government also advocates for and attempts to enact systems of laws that all citizens are accountable to the

right to vote and speak freely (pp. 150-151). This right to free speech, the right to “speak the truth”, is *parrhēsia* in the basest sense. All of these notions of “good” government, of equality and the ability for the people to govern themselves, is good Socratic democracy.

Pre-service social studies teachers must be exposed to, and then teach, the principles of Socratic democracy to students and its power to subvert the perverted form of corporate democracy that is currently running American government and politics. Much like the critical examination of American history that is necessary, the perversion of American democracy needs to be critically dissected, even more so now that we are in the wake of an American presidential election that has been deeply rooted in divisive rhetoric and potential foreign influence that could have subverted the democratic process. On the need to discuss American history and democracy, Darling-Hammond (2006) fervently argued that any proper teacher education program would “strengthen [the] democratic participation” of students (as cited in Sleeter, 2013, p. 146). Good, authentic democracy has deep Grecian roots that “elevated abused peasants into active citizens who demanded public accountability of their elected officials” and called for “land reform and the cancellation of debts to greedy elites” (West, 2004, p. 205). Returning to this form of democracy, where all individuals had agency and voice in government, students and pre-service social studies teachers should be able to follow how American democracy has been warped into a faux form of public representation where those with voting power are deeply influenced by corporate dollars and special interests (the election of Donald Trump is a picture perfect example of this in action) (Alinsky, 1971; Sleeter, 2013; West, 2004). Yet, there is still a good deal of the population that doesn’t fully understand our form of government and our form of democracy. American citizens believe that

“democracy” is tangential to “voting, majority rule, and elected representation,” when, in reality, each are different forms of government (Woodruff, 2005, as cited in Sleeter, 2013, p. 16). Woodruff went into more detail, noting that “voting can be rigged so that it does little more than justify the wishes of tyrants; majority rule negates the rights and interests of minorities; and elected representatives leads to bloc competition for power,” the latter of the three reflecting our current form of government, with one party holding bloc power in multiple houses of Congress (as cited in Sleeter, 2013, p. 16). Pre-service social studies teachers and the students they teach should, instead, study what Socratic democracy can do to spur social change via democratic power and political organization.

Socratic democracy holds great potential for spurring social change, especially if pre-service social studies teachers inject such principles into their daily curriculums. A true democratic educator, according to Dewey (1938), will “view education as a resource for the public good” (p. 18). A critical multicultural education provided to future social studies teachers only enhances this statement, providing students with the ability to examine and work to subvert and destroy historical structures of oppressive power. To do so, their collective, democratic voice must be mobilized by engaged, critically-oriented teachers. As West (2004) noted, “the basis of democratic leadership is ordinary citizens’ desire to take their country back from the hands of corrupted plutocratic and imperial elites” (p. 23). He furthered his argument for democratic empowerment of students by stressing that not only is democracy a “cultural way of being,” (p. 68) but also a way to allow for an “energized public to make elites responsible” for the decisions they make (p. 68). In essence, Socratic democracy allows for the public to “thwart the nihilism of imperial elites” (p. 57) via “democratic individuality, democratic community, and

democratic society” (p. 203). Continuing this line of thinking, Gutmann (2000) argued that in order to create and continue the “institutions, practices, and policies that *could improve* the capacity of American democracy to resolve disagreements also depends on citizens and their representatives to collectively identify and create them” (pp. 76-77). This cannot be accomplished without an informed, democratically and critically oriented public educated by critically-oriented educators. This collective expression of democratic and community power easily leads to united coalitions of individuals working against oppressive powers; for example, Alinsky (1971) organized a change in a major corporation’s philosophy by marshaling a bloc of proxy voting power to pressure the company to make agreeable changes for the individuals represented by the power bloc. This proxy bloc, however, is not always an applicable approach for change. To organize a number of individuals socially, Apple (2013) implored that dedicated change-agents work to create “decentered unities . . . spaces that are crucial for educational and larger social transformations that enable progressive movements to find common ground and where joint struggles can be engaged in” can be the necessary agents of change within society (p. 13). By examining such instances of democratic efforts leading to lasting change, students and pre-service social studies teachers can embrace the values of true Socratic democracy and ethics that do “what is best for the most,” after having been exposed to the concepts that accompany the practice of *parrhēsia* modeled to them from their teachers and professors, respectively (p. 33). Such an approach can be examined by a teacher choosing to bring counternarratives in the classroom, alongside constant discussions about how they interplay with controversial issues. Yet, these pedagogical

approaches are often silenced from the curriculum due to the overwhelmingly influential communities and society in which our schools (and teachers, students, parents, etc.) exist.

Neoliberalism, Curricular Control, and the White Dominant Narrative in Social Studies

Social actors, influential persons, and groups with influential power and social capital have constantly attempted to change curricula with which they do not agree, henceforth rekindling the war of cultural politics, oftentimes on a national stage. These groups have been successful in instituting curricula that attempt to “inculcate the next generation into blind allegiance to our country,” excluding critical thinking that would have students examine other social perspectives and ideas (Loewen, 1996, p. 229). In 2015, the AP History course written and tested by the College Board was attacked by conservative groups proclaiming that the curriculum was both unpatriotic and advanced a liberal ideology (Ganim, 2015). Pressured to respond to the supposed “liberal ideology” that the College Board proposed, state legislatures in Oklahoma (Legum, 2015), Nebraska, (MacNeal, 2014), Texas (Ganim, 2015), and Indiana (Wesco & Thompson, 2014) either successfully voted to ban the teaching of the College Board's AP U.S. History curriculum, attempted to ban the AP curriculum but failed, or proposed legislation that would ban the AP curriculum but was never brought up for a vote within the full legislature. In response to the social pressure, the College Board folded. The College Board, in response, released new guidelines that conformed to what the conservative advocates and state governments wanted to be taught, thereby censoring more critical parts of American history and white-washing white atrocities so that they better aligned to the faux history presented to students in their textbooks (Massey, 2015). The pressure from these outside groups instituted a curricular change on a national level.

A similar instance came about in a recently published report detailing the findings of a national study of common reading lists for incoming college freshman. A conservative group published a report decrying what texts make up the various reading lists, stating that the “preparation” programs in question all “overwhelmingly select[ed] books that align with the liberal and progressive worldview that pervade academia,” due to the fact that the majority of these texts tend to discuss matters of race, environmentalism, and how “Illegal immigrants contribute so much to society, and would contribute so much more if only they were legalized” (Randall, 2016, p. 60). Here, the topics of race, global warming, immigration (which are clearly controversial topics in conservative-leaning circles), are brought to the forefront and taught to students in their self-directed reading, topics that those in power would not want to be examined due to their controversial nature. Interestingly, the report offers ideas as to what students should read instead. Instead of Hurricane Katrina and the racial issues that arose after the storm, the report suggests reading about the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill (p. 60). Instead of reading Justice Sonia Sotomayor’s autobiography (a liberal justice appointed by a sitting Democratic president), they suggested reading the autobiography of Clarence Thomas (a conservative justice appointed by a Republican president) simply because “both [are] the memoirs of members of racial minorities who triumphed over adversity to reach the summit of success among the judiciary” (p. 60). What the report does not discuss, however, is their desire to progress the conservative ideology of the latter Justice, not the former. Again, this report serves as a second example of how a non-governmental agency, by attempting to apply pressure to existing curriculum, worked to change an educational practice because it did not attempt to advance whitestream knowledges. Yet,

government agencies (in particular, state governmental agencies) have attempted to further cement whitestream knowledges on a nearly yearly basis.

Texas is a strikingly powerful example of a state government attempting to change the state's curriculum to reflect whitestream knowledge and "facts" (e.g., Apple, 2000; Goodall Jr., 2010). Texas carries with it a considerable amount of financial influence when determining what textbook publishers will include in the texts they sell to schools due to the fact that Texas spends a great deal of money buying textbooks from year-to-year; as a result, the textbook publishers have changed what is presented in their texts to have a better opportunity to secure state contracts to provide students with textbooks, fundamentally allowing a single state to shape the content for nearly all American students (Apple, 2000, pp. 61-63). As Texas tends to be a more conservative state, the content within the textbooks will reflect a conservative ideology, thereby avoiding a host of necessary critical issues that should be discussed by teachers and students in their classrooms. This is troubling, as Texas' Board of Education in recent years voted to change which subjects could and could not be taught in social studies classrooms. A conservative party-line vote by Republicans serving on the state's textbook adoption committee made a number of changes to enforce a conservative, whitewashed view of history to Texas students. The board, among other changes, forced Texas schools (and thereby, textbook writers) to "Delete Thomas Jefferson and replace his Enlightenment thinking with religious icon John Calvin," "Remove hip-hop as an 'example of a significant cultural movement,'" "Omit Tejanos from list of 'fallen heroes of the Alamo,'" and to teach "only the 'positive aspects' of slavery" in history classes" (Goodall Jr., 2010, pp. 79-83). Such changes then became "official knowledge" after the

overly white, conservative textbook committee won the game of cultural politics. The terrifying aspect of this shift was that it was done without consulting “historians, economists, or sociologists” about any of the issues that were changed and “that the Texas board was clear about its intentions to rewrite history from a conservative Christian ideological perspective” (p. 81). A similar censoring occurred when the extremely successful Mexican American Studies Program taught at Tucson Public Schools in Arizona was shut down by both the state's board of education and state legislature because the legislators believed that the course was teaching un-American ideas in their curriculum (which was filled with counternarratives against traditional white narratives), regardless of the fact that students who graduated from the program had a higher likelihood of graduating from high school than those who did not take the elective (University of Arizona College of Education, 2012). The law, Arizona House Bill 2281, legally proclaimed that the Mexican American Studies Program attempted to "promote the overthrow of the United States government," promoted "resentment toward a race or class or people," was "designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group," and, perhaps the most glaring example of neoliberal thinking influencing education in the state, that the program would "advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals" (Arizona House Bill 2281, 2010, p.1). Interestingly, the bill makes an exception to proclaim that the teaching of the Holocaust (a genocide of white Europeans) was an entirely acceptable subject for students to learn in the classroom, even though the teaching of the Holocaust was never challenged by the Mexican American Studies Program (p. 2). This was an incredible reaction by the white legislature. The legislature felt that the white dominant narrative had been so threatened

by the presence of the Mexican American Studies program and the critically-oriented ways of thinking taught in the class, as well as the counternarratives presented to non-white students, that the state government of Arizona passed a *state law banning the teaching of a single class*. Clearly, the dominant narrative won this battle of cultural politics.

The aforementioned examples have shown that the decisions made by the various political entities clearly benefited the white majority. As such, these political entities, the Texas textbook adoption board and a number of state legislatures, acted in such a manner that the political bodies felt “pressure from the ‘ruling class,’ [and] pressure from textbook adoption companies” to pass such laws in order to “control children and avoid classroom disharmony” (Loewen, 1996, p. 35). In short, these examples, among others, illustrate how there is a constant struggle by powerful entities that attempt to determine what knowledge should be taught and what knowledge should be the “truth”.

Such public political movements centering around influencing what should and should not be within the official curriculum are not a recent phenomenon, as cultural politics have been in play for as long as public schooling has been in practice. Take for example Lynne V. Cheney's 1994 rant during her time as the chairperson for the National Endowment for the Humanities. Cheney, wife to former Vice President Dick Cheney, called into question a proposed set of American History standards crafted by numerous college professors and historians from UCLA. These standards would eventually become a part of a proposed Common Core curriculum for American History to be used across the nation. Cheney, a white woman, took issue with the subjects that were proposed for study. She stated that the standards were the “epitome of left-wing political correctness”

since “they emphasized the nation’s failings and paid scant attention to its great men” (Ravitch, 2010, p. 17). Cheney took issue with the fact that the proposed curriculum would have students examine ugly parts of America’s past, including McCarthyism and the Klan, while also devoting a significant amount of time to the study of the life of Harriet Tubman. Cheney also was angered by the fact that the curriculum only mentioned “Ulysses S. Grant just once and Robert E. Lee not at all. Nor was there any reference to Paul Revere, Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, Jonas Salk, or the Wright brothers” (all of whom are white men) (p. 17). The proposed standards, in her opinion were a “warped and distorted version of the American past in which it became a story of oppression and failure” instead of the white-washed, "Heroified" past that would worship these men as demigods (p. 17). She, of course, was not alone in her objection to the curriculum. Ultra conservative talk show personality Rush Limbaugh agreed with Cheney's viewpoint, saying that the standards should be “flushed down the toilet” (p. 17). However, these public entities are not the only individuals exerting pressure on state boards to change curriculum; business interests have been exceedingly vocal in the current neoliberal push to amend a humanities education that embraces the social studies and the arts into one that focuses on job preparation skills for students. This is a major issue, as the tenets of neoliberalism funnel power to the wealthy elite.

Neoliberalism has impacted American society, schools, and free-market capitalism. Arising in the years following World War II, neoliberal economic philosophies were put in motion by the work of Friedrich von Hayak, who espoused his ideas for a society “derived from classical liberal philosophy [specifically] . . . individual liberty, private property and market competition” (Sleeter, 2013, p. 3). These economic

philosophies were nothing new in regards to American political philosophy; in fact, the author noted that “Liberalism, as embodied in the U.S. Constitution, limits the ability of ordinary people to self-govern, centralizing power in the hands of those who presumably ‘know what is best for the whole’” (p. 17). This has created an oligarchy of ruling power in American government (draped in a faux label of true democracy) where the manipulation of elections, ballot boxes, and voting populations has led to a society that is constantly “negat[ing] the rights and interests of minorities” (p. 16). Liberalism, when applied strictly to economics (and away from self-governance) has created what John Perkins (2004) termed a “corporatocracy,” a system where rich powerful businessmen hold a great amount of material and political capital to influence societal and political affairs, allowing said businessmen to “build a global empire to which most people in the world are subservient” (p. 26).

Oddly, this zeal for neoliberalism has (somehow) been embraced by a number of conservative Americans of low socioeconomic status classes and social class. Hursh (2005) found that “Tea Party advocates, [seek] to shrink or completely dismantle government support of public welfare in favor of expanding individualism, privatization, and competition for profit (as cited in Sleeter, 2013, p. 146). This growing, ultra conservative Tea Party movement in America, according to Parker (2010), has members within its ranks that believe that both blacks and Latin@s are not hard working, are not unintelligent, and are not trustworthy; the author goes so far to say that any card-carrying member of the Tea Party is practically “‘predisposed to intolerance’” (as cited in Ostertag & Amaline, 2011, p. 263). Thus, it is interesting to question if such motives espousing neoliberal tenets are purely economic in nature or fueled by racial bias inherent in

American structural racism (Feagin, 2010). In order to allow for the persistence of their hegemonic control over political and economic capital, the “corporatocracy” has worked to influence the composition of schools, the curriculum being taught within schools, and how future teachers are educated.

The Walton family, owners of the Wal-Mart franchise, have been incredibly active in creating partnerships with small “regional and religious colleges” to fund and encourage students to form groups that are “strongly pro-business . . . [that] bring economic ‘truths’ to the public” (Apple, 2013, p. 132). Motivated by religious reasons, these student-lead groups have actively worked to swing local elections in favor of politicians whose future votes would greatly assist the growth of capitalism and further the interests of big business like the Waltons and other large multinational corporations. These student groups, which have adopted the moniker the “Students in Free Enterprise” (SIFE), were also able to enter elementary and middle schools in their regions by offering to teach a very conservative “economic illiteracy” class to students during the school day (p. 133). The student groups, when asked why they preferred to reach young students with their message regarding the positive aspects of free market capitalism, stated that elementary age students do not yet have “their attitudes . . . set” and such young children can be easily influenced to support future big business endeavors (Moreton, 2009, p. 198). Even teachers were targeted by SIFE groups, with multiple smaller colleges offering “training sessions on free markets . . . [that would count] towards the state teacher licensing requirements” regarding continual growth points and/or professional development (Apple, 2013, p. 133). Multinational corporations influencing teacher licensing is incredibly dangerous. Nevertheless, under the guise of teacher education,

such families as the Waltons (and other big businesses that bankroll SIFE programs like Coors and Standard Oil) have found ways into the classroom to directly influence students. Within these lessons, businesses have had the opportunity to spread the neoliberal philosophy of individualism and free enterprise; the intent behind the message is that such an economic practice would benefit all Americans (and not just the wealthy corporate elite that such an economic philosophy would support and empower). There is a religious aspect to such a narrative as well, as one individual from the Texas-based Institute for Christian Economics went on record as saying that “The man who makes the highest profit . . . is the man who is best serving the public” (as cited in Moreton, 2009, p. 250). This is just one example of how businesses have greatly influenced the curriculum of schools and teacher education as a result of the neoliberal push for reform. These neoliberal reforms have, in particular, targeted teacher education programs as a gateway for entry into schools to influence students into supporting the globalization of business despite its human costs.

The neoliberal reform movement in the United States has had a tangible impact on how pre-service teachers are trained, licensed, and taught in teacher education programs, as teacher education curricula has been targeted for reform by conservative politicians and business interests. In order to counter the neoliberal push into educative spheres, Sleeter (2013) stressed that teacher educators and social actors must understand the transformative power of neoliberalism on schools and society, that teacher education programs should continually mandate courses orienting from a critical social justice standpoint (one similar to Bennett's notion of critical multiculturalism), and that students should be taught a proper democratic education, not one warped by neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism has worked to actively change what is taught in schools, attempting to make curriculums more conservative (and devoid of counternarratives). Beginning with the passage of the *No Child Left Behind* act, schools were directed to begin “Following models of business management” with “clear, high standards . . . to align curriculum to them and teachers are to teach to them and test student mastery of them” (Sleeter, 2013, p. 21). With business-like accountability came a business-centric curriculum instituted by pressure from the members of the business community’s elite. Instead of a curriculum that emphasizes the development of students, “neoliberalism emphasizes education as preparation for work, and market-based education reform” (p. 47). This has transformed schools from centers of democratic learning into “businesses designed to turn out workers for the new global economy, and as venues for profiteering” (p. 146). In short, schools have become machines to churn out workers, not democratically-oriented thinkers that could work to examine the inequities inherent in the system.

Neoliberalism has also impacted how accreditation procedures for teachers are undergone as well as the role of schools as they have been conceptualized. Darling-Hammond (1992), Darling-Hammond et al. (2005), and Zeichner (2009) wrote about the notion of alternative teacher accreditation and the deregulation of teacher licensing. Zeichner (2009) noted that “Deregulation advocates assert that ‘there is no reliable link between pedagogical training and classroom success’” (Fordham Foundation, 1999, p. 6, as cited in Zeichner, 2009, p. 13), despite the fact that such assertions are “not supported by any reasonable reading of peer-reviewed scholarly research on this issue” (Zeichner, 2009, p. 16). Such a shift has also impacted how the teaching profession is viewed by society. Apple (1986) observed how the power and prestige of being a teacher, in recent

history, has been marred by a “decline in positions with high levels of autonomy” (p. 199). Apple also cautioned that schools are, in the end, “state apparatuses . . . [that are] under intense pressure to act in certain ways, especially in times of both fiscal and ideological crisis” by political and business leaders who have a great deal of fiscal and social capital (p. 203). This finding can be evidenced by recent events in Wisconsin, where the governor led a crusade to forcibly fold teaching unions. Such an act can help frame the question: Are teachers viewed more as replicable parts than as dedicated professionals? This political control of schools then becomes a “weapon of social control” under the discretion of the government after resolving the winner of the game of cultural politics (Kliebard, 2004, pp. 28-89). The neoliberal push for control of teachers has even led to the ability for failing schools to easily be transferred from an examination of the system and tests that fail students; instead, as Kumashiro (2012) wrote, it is easy for school corporations, political organizations, and the general public to shift the blame for such failing schools easily onto teachers themselves. If a teacher chooses, then, to teach a curriculum that many parents find issue with, one that is rooted in discussions of controversial issues and counternarratives, the school can easily remove the teacher from their position. As a result, the school district is no longer seen as supporting “dissident” teachers and the normal whitestream curriculum is allowed to continue to be taught unopposed. Instead of looking at the systemic issues, teachers are the ones bearing the brunt of the blame for the ills of a system propped up by massive businesses profiting from high-stakes testing as the only measure of educational accountability. Here, neoliberalism and neoconservative politics have a noticeable conversion of interests.

Apple (2001) examined how neoconservatives are pushing to create an “imagined [past] as the framework for imagined and stable futures, futures in which identities are based on people knowing the knowledge and values that neoconservatives themselves have decided ‘have stood the test of time’” (p. 228). Neoconservatives have constantly worked to focus the narrative in schools; to do so, neoconservatives have capitalized on the “weight of *tradition* . . . [bearing] down heavily on those who challenge the conventional . . . social studies curriculum,” to prevent a curricular change that moves away from white exceptionalism and revisionist history (Beal & Bolick, 2013, p. 12). In essence, by regulating what is taught by enforcing the *status quo*, there is no real push for curricular reform unless it is done by dedicated teachers, parents, and students who want change. If teachers, then, are reprimanded for teaching topics that are “not acceptable” according to the administration or the community, any chance to change what is taught is quickly smothered, especially if the teacher is removed from their teaching position. As Delores Delgado Bernal (1998) argued, it is these decisions made concerning public education in the United States, specifically “what is taught, how it is taught, who is taught, and whose fault it is when what is taught is not learned” that neoliberal reformists hope to control (p. 556). If anything, this pattern has revealed that “teacher education is a social [and, as I would argue, a deeply political] enterprise . . . largely influenced by political and financial conditions” (Lee & Yarger, 1996, p. 16). It is within these factors that an individual wishing to institute a non-conservative counternarrative into their classroom must operate.

Rationale for This Study

As discussed above, there are a number of issues in regards to the materials and topics that students are being presented and taught in American classrooms, with progressive and conservative groups fighting for what knowledge should be legitimized. The purpose of this study was to examine and explore the reasons behind why several social studies teachers chose to fill their individual curriculums with what they considered to be controversial issues and topics for their students to explore and discuss. Additionally, these teachers shared their motivations behind teaching such a curriculum, the impact of their pre-service teacher education training on their ability to teach controversial topics in the classroom, and what support structures were available to encourage their unique classroom practices.

While existing literature has stressed a need for continued examination of teachers who conducted conversations of controversial topics in their classrooms (Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Hess, 2002, 2008; Hess & Posselt, 2002, Washington & Humphries, 2011), there are few pieces of literature that has attempted to understand the personal motivations as to why teachers choose to teach such a curriculum in an age of neoliberal school reform. Additionally, there is not a substantial amount of literature that examines the best practices for examining and discussing what teachers perceive to be controversial issues in their various classrooms. This paper seeks to fill that gap, while also attempting to examine how the modeling of such teaching can expand into the pre-service teacher education practices of schools of education. The existing literature concerning the teaching of controversial issues, however, does detail how many teachers actually do not examine or discuss controversial issues in their classrooms. For example,

Hess and Posselt (2002) found that their studies suggested that “few students study controversial issues” (p. 287) while Hess (2002) reviewed the research of Kahne et al. (2001), Hahn (1991), Shaver, Davis, and Helburn (1980) that all reported that their various classroom observations did not reveal teachers and students engaging in the discussion of controversial issues (p. 11). As a result of these studies and observations, there has been an extended call for a number of additional, needed studies to further understand why teachers choose to integrate controversial issues into their classrooms and how they do so, of which this dissertation is one such answering of that call. For example, Hess (2002) called for the need to understand “how teachers select [controversial issues] for classroom discussion . . . [and] their personal views on [how controversial issues] inform their selection of issues” (p. 36). Hess (2008) and Washington and Humphries (2011) re-iterated the same needed call, the need to understand what motivates teachers to imbue their curriculum with controversial issues, as the current body of research does not shed enough light on topic. Hess (2008) further called for the need to “investigate what influence various forms of issue-focused teacher education and professional development have on whether and how teachers include issues in their classes” (p. 134). Similarly, Bickmore and Parker (2014) called for an understanding as to why “teachers report [why] they would like to (or do) teach about and discuss conflicts but feel constrained by fear or backlash from parent communities, mandated curriculum, and assessment demands” (p. 294). Hence, this study will contribute to the existing body of literature, to fill these missing gaps that a number of academics have called for, particularly when attempting to examine how and why controversial topics are taught in the social studies classroom. This dissertation begins to

provide some answers to the questions posed by other researchers providing context as to why and how teachers bring controversial topics into their classrooms from a number of academic disciplines.

Returning to the problem at hand, it is clear that an issue exists in American schools concerning what teachers can teach, what they choose to teach, and how social actors can mute alternative voices and topics that teachers can opt to teach. The current state of pre-service teacher education, as cited above, points to an environment that is deeply unstandardized in regards to instilling critical stances to future teachers. This study sought to examine teachers who chose to teach critical counternarratives and controversial issues in social studies classrooms, regardless of the risk, in an attempt to understand why they have chosen to do so within such a politically tumultuous environment. This study has allowed for a better understanding of the influences of these critical educators, helping teacher education programs to make them truly critical, both in practice and in name.

CHAPTER TWO: *Parrhēsia*, COUNTER-NARRATIVE, AND NEOLIBERALISM IN MODERN SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER EDUCATION

As my dissertation involves an examination of social studies teachers utilizing non-white, non-Eurocentric curriculums in their classrooms, it is necessary to examine several different bodies of literature in order to both frame my study as well as to facilitate an examination of Socratic and Foucauldian truth-telling known as *parrhēsia*, an examination of relevant teacher education literature involving the preparation (and lack thereof) of critical teacher education graduates, and relevant information in regards to the establishment and credibility of counternarratives in both academic research and student curriculum. Each will be explored in the aforementioned order in the paragraphs below.

The Three Roles of *Parrhēsia* and their Educative Potential in Teacher Education

To reiterate, *parrhēsia*, in its simplest form, comes from the writings and philosophical ideals of Socrates in ancient Greece. As Foucault (2005) wrote, “*Parrhēsia* is a quality, or rather a technique, used in the relationship between [peoples]: it . . . ensures one’s ability to select from the field of true knowledge that which is relevant for [a person’s] transformation, change and improvement” (p. 242). In short, Foucault believed that *parrhēsia* is a philosophical notion that is so bound up with the choice, decision, and attitude of the person speaking that the Latin form of the verb, when translated, becomes “*libertas* . . . the freedom of the person speaking” (p. 373). *Libertas*, when translated to French, becomes “*franc-parler*” or “speaking freely” which to Foucault was the “most exact translation” of the term (p. 373). Thus, this notion of coming to understand the truth and the practice of *parrhēsia* encompasses three specific

tenets: general frankness of and freedom of speech by a speaker, the importance of telling and seeking the truth by a speaker and his/her acceptance of the danger which comes with such an act, and the importance of coming to know one's self mentally and emotionally through the practice of the other two tenets of *parrhēsia* (Foucault, 2005, 2011a, 2011b; West, 2004). Additionally, *parrhēsia* is utilized in three different capacities: as an antithesis to rhetoric that is used to speak lies as if they were the truth, for use in government and politics to determine the desirable actions that would befit a ruling head of a political state, and as a catalyst for an examination of personal and social philosophy (Foucault, 2005, 2011a, 2011b). However, while the latter three uses are important, they are not particularly relevant to my proposed study (particularly when *parrhēsia* is used as a check against power).

While an antiquated notion, utilizing *parrhēsia* as a teaching tool is supported by researchers as a means of coming to understand the contemporary meaning behind the notion (e.g., Lather, 1997). While Lather herself did not discuss *parrhēsia* or argue the importance of this philosophy, her work is applicable when examining how *parrhēsia*'s public perception has changed over time. Lather's work prompts a "working of the ruins" of contemporary issues to understand their historical roots. By understanding the roots of various issues, an individual can trace how a notion (or influence) changed over time and given new meaning or new interpretation. Such a practice in academia is not limited to contemporary explanations of antiquated philosophies alone; academics can also see how contemporary structures of power, societal norms, and societal standards were all formed and able to persist by investigating their roots historically. Lather's process, then, allows for a "working of the ruins" of the history and the connotations behind how the

"antiquated notion" has affected modern thought. She argued that utilizing and examining such concepts (like *parrhēsia*, for example) emerges from the "ruins of progressive history, naïve realism, and transparent language that allow us to see what beliefs have sustained these concepts" (p. 300). Dufourmantelle and Derrida (2000) conducted such a "working of the ruins" when the pair engaged in such practice to examine how the notion of "hospitality" evolved over time from its ancient Grecian roots. Now, as Lather (1997) stressed as a function of "working the ruins," one must be critical in one's thought processes, making sure that they end up "refusing the consolations and easy evasions of habituated knowing in order to think the ruins of our ways of making sense," thereby creating a "condition of possibility for movement toward a different kind of future" (p. 291). Foucault himself began his research with an archaeological approach to understanding history seeking to understand the "'archive' – the diversity of autonomous and sometimes amorphous discourses" throughout time (Burrell, 1988, p. 223). However, his work did progress to a genealogical approach that he defined as a:

form of history which an account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or run in its empty sameness throughout the course of history (Foucault, 1984, p. 59).

Gutting (2013) breaks this notion down a bit further, stressing that the genealogical approach is used to show how any "system of thought (itself uncovered in its essential structures by archaeology, which therefore remains part of Foucault's historiography) was the result of contingent turns of history, not the outcome of rationally inevitable trends" (From Archaeology to Genealogy section, para 3). Thus, if given the proper research, the historical roots of any topic or notion can inform present interpretation.

Hence, if the notion of *parrhēsia* can be adapted into a pedagogical practice for use in classrooms, its continued use can further support existing critical and liberatory pedagogies that stress the investigation of social issues that produce structures and practices of inequality across race, sex, and a litany of other differences. There is one issue that must be discussed, however, before exploring the three roles of *parrhēsia* further: Foucault's belief that *parrhēsia* is not a form of pedagogy nor can it be adapted as a direct teaching tool for use by teachers in all circumstances of the use of *parrhēsia*.

Foucault's notion of *parrhēsia* as a teaching tool notes that there are some limitations to the use of it pedagogically. First, it is important to note that Foucault (2011a) believed that *parrhēsia* is not a "way of teaching; it is not a form of pedagogy. Although it is true that it is always addressed to someone to whom one wishes to tell the truth, it is not necessarily a matter of teaching him" (p. 54). However, this does not mean that *parrhēsia* cannot be used as a teaching tool. Foucault stressed that when an individual "throws the truth in the face of the person with whom he is in dialogue, or to whom he is speaking, and there is none of that progression peculiar to pedagogy, passing from the unknown to the known," then teaching is not occurring (p. 54). However, the teacher must find some way to facilitate a positive conversation. Regardless of this fact, *parrhēsia* itself is not entirely seen as an educative notion. Foucault (2010b) stressed in his later works that "*parrhēsia* was first of all and fundamentally a political notion" (p. 8). He further argued this point, stressing that *parrhēsia*'s correct use will result in an individual coming face-to-face with "a truth which he cannot accept, which he can only reject, and which leads him to injustice, excess, madness, blindness . . . We are dealing here with an effect which is . . . anti-pedagogical" (Foucault, 2011a, p. 54). It is on this

point where Foucault and I disagree; West (2004) sees that all forms of the use of *parrhēsia* (including abrasive conversation), as an essential teaching tool for educators that use it alongside the Socratic method when they teach. For West, the Socratic conversation becomes a method to discuss the “truth” of matters via multiple voices in a conversation. Additionally, such a state of rejection of uncritical thought leads to a mental disequilibrium, which according to Piaget (1985) is the process one must undergo before acquiring new knowledge and learning. Vygotsky (1978) agreed with this sentiment, stressing that "*human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow in to the intellectual life of those around them*" (p. 34). Without mental disequilibrium, and without a structured social space where such disequilibrium can safely occur, learning is impractical and difficult. Returning to West (2004) and to *parrhēsia*, specifically, the author stated that an educator that uses the Socratic method is committing to a constant “questioning [that] requires a relentless self-examination and critique of institutions of authority, motivated by an endless quest for intellectual integrity and moral consistency” (p. 16). To commit to such a process, an educator must critically orient themselves and channel such speech within spaces of learning and education (p. 16). If utilized appropriately, *parrhēsia* can be used to emphasize critical thinking for pre-service teachers and their future students. Critical thinking, hereafter, will utilize the definition posed by Sensory and DiAngelo (2012) who state that critical thinking is “the ability to engage with multiple layers of complexity” (p. 12). Such critical thinking, an anchor of any pre-service teacher program that claims a critical social justice philosophy, can be enhanced by a teacher educator modeling the concepts and use of *parrhēsia* only if the teacher educator is committed to creating and

maintaining a classroom space where the aspects of *parrhēsia* can be practiced. While *parrhēsia* cannot stand alone as a theory and methodological practice of a liberatory pedagogy, the tenets of *parrhēsia* can be integrated into established teaching methods by fully establishing a safe classroom space where dialogs and practices can be had between pre-service teachers and teacher educators. These teaching methods, including critical journaling, open and free discussion between teachers and students, and a commitment from the teacher to plan a curriculum that is not fraught with white exceptionalism and falsehoods, echo the ethical obligation that accompanies the use of *parrhēsia*. Hence, the theory (*parrhēsia*) must inform the teacher educator's practice (or praxis). Praxis, as Freire defined (2010), allows for both educators and the pre-service students to “unveil the world of oppression” through personal examinations of theories of education and how such theories are practiced and enacted in the classroom (p. 54). Thus, I contend that Foucault's notion of *parrhēsia* as a teaching tool is not fully correct. There are times when the truth must be told to those who are resistant to hear it. While one cannot force an individual to engage and commit fully to the process, teacher educators can create spaces where necessary discussions and modeling of *parrhēsic* practices can occur.

***Parrhēsia*, the Dominant Narrative, and the Ethical Obligation of Improving the Self**

The three roles of *parrhēsia* (frank and open speech, the importance of truth and accepting the danger that accompanies it, and the importance of knowing oneself) can be utilized by individuals who wish to deconstruct messages the dominant discourse uses to socialize individuals towards others within the United States. *Parrhēsic* speech can be used to undermine the dominant narrative by serving as a vocal critic of those in power and the structures that support and perpetuate inequality. Such a narrative, much like the

white dominant narrative in the United States that proclaims white culture as “superior” to all other (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), persists due to multiple factors. Such factors include the invisibility of the narrative to those receiving benefits from it, the socialization of all individuals in the United States (via schools and similar institutions) that goes about “rationalizing [a] white-racist frame . . . and the major institutions created to preserve white advantage and power” (Feagin, 2010, p. 9).

As humans are social people, they are influenced by social group norms (i.e., established dominant narratives) (Jovchelovitch, 1996). This process of socialization is fostered by the school system; schools are established centers of cultural and social reproduction that children are mandated to attend to receive an education. Since the establishment of public education in the United States, schools have inequitably served white students when compared to students of color, resulting in a massive disproportion of educational quality between white and non-whites (e.g., Milner IV, 2012; Tyack, 1974; Urrieta Jr., 2014). Such a system that serves as “an agent of *social function* [that legitimizes]” the dominant narrative (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p.164) does so by teaching what has been “declared to be official knowledge . . . *compromised* knowledge . . . knowledge that is filtered through a complicated set of political screens and decisions [controlled by whites in power] before it gets to be declared legitimate” (Apple, 2000, p. 64). It is here where Milner IV (2010) stressed that teacher education must be reformed in order to bring about “multiple perspectives into the curriculum—so that the curriculum is not representative of only one dominant worldview” (p. 124). Therefore, what is being taught is not the truth. Instead, what is being taught is a knowledge that legitimizes and maintains the status quo. *Parrhēsia* can deconstruct this.

Parrhēsic speech that actively examines the power dynamics arising from the white dominant narrative, who benefits from the narrative's existence, and how the narrative harms those it does not benefit, can lead to individuals forming coalitions that can bring about bottom-up change (Apple, 2013). As West (2004) wrote, “There can be no democratic [education] . . . without democratic *parrhēsia*” used by active citizens who do not fear speaking “against the misinformation and mendacities of elites” (p. 39). By disrupting this power, by disrupting the “self-interest, compromise and other . . . political words” utilized by the master’s narrative, *parrhēsia* can bring about social change (Alinsky, 1971, p. 49). As Parker (2003) argued,

Every effort must be made to educate all students to listen across difference, but because privileged persons possess the fruits of privilege—political, cultural, and economic power—and can, therefore, do the most harm to those who do not, they especially need to learn to listen. That is, they are uniquely obligated to listen without egocentric or ethnocentric distortion (p. 105).

Social studies classrooms can be such locations if pre-service teachers are not afraid to use *parrhēsia* as a guide for their teaching and curriculum.

While Foucault argues that *parrhēsia* is not pedagogical, there are places in the academy where modeling its use can be inherently pedagogical. Using *parrhēsia* as a framework for teacher and social studies education can promote and facilitate such necessary dialogs discussed above. By encouraging and facilitating critical dialogs, teacher educators can promote major cultural changes in how young students view society, critique it, and bring about a framework for social justice in the socializing institutions (schools) traditionally used to enforce the dominant narrative. There has been a call for such a movement, but it is a general one that does not consider *parrhēsia* as an option. For example, Parker (2001) believed that pre-service teachers must teach their

students to become critics, thereby becoming active members in a democratic society.

Huckaby (2007), in her analysis and call for professors in higher education who work to speak “dangerous truths,” stated that in order to

challenge hegemony [one] must become astute about their position within power relations and how they function in the construction of knowledge. In other words, they need to attend to the extent to which they are free, the limitations they face, and the consequences of their actions (p. 514).

It is at this juncture where I contend that the use of *parrhēsia* in pre-service teacher education by pre-service teacher educators is an ethical obligation to have their students undergo a constant, introspective examination of themselves, their thoughts, and their biases.

The use of *parrhēsia* in a pre-service teacher education program, in order to challenge Foucault’s argument against *parrhēsia* as pedagogy, must facilitate a guided introspection of the self by all pre-service teacher candidates by an ethically obligated teacher educator who will enact *parrhēsia* as the students contend with their personal and societally-conditioned beliefs. As Foucault (2011a) interpreted from the writings of Galen, “One cannot take care of oneself without knowing oneself” (p. 44). And, if one were to follow Galen’s logical flow, a person undergoing this introspection must do so by being guided by a second party which he defined as someone who had “reached a certain age, has a sufficiently good reputation, and who possesses, in addition a certain quality. This quality was *parrhēsia*, free-spokenness” (p. 44). I contend that this person is the pre-service teacher educator. Returning to why the guided introspection for the transformation of the self is necessary, Foucault (2011a) elaborated upon the notion that, “*parrhēsia* is a virtue, duty, and technique which should be found in the person who spiritually directs others and helps them to constitute their relationship to self” (p. 43).

Foucault stressed that guiding an individual on this path of introspection was (and is) an ethical *duty* concerning this commitment for the teacher. Clearly, Foucault did not see *parrhēsic* teaching as a half-measure; any educator attempting to expose their students to the teachings and lessons of *parrhēsia* must be fully invested in this philosophy and approach. Foucault continued, having written that the process of students undergoing a deep introspection and personal change can only be accomplished if one is able to develop a “relationship to the other. In other words: one cannot attend to oneself, take care of oneself, without a relationship to another person” (p. 43). It is the responsibility of the teacher educator to be the one “to tell the truth, to tell the whole truth, or at any rate to tell all the truth that is necessary, and to tell it in a certain form that is precisely *parrhēsia*, which once again is translated as free-spokenness” (p. 43). Hence, the pre-service teacher educator must fully commit to the teaching process, exposing his/her students to information that should challenge their reality to facilitate transformation and personal growth. This relationship must also have pre-service teachers question the society in which they reside.

To begin to understand their position within the existing society while becoming members of democratic societies, all students must engage in a number of complex and controversial discussions that examine the notions of power, privilege, race, and politics. However, a number of pre-service teachers do not know how to facilitate such necessary discussions as they are taught that such controversy is not welcome in a classroom by the communities in which they teach, the social pressures that work to censor examinations of the horrors of the American past, and the conservative political entities. In addition to these silencing pressures, there is no regulated method with which, when, and how social

studies method classes are taught across the nation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). The same can be said for what can be taught as well; however, there are a number of organizations (e.g., Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) that have standards that show that pre-service teachers are engaging in best practices when said students are being trained, there are no existing guidelines that state when social studies methods should be taught within a pre-service teacher education's scope and sequence of classes/curriculum. This, itself, is another issue. Returning to the issue of silencing classroom curriculum from speaking about the "truth," pre-service teachers must be taught to find and utilize their voices to bring about necessary change. Critical discussions, Socratic seminars, and speaking truth of subaltern realities that run counter-current to the message of the master's narrative is what will bring about change. This can be done by encouraging the practice of the three tenets of *parrhēsia* early in pre-service teacher education programs by teacher educators. However, it must be adapted for use, as the practice of *parrhēsia* cannot be mandated and forced upon students, only modeled and fostered by the teacher educator.

Safe learning spaces must be created that foster dialog between teacher educators and pre-service teachers (as well as between pre-service teachers themselves). If students do not feel safe within their classroom, they will not be prompted to openly discuss controversial topics. Instead of growth, students will remain mute and stagnant. Safe spaces must be created where individuals can freely discuss matters of race and inequity, a space that Eng (2008) stated is both "an essential part of curriculum making" and a "safe place where students [and adults] feel welcomed, valued, and at home" (p. 262). While Eng did not mention *parrhēsia* in her work, the facilitation of the safe space is

necessary in order to observe and then engage in *parrhēsic* dialog and thought. I contend that a safe space is a location where individuals can engage in frank, honest discussions with the goal of individual intellectual and emotional change. These safe spaces, facilitated and crafted by pre-service teacher educators, should not only encourage conversation amongst all individuals and viewpoints, but all participants should understand that they could state their opinions without fear of academic or personal reprisal. In essence, the goal of the conversation is to promote learning and understanding across the members of the group. While a pre-service teacher educator cannot force all of the students to participate in the conversation, those that are willing and dedicated to interact with others in the space can undergo personal and emotional growth. Those that participate must believe that they are in a safe space, a space crafted by the pre-service teacher educator. Once engaged in frank and open discussion, those that choose to do so must speak their minds and transmit their emotions to others, even if the subject matter of the conversation causes another participant to become disturbed, angry, or offended. If this occurs, the pre-service teacher educator can give the specific party voice to discuss why the offending party's words, thoughts, or actions provoked the specific response. This can then lead to further conversation and teachable moments, leading to personal and emotional growth of the group. Bonilla-Silva (2010) advocated for these type of conversations as a necessary way to subvert the dominant narrative. The notion of the safe space is to foster and facilitate conversations concerning socially taboo topics (race, sexual preference, gender, etc.), not to cater to or protect the feelings of any one group, particularly those in the socially dominant group. Within these safe spaces and conversations, there is an opportunity that the created space will serve as a location for

“resilience and hope” (Baker, 2008, p.65), as well as places of democratic practice where pre-service educators can examine and critique the social system. Essentially, this must be done by teachers, especially pre-service teachers who are constantly entering the job market, with a critical social justice mindset. Somehow, within their pre-service teacher education programs, such an orientation must be developed. The following section will examine the existing body of scholarly literature examining the development and maintenance of critical thinking skills within teacher education programs and how my future work will contribute to the field of pre-service teacher education, among others.

Pre-service Teachers’ Existing Thought Processes

Existing literature examining the critical orientation of pre-service teachers, of those who enter pre-service teacher education programs and leave them to teach in classrooms, provide an interesting view into both the impact of pre-service teacher education and the power of pre-conceptualized thought processes. Adler (2008) and Zeichner (1999) conducted research on the beliefs of pre-service teachers concerning students and schooling as they enter programs and have found similar results. Adler (2008) stated that the current body of research “points to how difficult it is to change the beliefs and attitudes preservice teachers bring to teacher education” (p. 332). Furthermore, McCall (1995), Smith (2000), and Wilson (2001) all conducted research on this topic and found that the “meanings and assumptions that preservice teachers held and the effect of their backgrounds” were critical cogs in how preservice teachers conceptualized and approached issues of diversity (as cited in Adler, 2008, p. 337). Richardson (1996) found that “preservice teachers enter teaching programs with largely traditional views they have acquired in their schooling” that are often accompanied by an

“idealized vision of what teaching is, and they often hold the view that learning is a somewhat mechanical transfer of knowledge” (as cited in Webeck, Field, & Salinas, 1997, p. 152). A troubling finding in regard to the knowledge that pre-service teachers acquire in their pre-service teacher education programs was that “preservice teachers do not typically develop completely new perspectives about what they believe and what they value in the course of their teacher programs” unless the teacher educator is cognizant enough to make sure that pre-service teachers are constantly “articulat[ing] their [personal] beliefs and us[ing] them as a[n academic] benchmark” (Webeck, Field, & Salinas, 1997, p. 154). Instead of learning new viewpoints that can influence the thought processes and personal beliefs of pre-service teachers in regards to students who do not have the same cultural, ethnic, racial, and learning backgrounds as themselves, pre-service teachers have been documented to be “interpreting the messages of teacher education courses in ways that reinforce the perspectives and dispositions that they bring to the program,” which can lead to a general “distortion of the intentions of teacher educators” and the curriculum they teach (Zeichner & Gore, 1990, p. 17). Instead of learning about other cultures and gaining empathy for other students, some pre-service teachers are only viewing students and lessons in a way that further cement pre-existing stereotypes of students, furthering matters of racism and sexism that these students bring to the university. The issue with immutable (or, in this instance, stubbornly mutable) belief systems is a major problem in teacher education. Clearly, having been socialized by the dominant narrative their whole lives, there is a great possibility that pre-service teachers enter the college classroom with numerous negative and deficit discourses pertaining to groups of students. Thus, if pre-service teachers enter the university with

deeply-held notions of racism or deficit thinking pertaining to a certain population of students, the research has shown that even a critically-oriented pre-service teacher education curriculum may make little impact in terms of shifting the students' thinking away from pre-existing biases. In order to create critically-oriented educators who want to teach social justice in their classrooms, there must be a dedicated push by critically-oriented schools of education to expose their pre-service teachers to a great deal of targeted curricular work and personal reflections arranged by the teacher educator to push back against their pre-existing biases towards certain populations of students.

Issues persist in regards to pre-service teachers refusing to engage in (or unable to engage with) the curriculum of their pre-service teacher education programs. Gay and Kirkland (2003) constantly stressed the importance of pre-service teachers undergoing self-reflection. Gay and Kirkland noted that such self-reflection allows pre-service teachers to undergo an audit of personally held beliefs that shape both their educational history and practice in regards to how they personally engaged with past concepts that challenged their belief systems. Farber and Armaline (1994) agreed, noting that a philosophical lens influenced by the work of John Dewey stresses the introduction of "reflective thinking" to pre-service educators, specifically when it occurs "in conjunction with the field experiences" they undergo (p. 61). This, when done successfully, will increase

the likelihood that [pre-service teachers] will be more sensitive to problems emanating from the intersections of diverse cultures and [are] more likely to arrive at a decision or action based upon a combination of the relevant knowledge available and the contextual circumstances of the situation (pp. 61-62).

In theory, such practices would be an incredible boon for teacher education programs. However, as Gay and Kirkland (2003) wrote, there are major issues that may prevent some pre-service teachers from engaging in deep self-reflection. Gay and Kirkland noted that there are a number of “obstacles that can interfere with the process” of self-reflection within a pre-service teacher classroom that have to do with either the “challenges of self-reflection in general” or issues that are “specific to ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity” (p. 182). The unwillingness by these pre-service teachers to engage in critical self-reflection (and, thus, the curriculum planned by the teacher educator) come in multiple forms. One, as Gay and Kirkland wrote, is exhibited when “preservice teachers . . . [refuse to analyze] their thoughts, beliefs, biases, and behaviors about racial and cultural diversity” by refusing to engage in classroom discussions entirely for whatever reason (p. 183). Another issue that prevents self-reflection occurs when pre-service teachers claim that they are not racist, that racism does not exist, or they are paralyzed by “guilt over past acts of oppression, injustice, and marginalization” (p. 184). Such emotional paralysis and refusal to undergo a personal examination of one's racism, Leonardo (2002) argued, is entirely self-defeating to any sort of anti-racist education as such paralysis and guilt over past issues do not advance a social justice agenda. However, guilt, denial, and refusal to self-reflect tends to easily come about due to the “cultural clash” that emerges “when white, middle class preservice teachers enter urban schools” (Farber & Armaline, 1994, p. 61). The result of exposure to a reality wholly unlike their own (and the dominant narrative's vision of reality and society) easily contributes to an inability to engage in the necessary critical reflection and needed introspection that Liston and Zeichner (1991) call the “reflective examinations of [alternate] realities” (p. 92). Thus,

many pre-service teachers accompany this muteness by refusing to critically reflect with reality, and they will not be able to break away from a deficit ideology that will forever negatively inform their practices toward students who do not share the same racial and cultural qualities as the pre-service teacher (p. 61). The literature suggests that one of the major reasons for this "slippage" may have to do with a general lack of cohesion guiding pre-service teacher education nationally.

Pre-service teacher education programs suffer from a lack of substance and a lack of standardization nationally (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Zeichner & Conklin, 2005). Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) found that schools of education across the United States are vastly different in regards to the presented curricula that each pre-service teacher must take, writing that "Prospective teachers generally take courses in the arts and sciences and in schools of education, and they spend time in schools. What they study varies widely" (p. 447). This is result of many pre-service teacher programs within schools of education lacking structure and substance; Darling-Hammond and her companions, reviewing literature and documents from a number of teacher education programs between 1950 and 1990, discovered that schools of education suffer from a range of issues including "inadequate time" to complete all the necessary classes before entering student teaching, "fragmentation" of curriculum where "key elements of teacher learning are disconnected from each other," "uninspired teaching methods," "superficial curriculum," and "traditional views of schooling" that do not emphasize new teaching and learning methods and critical theories (p. 447). As a result of this piecemeal, unstandardized curricula, a "substantial number of individuals enter [student teaching] without completing teacher education" and are "significantly less well prepared than

those who enter having completed a preservice preparation program” (pp. 444-445).

Lesley’s (2014) work went a step further, as she noted that few states even require pre-service secondary education teachers “to complete literacy education coursework” and many schools of education only require “one (three credit hour) course in content area literacy” (p. 50). These are critical issues, as one of the major findings reported by Zeichner and Conklin (2005) concerning a national study of teacher education programs, noted that the substance of the programs is what makes the biggest impact, not the structure. If the structure is already in shambles, however, it only further hurts pre-service teachers, especially those who wish to learn how to approach the classroom critically.

That is not to say, however, that pre-service teacher education has not worked to address some of these issues. Darling-Hammond (2010) reviewed more recent literature that shows that some schools of education have undergone “successful transformations . . . [redesigning] their programs; creating stronger clinical practice, strengthening coursework around critical areas like student learning and development, assessment, subject matter pedagogy and the teaching of English language learners and special needs students” (p. 36). However, outside forces that have pushed for alternative certification programs for teachers and other similar “attacks” on pre-service teacher education (e.g., Vasquez Heiling & Jez, 2014) have done little address the issues that Darling-Hammond and her colleagues mentioned in their survey of years of pre-service teacher education programs; as a whole, nationally, the general effectiveness of pre-service teacher education is lacking in quality and coherence. Equally troubling is the body of literature that illustrates that when pre-service teachers graduate from their schools of education and head into the field to begin teaching, gains made in teacher education programs may

not be effective as teachers are prone to slip back into the thought patterns they held before earning their degrees.

Literature has shown that after earning accreditation and graduating from schools of education, teachers tend to revert to their older, more conservative thinking practices they possessed when entering their pre-service teacher education programs when they begin to teach alone for the first time, if they made any real progress at all (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Wade, 1995; Webeck, Field, & Salinas, 1997; Zeichner, Tabachnick, & Densmore, 1987). Book, Byers, and Freeman (1983) reported that students entering pre-service teacher education programs “believe that there is not much they can learn in preservice teacher education except during their student teaching experiences,” and, therefore, do not immediately see the benefit of the curriculum they undergo before their field experiences (as cited in Richardson, 1996, p. 108). As first-year teachers begin to teach away from the university setting, they are suddenly devoid of the network of professors that helped guide their teaching, planning, and thinking when still completing their degrees. As Wise, Darling-Hammond, and Berry (1987) stated, “Beginning teachers are generally left to ‘sink or swim’ during their first years of teaching” (p. 95). Without the presence of an experienced and critically-oriented mentor, “untutored novices often fail in their early attempts” at teaching and examining their praxis (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996, p. 95). As a result, teachers appear to fall back to the deeply held personal beliefs which made up their identity when they began their pre-service teacher education (Wade, 1995) as it has been found that much of what pre-service teachers have learned in their pre-service teacher education programs “dissipate” (Lieb, 1992, p. 13). These issues could be addressed, however, on the governmental level if there were an organized

pushed to enact “teacher professional standards that direct the process of teacher education” (Huang, 2015, p. 255). However, there has been little effort to make a formulaic change nation-wide to make sure that pre-service teachers, upon graduation, would receive the support and mentoring needed to retain critical viewpoints when becoming professionals. However, there are still issues with pre-service teachers retaining conservative belief systems while undergoing their training in the university due to other institutional and personal issues.

Such conservative beliefs may remain hidden within pre-service teacher programs because of general philosophical mismatches between professors and students (e.g., Applebaum, 2009; Kilmer, 2007; Zeichner, Tabachnick, & Densmore, 1987). Leming (1992) wrote that college professors and the students they teach tend to have radically different political views and ways of thinking. The author found that many social studies pre-service educators tend to have more leftist political views with a “greater allegiance to ‘citizenship goals than the general population of social studies teachers” while pre-service social studies teachers have political views that are more moderate or conservative (as cited in Armento, 1996, p. 487). This creates an ideological mismatch; no matter what a teacher educator may say or argue in his/her classroom, some students may unequivocally reject what he/she is saying due to having such opposite ideologies. This mismatch has extended outside of the classroom as well, with students forming opinions of professors based on their social media profile and the information shared within (Sleigh, Smith, & Laboe, 2013). Kilmer (2007) noted that liberal professors, especially when brought up by conservative activist groups, must be willing to discuss their views in class with their students and discuss the difference in philosophical

viewpoints, all the while furthering the importance of teaching critical thinking at the university level. This is an issue, especially when students code their responses and respond favorably to the views espoused by their professors if only to tell them what they want to hear (in order to pass the class). In fact, Zeichner, Tabachnick, and Densmore (1987) found that student teachers had their perspectives “solidify rather than change during their student-teaching experience” (as cited in Richardson, 1996, p.112) while Stoddart, Connell, Stofflett, and Peck (1993) found that “beginning teachers typically leave the university, after the new experiences, without an appreciably changed view of teaching than they held upon program entry” (as cited in Webeck, Field, & Salinas, 1997, pp. 153-154). Additionally, Webeck, Field, and Salinas argued that this lack of change:

can be attributed to a number of factors, but we must consider that unless learning includes an element of dissonance that causes the learner to respond intellectually or affectively to a problem, it is likely that change will not happen. To learn, change must occur (pp. 153-154).

Going a step further, Hayes and Fasching-Varner (2015) observed that a great number of teachers “exit their preparation programs with little or no knowledge of themselves as raced, gendered, and classed beings, with little preparation that centers on social justice” as these programs are deeply entrenched in a system that promotes whiteness, racism, and neoliberalism (p. 104). Additionally, there is an activist leaning of several conservative student groups that continue to argue that academics are too liberal and discourage or punish students who espouse conservative beliefs in the classroom (Fisler & Foubert, 2006). This further showcases not only philosophical mismatches between professors and students, but outright rejection of any worldviews or beliefs that the student chooses not to believe, thereby not allowing any philosophical shift away from the deeply conservative ideology. Thus, logically, if a student’s inherent beliefs have not been

changed during their pre-service teacher education program before their field experiences, there is a possibility that the student teaching experience will end up cementing a mindset that reflects their personal beliefs (which have been heavily influenced and socialized by the dominant narrative in society).

This raises a troubling question: if several studies all point to the influence of personal background and histories as a significant factor in how pre-service teachers approach issues of diversity (and other such critical matters), what are the most effective ways to approach pre-service teachers to talk about controversial topics? What inspires teachers to take a critical stance when they enter the classroom to teach? What influences teachers to make a potentially career threatening decision to teach non-Eurocentric curriculums that run in stark opposition to what a conservative, overwhelmingly white populous believes? A critical teacher education program can work and has worked in the past (as shown above). The literature below discusses the relevant ways in which to implement such a curriculum that is centered on the creation of positive classroom and educational experiences that have a lasting and real impact on pre-service teachers that they then carry into the classroom when they begin teaching professionally.

Critical Teacher Education and its Impact on Pre-Service Teacher's Mindsets

Current teacher education literature has noted a trend in schools of education across the United States that is requiring students to undergo a mandatory multicultural education class in order to earn their degrees (e.g., Perrone & Traver, 1996; Sleeter, 2013). When executed correctly with a receptive audience of pre-service teachers, such an approach could be extremely beneficial. As Sleeter (2013) stated, an excellent multicultural pre-service teacher education program that teaches white students anti-

racism and anti-racist thinking will allow students to “identify manifestations of racism, learn how racism works, and learn to interrupt it. Anti-racism gives tools to not only talk about racism, but also do something about it” (p. 134). However, many school of education (that claim a critical stance) are not critical (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Marx, 2006; Noguera, 2003; Pollack, 2012; Sleeter, 2013; Zeichner, 2006, 2009). Other schools of education believe that pre-service teachers only require a single class that examines multicultural pedagogy or issues of social justice. A single class will do little to disrupt racism as the vast majority of white pre-service teachers will not be able to navigate issues due to their “white fragility” and inability to acknowledge and discuss racism (DiAngelo, 2011). This is a tremendous issue, especially when many pre-service teachers believe that “students’ explanations for gender and ethnic [and class] differences . . . do not make a difference in teaching” (Walker, 1993, as cited in Richardson, 1996, p. 108). As a result of this faux criticality, Perrone and Traver (1996) found that simply mandating that pre-service teachers take a multicultural education class is “clearly not sufficient” and that if students only have a short exposure to students of color in a classroom, it will just further their beliefs in stereotypes and pre-established racist thought practices (both conscious and unconscious); instead of solving the issue, the single class will give these individuals access to the necessary language that will allow them the ability to discover the “‘proper’ way to talk about multiculturalism” and students of color while masking their still racist thoughts and practices (p. 394). Marx's (2006) research furthers this point; Marx's work is based on her observations of pre-service teachers from a school of education that claimed a critical stance. Marx discovered that the pre-service teachers from this "critical" school of education were

being taught about students of color and students who were categorized as English Language Learners from a deficit mindset that actually focused on using commonly accepted stereotypes to teach the pre-service teachers about these two populations of students. Clearly, it was incredibly inappropriate for the teacher educator in this instance to use such a method; not only did it further racist thinking by white pre-service teachers, but it continued stereotypical notions that a social justice-oriented program should work to dismantle. Marx found that the female pre-service teachers demonstrated their deficit mindsets toward the students of color they were working with in four specific ways #1: discussing and commenting on student culture, #2: student language, #3: student families, and #4: student self-esteem and intelligence, (all discussed in negative ways) while also finding that the female pre-service teachers had “fears of people of color . . . [as the pre-service teachers would be observed] making attempts to create distance between themselves and people of color” while still stressing that the students of color should be conforming to white standards of learning, education, and navigating society (as cited in Valencia, 2010, p. 127).

On the other hand, there is a body of literature that provides positive suggestions for how to implement a critically oriented pre-service teacher education program (aside from my proposal of a framework that embodies *parrhēsia* as detailed above) that can help dispel such issues of deficit thinking and racism. Zeichner (2009) wrote that teachers should engage in action research as soon as they begin teaching, either during the advent of their student teaching or when they enter the field professionally, allowing for them to understand their practices. However, the issue with action research is that it occurs within a teacher’s existing mindset. Unless done with a professor or another critically oriented

individual, the teacher's results may create a feedback loop that only exists to justify their practices (which may create a positive or negative effect, depending on the teacher's mindset towards his/her students). In terms of general curriculum and what should be taught to pre-service teachers, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1992, 1993) proposed solutions to such issues in teacher education programs by being forthright and honest with pre-service teachers. They stated that teacher educators must clue pre-service teachers into the reality of the classrooms they will be entering, stressing the need for the teacher educator to discuss issues of cultural diversity that pre-service teachers will encounter during their field experiences. The researchers suggest that pre-service teachers be exposed to the "cultural and racial communities represented in their classes" by having students engage in "home visit[s], conferring with community members, talking with parents, consulting with various [teachers of color] and observing students in and out of school" (p. 394). Both Boyle-Baise (2003) and Gay (2004) agree with Cochran-Smith and Lytle's call to have pre-service teachers gain tangible, real-life experiences in the communities in which they will be teaching to understand the differences between their perceptions of urban communities and the communities themselves. Haberman (1996) wrote that there is a significant issue with how pre-service teachers are educated in terms of understanding the socialization of humans and the influence of the dominant narrative on an individual's actions. Haberman stated that:

future teachers do not routinely learn alternative explanations of human behavior in which the unit of analysis is not the individual. Rarely, if ever, are they presented with ways of explaining human behavior in which individual personality constructs are not assumed to be the primary causes of children's behavior (p. 748).

It is the move to structural thinking, the gaining of a "double consciousness," that will bring about the conversations of inequity and race (Du Bois, 1903). Additionally,

scholars urge for pre-service teachers to introspectively meditate on and engage in open discussions with classmates concerning race, racism, and white privilege to learn to understand and identify the concepts. Such concepts, obviously, are invisible to individuals who have never experienced or acknowledged them before. By discussing these topics in class, it begins to allow pre-service teachers the ability to evaluate thinking toward the learning of their students and how the pre-service teacher's thoughts and attitudes will impact that learning (either positively or negatively) (e.g., Marx, 2006; McIntyre, 2002). Finally, from an administrative/collective/organizational standpoint, a social justice teacher education program should be

An entire community, like a school and its parts—the sequence of courses and experiences—would fit together to make a whole. Its leaders would be able to make decisions shaping the program: [if they cannot have the ability to make necessary decisions, then the pre-service teacher education program would resemble] a poor colony run from afar by faculty or administrators (Carroll, et al., 2007, p. 214).

This allows committed faculty at the university to shape every aspect of the program, designing and implementing the curriculum for the pre-service teacher education program and the experiences the teachers within it will undergo. It is only through significant experiences that students can undergo philosophical shifts that will orient a teacher's philosophical stance as one contingent on social justice education (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996).

In order to subvert the dominant narrative, informed students must be taught in schools by critical educators. Critical educators must come from teacher education programs that do philosophically shift the mindsets of teachers so, when socialized into the profession, they rely on their multicultural education and social justice education instead of falling back into practices and thought patterns that would only serve to

continue the dominant narrative. In order to do so, social studies teachers must fall back onto practices for democratic education of students, practices that underlies the philosophy of Dewey (1938). It is true that democratic education, in this current age, has been co-opted by the neoliberal influence and change in education and teacher education (Sleeter, 2013). However, if pre-service teachers receive an education within the *parrhēsis* framework discussed above, there is a chance that they can recognize these undemocratic influences, critique them to their students, and return education to its true purpose of instilling democratic participation into the next generation of American students who can see how the dominant narrative has influenced society, government, and politics in general.

Counternarratives in Academic Literature

Counternarratives in the field of education have been adapted from counternarrative's extensive use within several critical research methods and theories. Specifically, the use of counternarratives are a major piece of the philosophical foundation of both critical legal studies and Critical Race Theory (CRT).

It is important here to include an aside as to the framework I will be using in my study and why this discussion of CRT is present. As a white scholar, I do not believe I can use CRT; however, using the notion of counternarratives that have evolved out of CRT is, in my opinion, acceptable. This lengthy discussion of CRT illustrates where the notion of counternarrative and its acceptability in academic research arose and provides a historical context for the reader as to why I have decided to utilize it.

Highlighted by the ability to examine issues from multiple perspectives, counternarratives in critical legal studies arose as a method to tell counter-hegemonic

tales while also providing contextual and tangible evidence as to why there are numerous racist laws and legal practices that benefit whites in the United States (Bell, 2008; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Counternarrative's use by prominent legal scholars (e.g., Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic) allowed individuals disadvantaged by the legal system in the United States the ability to call "attention to neglected evidence" while "reminding [people of a] common humanity" within the court room (pp. 49-50). Such an idea holds especially true when our legal system functions as a boon for whites and as a hindrance for individuals of color. Within critical legal studies, counternarratives were used by lawyers with a critical stance to explore the notion of a "*differend*" legal system in the United States; this notion of a *differend* legal system "occurs when a concept such as justice acquires conflicting meanings for two groups . . . [where] the subordinate person lacks language to express how he or she has been injured or wronged" (p. 50). Counternarratives allow such individuals the ability to find a space to tell their stories and gain access to the courtroom. The courtroom and the legal system are entities that operate on a linguistic level governed by an extensive array of rules and procedures that places non-legal scholars in a space that is far removed from commonplace language and social norms/rules. As Delgado and Stefancic stated, counternarratives within the legal field that showcase the experiences of marginalized and oppressed groups "provide a language to bridge the gaps in imagination and conception that give rise to the *differend*. They reduce alienation for members of excluded groups, while offering opportunities for members of the majority group to meet them halfway" (p. 51). This newly created space, one that provides individuals a look into the realities and lives of individuals not served by the dominant narrative, allows the "poor and disenfranchised to

achieve a better brand of justice” (p. 51). Educational scholars, seeing how Critical Legal Theory was able to provide inroads to an established system of power, began adapting the tenets of Critical Legal Theory to the field of education, creating numerous critical theories to deconstruct society from a new perspective (in this instance, from a race-first perspective) and observe how it impacts education and schooling in the United States.

From critical legal studies, scholars developed Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a method to observe the world. CRT embraces four central lynchpins that guide the practice of this theory: the normality of the existence of racism, white dominance over individuals of color, race as a social construction, and, finally, an existence of “a unique voice of color” in society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 10). The fourth lynchpin, the "unique voice of color," is counternarrative. Delgado and Stefancic noted that such a voice is unique as a vast majority of individuals have not developed what W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) called a “double consciousness” that allows individuals to understand that society has multiple realities and multiple social divisions. Understanding that there are multiple realities and social divisions then allows those who have developed a "double consciousness" the ability to critique such social divisions. However, coming to such a state requires an individual to come to a realization that such social divisions exist, allowing an individual to operate in a space free from the dominant discourse. Counternarratives can provide such access. It is due to a lack of societal-wide “double consciousness” that Critical Legal and Critical Race Theory scholars show that “History books, Sunday sermons, and even case law contribute to a cultural hegemony that makes it different from reforms to make race an issue” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 46). It is within this final tenet that CRT (as well as the other theoretical branches of CRT)

embraces and practices counternarrative dialogs. Such counternarrative dialogs allow “voices-of-color . . . to communicate to their white counterparts matters that the whites are unlikely to know . . . [such as] their experiences with racism and the legal system . . . [and the] law’s master narratives” (p. 10).

Counternarrative in the primary, secondary, and college classroom can be integrated with critical pedagogy and deliberate curriculum design to engage students critically and personally as a way to disrupt the messages presented to them by the white dominant narrative (Banks, 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Collins, 2009; Fuentes, 2014; Irizarry & Antrop-González, 2014; Lather, 1991, Rolón-Dow, 2005; Solórzano, 1997). One such educational theory that embraces the use of counternarratives as educative tools is multicultural education. Banks (2010a), in his call for multicultural education, stated how this approach is “an idea stating that all students, regardless of the groups to which they belong, such as those related to gender, ethnicity, race, culture, language, social class, religion, or exceptionality, should experience educational equality in the schools” (p. 25). Multicultural education calls for teachers to dispel “negative attitudes toward and misconceptions about different racial and ethnic groups” (p. 21) while also calling for an extensive investigation of other cultures, “such as those in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the Americas as they were before the Europeans arrived” (Gates, 1999 as cited in Banks, 2010b, p. 237). Grant and Sachs (1995) went one step further, advocating for students within a multicultural classroom/curriculum be provided with

the knowledge and skills to enable them to give a definitive account of how ‘culture’ is acquired, transmitted and distributed, as well as its meaning and the part it plays in the formation of commonsense knowledge and assumptions that are so important for the maintenance of hegemonic forms of power in our society (p. 100).

It is here where I would like to state that Banks did not go far enough with his work to be critical of society; Grant and Sachs are much closer to what Bennett (1999) defined as critical multicultural education. While Banks' approach did have students investigate difference in race and culture, Bennett believed that a critical multicultural education is deeply rooted in "democratic values and beliefs" that "affirms cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies" (p. 11). Such an approach to education will attempt to "foster the intellectual, social, and personal development of virtually all students to their highest potential" while simultaneously moving "toward equity, curriculum reform, the process of becoming interculturally competent, and the commitment to combat prejudice and discrimination, especially racism" (p. 11). It is the final aspect of this quote, the push to interrogate and consciously combat racism, which makes critical multicultural education the correct avenue in which to utilize counternarrative as a powerful tool for an education that utilizes *parrhēsia*. Such a critical multicultural approach that deliberately utilizes a non-whitestream curriculum (which will be touched upon below) is an instance of a curricular counternarrative to be taught to students. Such a narrative, according to Lapayese (2014), will allow students to "recognize there is more than one way to look at the world and thus, open up possibilities for understanding the schooling experiences of Afro-Latinos, for example, in new and different ways" (p. 234). Fuentes (2014) agreed, stating that counternarratives can "provide new narratives that include traditionally marginalized communities in the development of a new vision of education" (p. 348), an education that allows students to "ask questions about what [they] have not thought to think, about what is most densely invested in [their] discourses/practices, about what has been muted, repressed, unheard" (Lather, 1991, p. 156).

Counternarratives can also allow for students of color to recognize, critique, and deconstruct existing social stereotypes (Solórzano, 1997); confront and deconstruct deficit thinking mindsets held by whites (Valencia, 2010); gain positive values of their individual cultures and histories within and outside of school (Villenas, 2014); and have students engage with

Other knowledge—radically different ways of seeing, speaking and representing. This [engagement with Other/counter-current knowledge against the dominant discourse] opens up a space for students to critically understand how they represented history, in the economy, in schools, and in other social discourse. [Non-whitestream] students would be called upon to think, write, and speak against the grain; to be attentive to elite appropriations of their voices and struggles, and to reflect how consciousness may be reconstituted to effect a more socially just world order" (Lapayese, 2014, p. 234).

The liberatory power of such an approach will, hopefully, allow students to observe and dismiss the stereotypes society has built to act as control mechanisms for oppressed groups (Collins, 2009; Yosso, 2006) and become empowered by their own cultural knowledge and identity. Lapayese (2014) even theorized that counternarratives that reflect students of color used in the classroom can “connect students to outside literature that may speak to their experiences and interests” (p. 234), which is a cornerstone of the work and educational philosophy of John Dewey. Dewey (1938) wrote that engaging students in relevant educational experiences (much like the one proposed above by Lapayese) will be both “immediately enjoyable . . . [while promoting] desirable future experiences” (p. 27). Counternarratives can be used to engage students deeply, and pre-service teachers in the social studies should be exposed to the aforementioned positive outcomes that a host of academic researchers have shown counternarratives can bring. However, the way that public schools teach social studies in the United States

discourages educators from attempting to tell a true version of historical events. It is my intention to examine how teaching non-dominant discourses within the social studies classroom will dispel the literal white-washing of American history, the championing of white exceptionalism, the dismissal of unsavory flaws, and the downplaying of atrocities committed by whites against individuals of color.

However, this is no literature that examines the use of counternarratives in social studies classrooms. Extended further, there is a limited amount of counternarrative literature that even involves high school classrooms. Many studies posited that the results of their various studies could end up establishing a counternarrative to established practices and normative structures. Few papers actually discussed the integration of counternarrative into classroom practices or teaching at all. For example, Applegate (2011), as a result of her study which looked at alternative approaches to English classrooms in urban schools, posited that her findings could “provide a balance of ideologies constructed around power in the classroom, student voice, and various other issues that impact the pre-service teachers' habitus, which, in turn, would likely impact those teachers' approaches to their teaching methods and their own students” (p. 181). I could find no other literature that discussed any sort of integration of counternarrative into classroom teaching practices. This lack of literature points to a major gap in the field.

Counternarrative and the Control of Knowledge and “Truth”

Social studies teachers must be targeted for a reform effort within their pre-service teacher education programs that introduces the use of counternarratives as legitimate curricular tools. Social studies classrooms, currently, teach a deeply Eurocentric script when examining history and civics (Chandler, 2007; Loewen, 1996).

Currently, social studies curriculums in the United States do not teach students the truth about the American past. Instead, such classes teach a curriculum that has been manipulated to canonize whites (and of those whites, mostly males) within a frame of American exceptionalism that perpetuates false perspectives of the past that de-emphasizes the horrors and inhumanity of past actions of whites (Hunter, 1992; Loewen, 1996, 2010; Raphael, 2014; West, 2004; Yosso, 2006). As Yosso (2006) stated, the creation of such an altered version of history is a deliberate move by whites in power; the manipulation of history serves to change the “legacy of racism and White privilege [that] determine[s] whose stories are recounted as historical and whose experiences are dismissed as merely anecdotal” (p. 9). Clearly, the majority of textbooks in the United States believe white experiences, not the experiences of individuals of color, are considered to be legitimate (Loewen, 1996). By championing the experiences of whites and downplaying the experiences of those of color, the notion of white historical exceptionalism persists in the curriculums taught in our schools. Over the years, such embedded ideologies and curricula have become perceived as cannon knowledge, or as Delgado Bernal (1998) termed, a “legitimate body of knowledge” (p. 556). The entire process of creating this “legitimate body of knowledge” as she stated, is a result of deliberate choices made by those who have power as to what knowledge is taught. She wrote that “In education, what is taught, how it is taught, who is taught, and whose fault it is when what is taught is not learned are often manifestations of what is considered the legitimate body of knowledge” (p. 556). This returns us back to the issue of “cultural politics” (Apple, 1993, 1996, 2000, 2006) and its interplay between “cultural visions and differential power” (Apple, 1993, p.53) in the legitimization of knowledge (and,

therefore, the truth of history), and how teachers serve as “agents in the production, circulation, and use of particular forms of cultural and symbolic capital” in the classroom (Giroux, 1996, p. 43). Said historical knowledge disseminated by teachers is greatly influenced both by established standards (Ravitch, 2010) and by textbooks filled with a wealth of false information (Loewen, 1996; Raphael, 2014).

The majority of history textbooks used within classrooms in the United States serve to deeply transmit an ideal of white Eurocentric exceptionalism to students using both altered and false histories that de-emphasizes the inhuman actions of past Americans while simultaneously omitting issues of race, poverty, wealth, and other social inequities from the presented curriculum (Loewen, 1996). Loewen’s analysis of the content of high school American history textbooks revealed that the great majority of them were filled with errors, lies, and mistruths that

keep students in the dark about the nature of history. History is a furious debate informed by evidence and reason. Textbooks encourage students to believe that history is fact to be learned . . . textbooks employ such a godlike tone; it never occurs to most students to question them (p. 16).

Thus, without students or teachers actively questioning the content presented within the textbooks, they accept whatever is published as fact. Publishers and textbook writers are then allowed to continue deliberately manipulating the content of the textbooks and the message/ideology/history the textbooks are attempting to convey to their readers. Instead, textbooks have established and re-enforced an “Othering” mindset, where all non-white, non-Europeans are viewed as irreparably different “from the standpoint of a white ‘self’” (Frankenburg, 1993, pp. 16-17). This notion of “Othering,” the creation of a white/non-white racial binary, has been established for years since the advent of “Orientalism” by Western Europeans (Said, 1977, pp. 1-9). However, as mentioned previously, textbooks

that present an “Othering” mindset that is not questioned and critiqued will continue to be filled with lies and false histories that uplift white “heroes”. The facts, the true facts of history, have been deliberately manipulated to create a faux narrative that embraces the “Heroification [of a] “monolithic parade of white male political leaders” (Loewen, 1996, pp. 19-20). “Heroification” is a process where authors and textbook publishers “cherry pick” ideas that present past individuals in a positive light while downplaying (or entirely eliminating) any historical fact that makes the individual seem either un-heroic or non-conforming to “acceptable” American ideals and practices. “Heroification,” as a process, “so distorts the lives of [individuals in history books] that we cannot think straight about them” (p. 20).

“Heroification” creates a manipulated version of history that teaches students to both worship past historical American figures while also tacitly determining what knowledge is considered to be acceptable and truthful (e.g., Apple, 1993, 1996, 2004, 2006, 2013; Loewen, 1996; Sleeter, 2013). By presenting a certain view of an individual for students in an accepted textbook, unless critiqued by the classroom teacher, students will accept what is presented to them as fact. This can best be illustrated by discussing Loewen's (1996) study of how President Woodrow Wilson, Helen Keller, and Christopher Columbus are portrayed in several history books. Wilson, within these textbooks, is portrayed as “‘good,’ [an] ‘idealist,’ for self-determination, not colonial intervention, ‘foiled by an isolationist Senate,’ and ‘ahead of his time’” (p. 32). These are socially acceptable traits for a former president of the United States to have; the social archetype around Wilson is that he was a progressive politician that worked for the good of all Americans. However, these facts about Wilson were false. President Wilson was a

white supremacist, fervently racist, and deeply involved in the manipulation of South American and Caribbean politics to exploit smaller nations for the benefit of the United States (pp. 23-33). All of these facts are “well known to professional historians,” but do not appear in textbooks as they reflect badly on a former president. The same can be said for the politics of Helen Keller and their absence from a majority of social studies textbooks. Keller is included in textbooks as a perfect example of meritocracy for students to aspire to; by mastering her own abilities to overcome her multiple disabilities, she was able to “pull herself up by her bootstraps”. However, no textbook examines her active and visible ties to the Socialist Party. Why? Her politics no longer make her a heroic figure. As Loewen wrote, “Socialism is repugnant to most Americans. So are racism and colonialism” (p. 33). Loewen continued, explaining how textbook “authors selectively omit blemishes in order to make certain historical figures sympathetic to as many people as possible” (p. 33). Instead of engaging in a discussion around why Keller was a member of the Socialist party (she objected to how businesses exploited workers to the point that they became sick or disabled), her politics were deleted from the narrative detailing her history. Keller is framed to be “an ideal, not a real person, to inspire our young people to emulate her” (p. 33). Christopher Columbus is treated in the same manner as Wilson and Keller. Columbus is portrayed in history books as an explorer who found the Americas, not as an individual motivated by the “taking of land, wealth, and labor from the indigenous people, leading to their near extermination, and the transatlantic slave trade, which created a racial underclass” (p. 60). Nor are the brutal punishment methods exacted on the Native Americans discussed when they could not provide him with “food, gold, spun cotton . . . [and/or] sex with their women” (p. 61).

Additionally, the Native Americans are portrayed as feeble inhabitants of a lesser culture and not given credit for the civilizations they had cultivated before the arrivals of Europeans (Mann, 2011). Yet, these facts are not taught because teaching them would no longer make Columbus a hero to American school children. Instead, they are taught lies and distorted versions of the truth. As Loewen (1996) argued,

Lying to children is a slippery slope. Once we have started sliding down it, how and when do we stop? Who decides when we lie? Which lies to tell? To what age group? As soon as we loosen the anchor of fact, of historical evidence, our history textbook is free to blow here and there, pointing first in one direction, then in another (p. 297).

As Orelus (2011) wrote, it is only through counternarratives that the voices of non-whites can be studied and examined and “not through truncated version of such narratives as reported in western history textbooks” (p. 52). As Loewen (1996) surmised, textbooks are written for, and written by “descendants of the Europeans” (p. 44). European and white American “heroes” will continue to remain the focus of social studies curricula unless teachers choose to incorporate counternarratives in their day-to-day lesson plans. Said “heroes,” unless a concentrated effort is made to reform curriculum and seek "truth" in teaching, will continue to have their mistakes and atrocities white-washed by those with the power to control what is printed in said texts. As Raphael (2014) summarized, the generation of such a Eurocentric white history curriculum was done “Creatively, if not accurately" in order to fashion" a past we would have liked to have” and not one that actually occurred (p. 3). This fictional account of history is then written down and distributed as the "truth" within authorized textbooks sold by major publishing houses. Within these teaching materials, the white dominant narrative in America is passed on by presenting students with a tailored version of history.

Why are history textbooks so bad? Nationalism is one of the culprits. According to Loewen (1996), textbooks are often "muddled by conflicting desires to promote inquiry and indoctrinate blind patriotism" (p. 14). Additionally, textbook publishers do not tend to discuss matters of power, sex, and social class, as such subjects tend to be viewed unfavorably by textbook consumers and adoption panels, which led Loewen to term the three topics as the "taboos [of] textbook publishing" (p. 33). A study of modern textbooks conducted by Lavariega Monforti and McGlynn (2010) found a disturbing lack of Latin@ voices present in history textbooks; instead, white voices were treated as the speakers of truth. This contemporary study confirms that little has changed since Loewen's work and shows a frightening historical trend in curriculum: that there still is an utter lack of the voice of others, of legitimate counternarratives, in textbooks and history classrooms. The same trend applies to civics/government classes and their curricula. Both Avery and Simmons (2000) and Carroll et al. (1987) found that civic textbooks lack an examination of complex and controversial political notions, thereby pushing a more conservative political viewpoint due to the lack of information regarding controversial topics. Avery (2003), in fact, found that "traditional civics textbooks" omit and gloss over the existence of major advocacy groups and the topics they represent. Such an approach has resulted in a message that enforces a curriculum that "depoliticize[s] human rights and environmental issues" that would tend to facilitate discussions with a more liberal focus (p. 50). It is when textbooks and curricula begin to argue more liberal and critical points of view that outside entities attempt to impact what is taught in schools, oftentimes with great success.

Counternarrative as a Methodology for Truth-telling and *Parrhēsia*

Having reviewed the literature related to counternarratives, explored the issues with curricular control in social studies classrooms as a function of the white dominant narrative, and having reviewed the impact of the rise of neoliberal education reform efforts to continue to dictate the content of what students should be taught about America's past, I now move on to a discussion of how counternarratives as a teaching practice and methodology will align with my future research and inquiry. To begin, I will give specific examples of how counternarratives in social studies classrooms can provide a different lens to history that can allow for students to "critically [examine] one's own historical location amid relations of power, privilege, or subordination" (Giroux, 1996, p. 52). Additionally, I will examine how teaching the use of counternarratives to pre-service teachers can benefit students. Finally, I will provide a brief outline of how the use of counternarratives may appear in my proposed thesis research.

Counternarratives used within the social studies classroom can entirely change how a student views and perceives the world by supplying them with a historical truth that has been subverted or oppressed by the dominant narrative that enforces an Eurocentric view of American history. For example, textbooks in middle and high school classrooms do not examine how non-Europeans provided advanced technology and knowledge of exploration to Europeans before the "discovery" of America by Columbus. Instead, such technology and knowledge of exploration are seen as European inventions. As for the discovery of America by Columbus, there is evidence to suggest that Afro-Phoenicians were the first non-Native Americans to sail to and discover America

(Loewen, 1996, pp. 50-51). However, as this fact does not fit the dominant narrative's view of white European exceptionalism, it is not taught; Columbus, the white European, will always be cited as the "discoverer" of America. As Loewen wrote,

So long as our textbooks hide from us the roles that people of color have played in exploration, from at least 6000 B.C. to the twentieth century, they encourage us to look to Europe and its extensions as the seat of all knowledge and intelligence (p. 72).

Nor do textbooks provide a true account of the genocide of Native Americans as a result of colonization. Textbooks do not contain the brutal stories of how Native Americans were enslaved, decimated by smallpox, or after being forced from their homes, "surrendered to alcohol, converted to Christianity, or simply killed themselves" (p. 81). Nor is slavery and the racism it deeply engrained into past and contemporary society explored in detail, as such a topic is considered to be controversial and no longer relevant to today's student. I vehemently disagree with these curricular decisions, as they only serve to continue to socialize students into the history put forth by the dominant narrative. Instead of censoring these facts and pretending such atrocities never occurred, I believe they must be brought to the forefront and taught to students using the voice of those who were muted via primary and secondary sources. Students should be exposed to the truth of their history and how that frames modern thinking, modern interactions, and modern mental strata.

By exploring the aforementioned topics utilizing a counternarrative approach, matters of race and inequity can be discussed and examined within high school classrooms. Such an action is a tenet of both multicultural education and other social justice approaches that examine the dominant narrative and its effect on society (e.g., Banks, 2009, 2010a; Bennett, 1999; Noel, 2000). Loewen (1996) called for teachers and

students to “understand and to learn, that we might not wreck harm again” (p. 136).

Vecsey (1984) agreed, as he called for classrooms to study the narratives and histories of Native Americans and the brutality with which colonists treated them; he believed that by “envisioning . . . our dark American selves, [such lessons] can instill such a strengthening doubt” that will motivate students to ask questions about why such actions occurred and who benefited from them (p. 126). Slavery should be taught in a similar manner as well, with students needing to “grasp the indignity . . . [of] depriving people of [their] freedom [and] the basic *inhumanness* or *unnaturalness*” of the practice (Loewen, 2010, p. 165). By getting teachers to present the material in such a way, it will allow students to be “able to analyze racism intelligently in the present” (Loewen, 1996, p. 170) for there is no more “pervasive theme in our history [than] the domination of black America by white America” (p. 138). Finally, utilizing counternarratives to explore the humanness of individuals subjective to “Heroification” can allow students to understand that such individuals are not demigods (as history books portray them to be), but real people who have a number of faults and failings the go along with their historical successes. Loewen suggested such an approach, advocating for students to be able to “understand [such historical figures], wrestle with the problems [they] faced, grasp [their] accomplishments, and also acknowledge [their] failures” (p. 149). Avery (2003) stressed that social studies teachers must be taught to learn how to “analyze civic textbooks and materials” for the content and then choose to use them or not (as cited in Adler, 2008, pp. 334-335). In the end, teachers do serve as the curriculum “gatekeepers” in the classroom (Thornton, 1991). Such practices would embody the speaking of truth within *parrhēsia* when integrated into the classroom. Teachers who do so, who teach with a counternarrative

critical of the dominant narrative, do so with risk (which again feeds into *parrhēsic* actions and speech). Goodall Jr. (2010) stated that any counternarrative “about revolutions, about the reconstruction of society, are dangerous, politically dangerous, and because they require writers and speakers, as well as those who would oppose them, to take risks” (p. 36). Such a curriculum and the risk it carries is a focus of this study; however, it is first important to understand what is defined as controversial and taboo topics in the social studies.

Controversial Topics in the Social Studies

The notion of controversial topics in the social studies, the topics examined and discussed by my participants with their students, has with it a vast body of academic literature that works to define what exactly constitutes a controversial issue. Additionally, the same body of research works to differentiate between what is considered to be controversial in a classroom lesson and what is considered to be taboo (and the spaces in between these two categories). As such, it is important to come to an understanding as to the various categories of issues and how these categories interplay in the social studies classroom.

The definition of what constitutes controversial or taboo issues varies from scholar to scholar and from teacher to teacher. Washington and Humphries (2011) when citing Hess (2002), stressed that “teachers seem to hold a wide range of views on exactly what ‘controversial’ means, or whether they should disclose their personal views on these issues, and on whether they should shy away from what they view as ‘hot button’ issues” (p. 93). However, when attempting to define what is a controversial topic, a majority of scholars in this field look to the work of Hess when they work to define what is a

controversial issue. Hess (2002) defined a “controversial public issue (CPI)” as “unresolved questions of public policy that spark significant disagreement” (p. 11). Furthermore, when applying the teaching of controversial issues to social studies classrooms and the teaching within them, Hess (2008) elaborated further that “the teaching of ‘controversial public issues’ . . . describe[s] a social studies lesson, unit, course, or curriculum that engages students in learning about issues, analyzing them, deliberating alternative solutions, and often taking and supporting a position on which solutions may be based” (p. 124). Camica (2008) went a step further, dividing controversial issues into either “open” or “closed” issues of controversy; specifically, the author stated that when “society reaches a tipping point with an issue, a controversial or non-controversial issue in the curriculum often follows suit. The curriculum reflects these tipping points by the degree to which students are encouraged to express varying perspectives” and are defined as “open” or “closed” if they are encouraged to be argued with multiple viewpoints (as cited in Washington & Humphries, 2011, p. 94). However, there has been a historically evolving distinction between what is considered to be a controversial issue and what is a taboo issue in the classroom.

Hess (2008) explored the evolving notion of controversial versus the taboo in American mainstream society evolving from the 1950s and the work of scholars of the time. Hess wrote that:

Just as different labels have been used to describe this type of social studies, different definitions of what constitutes an ‘issue’ have been advanced. For example, in an approach advanced in the early 1950s, Hunt and Metcalf (1955) advocate the inclusion of issues related to ‘taboo’ topics (such as sexuality and racism) in the curriculum, while Oliver and Shaver’s approach (1966) focuses on policy issues that include the weight and balancing of competing ‘democratic’ values (such as liberty and equality). Some issues are defined as inherently public, while others, such

as the moral dilemmas in Kohlberg's approach (1981), are personal decisions for an individual to consider. In addition, other dimensions of how 'issues' are conceptualized and defined include time (an issue of the past, the present, or possibly the future), place (local, state, national, global), and scope (ranging from broad perennial issues to more narrowly focused 'case' issues) (p. 124).

The definitions of "controversial" and "taboo" still have a varied meaning depending on the scholar being read. For example, Evans, Avery, and Pederson (1999) stressed that the terms *controversial* and *taboo* are similar in meaning, "although taboo is the stronger designation. A topic may generate controversy without being taboo" (p. 219). In defining each, the authors first stated that controversial issues, when examined "from an anthropological perspective . . . [as] topics [that] receive little attention in schools because in the culture of schooling, and the culture of society, many controversial topics and issues are taboo" (p. 218). However, when defining a taboo topic, the same authors stated that taboo topics are "constrained actions by making certain behaviors and discussion of certain topics forbidden or discouraged. Thus, taboo topics are those that social studies topic teachers may choose to avoid or de-emphasize because of their perceptions regarding the sensitivity of the topic" (p. 218). Taboo topics further "exert control on our everyday lives, as well as our schools and determine the boundaries for what is acceptable and unacceptable" (p. 219). When applied to the classroom, the authors note that "taboo topics tend to be personal matters, topics considered obscene dangers, are inappropriate for classroom discussion. These include . . . abortion, pornography, open discussion of personal/family problems, obscene language, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and criticism of school administration" (p. 220). These topics, deemed to be taboo, "tend to provoke strong emotional reactions . . . [due to being] 'hot' social issues" (p. 220). This definition of what is a controversial issue and what is a

taboo issue differs slightly when examining the work of Engbretson and Weiss.

Engbretson and Weiss (2015), when defining the difference between controversial and taboo topics, first defined the former as issues that:

encompass ‘risky’ topics in schools due to their potential to draw negative attention from parents or administrators. Taboo issues, however, are different from controversial issues on at least two levels. The first is that controversial issues are inherently controversial because there is no one right answer for them and deliberation is key to their resolution (Hess, 2002). By contrast, taboo topics are generally closed to deliberation, likely to have a moral solution, and are often sensitive topics that are forbidden or discouraged (Evans, Avery, & Pederson, 1999) . . . [as well as the fact] that controversial issues are more likely to be located within the public sphere and taboo issues are more likely to be located within the personal (pp. 61-62).

While what is considered to be controversial seems to differ from the thoughts of Hess and Evans, Avery, and Pederson, the notion of taboo topics being inherently personal does link all of the works. It is within these slightly differing definitions that teachers may not correctly define what they are teaching as either controversial or taboo, despite the societal structures that define each (Evans, Avery, & Pederson, 1999). Regardless of this lack of overt knowledge of which is which, there are several beneficial reasons as to why social studies teachers choose to discuss controversial and taboo topics in their classrooms, despite the various structural issues that prevent their widespread use.

Definition of Controversial Issues in Regards to this Study. Interestingly, what has been defined above within the field of controversial issues in the field of social studies education differs from the definition of what constituted a controversial issue by the teachers in this study. The literature discusses that controversial issues are public in nature over notions of policy and how it should be resolved (Hess, 2002); such issues range from a discussion of uniforms in schools to supporting same-sex marriage.

However, participants in my study would instead argue that certain topics, even those not considered to be controversial, were controversial. In essence, the participants in this study tended to bleed together the notion of controversial issues and taboo issues in regards to how they perceived the students in their classrooms, school administrators, and parents would react to and engage with the topics being presented in class, in addition to how they wanted students to examine an issue from a non-whitestream frame. Hence, for this study, the term “controversial issue” and its derivatives throughout is defined as the topics and ideologies taught by the teachers in my study that tended to bring about a critical interrogation by individuals outside of the classroom, hence cementing the notion that an issue was controversial in their minds. While some topics my teachers discussed were inherently controversial (e.g., the activism of the Black Lives Matter movement, immigration policies, etc.), others had a contextual definition that made them controversial to the teachers in the study.

One common topic that was considered to be controversial in their classrooms, but not controversial by Hess and other scholars, would be the examination and elimination of genocide. While the Holocaust is such an example, the teachers in my study looked at instances of genocide toward non-white populations; one teacher did a yearly unit on Native American tribes with genocide as a centerpiece of the study, another does a yearly unit on the Rwandan genocide. A third teacher, while teaching a unit on world religions, had a classroom where discussion of Islam became a controversial issue over the issues of the actions of several white students and their concerned parents. While genocide itself is not controversial, nor is an examination of the religions of the major religions of the world, these teachers had issues with parents,

community members, or students that were critical of what was being taught and why. Hence, these topics became cemented in their mind as controversial and came up again and again in discussion when talking about their curricula and teaching practices.

Additionally, the teachers in my study defined controversial issues when examining historical events from a non-white perspective. For example, one teacher, when examining the practice of colonialism, would do so from the viewpoint of the colonized. By doing so, by framing the practice of colonization with the atrocities committed by white Europeans in the forefront of the practice, the topics became controversial in her mind. The same characterization of a “non-controversial controversial topic” occurred as well when a teacher in a district with extremely structured curriculum mapping would go “off book” and teach a topic that was tangentially associated with what other classes were being taught that day based on the curriculum map, leaving her class to be the only one to examine issues like the Tulsa Race Riots or sexist and racist practices of white Italian and Irish immigrants in American when they were considered to be socially black. These topics, fostered alongside critical conversations, would allow for teachers to unpack and discuss these issues from a controversial stand-point that the textbooks and other teachers would never touch.

Structural Barriers and Benefits of Discussing Controversial/Taboo Topics. As mentioned previously, there are a number of structural elements, including public sentiment, that prevent teachers from teaching controversial and taboo topics in their classrooms. According to Ho, Alviar-Martin, and Leviste’s (2014) review of existing literature, a number of academic studies have “shown that personal beliefs, community values, and norms influence teachers’ decisions to avoid controversial topics related to

sexuality and religion in the United States” (p. 2). Schultz, Buck, and Niesz (2000) found that discussions concerning “race in mixed race settings are ‘difficult and all too rare’ because teachers find this topic to be disconcerting and uncomfortable” (p. 34 as cited in Ho, Alviar-Martin, and Leviste, 2014, p. 4). Furthermore, Hess (2008), noted that existing research found it to be “highly unusual to find schools or school districts that have infused controversial issues in the curriculum in a systematic way that ensure that students will have multiple opportunities throughout a number of school years to engage in issues-centered social studies” (p. 124 as cited in Washington & Humphries, 2011, p. 93). This is especially lacking in the classrooms of inexperienced teachers, Hess (2008) observed that a great number of inexperienced teachers “will not select issues that may be upsetting to the community or to students are simply deemed ‘too hot to handle’” (p. 129) or in schools where there was a great deal of administrative pressures preventing the discussion of controversial topics (Bickmore & Parker, 2014). Additionally, at times when many teachers claimed that controversial issues were being discussed in their classes, said topics were, in actuality, not being discussed (e.g., Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Evans, Averty, & Pederson, 1999; Niemi & Niemi, 2007). In short, there are a number of structural barriers, both within and outside of schools, that attempt to prevent controversial and taboo topics from being discussed in schools. When this is not being discussed, when these items are not taught, they become part of the “null curriculum, or what is not taught in schools,” that only further enforces the dominant narrative played out in the war of cultural politics (Eisner, 2002, as cited in Engbretson & Weiss, 2015, p. 62). There are, however, a number of positive benefits that such discussions can provide both teachers and students.

Having students discuss controversial and taboo issues in the classroom provides many positive benefits for teacher and students alike, especially when studies have shown that students are “willing and interested in talking about politics” and “are developmentally poised to handle debate and controversy” (Niemi & Niemi, 2007, pp. 54-57). Hess (2002) did caution however, that “Teachers’ personal views on [controversial] topics do play a substantial, visible role in classroom discussion itself” thereby only re-enforcing the notion that “teachers’ views strongly influence the definition and choice of [controversial issues] for discussion” (p. 32). Evans, Avery, and Pederson (1999) first stressed that such discussions that result in a “Loosening or breaking [of] taboos has the potential for freeing the human mind and helping to make social studies education a more exciting and interesting field of study” (p. 210). This only supports the findings of Niemi and Niemi (2007) who found that when students do not “engage in discussion of controversial issues . . . [it communicates that] civics is boring . . . [and discussions, arguments, and opinions] are not welcome and not even necessary or central to civic participation” (pp. 56-57).

Besides making social studies more interesting and investigative to a point of creating a critical consciousness for students, discussing controversial topics in classrooms, for many teachers, helps prepare their students for living in a democratic society (e.g., Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Hess 2002, 2008; Washington & Humphries, 2011). Bickmore and Parker (2014) stressed that many “Democratic citizenship education scholars frequently advocate dialogue and deliberation pedagogies that address diverse perspectives on conflictual questions” (pp. 291-292) while Washington and Humphries (2011) re-iterate this statement, finding that a number of studies only show that the “main

reason teachers incorporate controversial issues is their belief that students need to grapple with such issues in order to become effective participants in a democratic society” (p. 93). Additionally, discussing controversial topics allows for students to understand the “connection between learning how to discuss divisive public topics and preparing for democratic citizenship . . .[and] enhance their ability to build a more democratic society” (Hess, 2002, pp. 11-12). This allows for the students to “develop an understanding and commitment to democratic values, increas[ing] their willingness to engage in political life” (p. 13). Hess (2008) went even further, stating that discussing controversial issues allows for students to not only learn how to “deliberate controversial issues, especially those that focus on public problems, [but also learn to participate] effectively in a democratic society” (p. 124). Bickmore and Parker (2014) did caution, however, that the “discussion of social conflicts may not necessarily develop into sustained democratic dialogue nor interrupt prevailing patterns of disengagement and inequity” in the classroom (p. 291).

Aside from preparation for living in a democratic society, there are several other documented reasons as to why these types of discussions should be done in classrooms. Evans, Avery, and Pederson (1999) found that many teachers who believed in “the highest levels of . . . student expression” would result in the development of “more class time to the discussion of issues” (pp. 219-220). A number of scholars (Gall & Gall, 1990; Hahn, 1996, 1998; Harris, 1996; Wilen & White, 1991) also found that discussing controversial issues “positively influence content understanding, critical thinking ability, and interpersonal skills” (as cited in Hess, 2002, p. 13). By developing their critical thinking skills and interpersonal skills by having controversial classroom discussions,

students are more able to “develop support, and justify arguments and conclusions” (Common, 1985, as cited in Hess, 2002, p. 13). Bickmore and Parker (2014) also found that when “teachers assigned students to voice the perspective of another, [this activity] seemed to provide a safe way for diverse students to practice entering into conflicts, allowing them to apply concepts, processes, and skills without exposing their own real social vulnerabilities” (p. 323).

Teaching Empathy in the Classroom

A final important body of literature to examine for the framing of my study involves the fostering and teaching of empathy in classrooms. To preface this section, the majority of the literature found involved teaching pre-service and in-service teachers the importance of fostering empathy within their individual classrooms. Specific literature involving teaching students empathy, particularly teaching white students empathy, was lacking. However, the existing literature allows for a general understanding of the importance of, the impact of, and how pre-service teacher education programs can be improved by teaching empathy. This body of literature, in addition to what the body of literature seemingly lacks, will be discussed. To begin, however, it is important to define what actually constitutes “empathy,” as there is no tangible, universal definition according to the literature.

When attempting to define what is considered to be empathy, including the notion of historical empathy, there is a lack of a consensus definition. Bohart et. al (2002) explicitly stated that “One is hard-pressed to find a conclusive, all-encompassing definition of empathy in the literature” despite it having “been studied from multiple perspectives in fields that range from psychology and psychotherapy to evolutionary

biology and social neuroscience” (as cited in Warren, 2013a, p. 176). Ylimaz (2007) concurred, stating that “scholars have not yet come to terms with each other about the definition of the term” (p. 335 as cited in Brooks, 2009, p. 214). Brooks (2009) related that “Empathy, perhaps more than any other aspect of historical understanding, is a particularly difficult achievement, because in some ways it runs counter to intuitive ways of thinking” (p. 220). Because of this general ambiguity, there are a number of scholars have offered differing, but similar, definitions for what constitutes empathy and historical empathy. For instance, Foster and Yeager (1998) stated that historical empathy is the “ability to infer from given knowledge an explanation of certain actions . . . [allowing for students to] seek to bridge the gap between what is known and what may be inferred from history” (pp. 2-3 as cited in Brooks, 2009, pp. 214-215). Foster (2011) went a step further, stressing that historical empathy allows “students to examine, appreciate, and understand the perspectives of people in the past and to render them intelligible to contemporary minds” (p. 175, as cited in Gehlbach, 2004, p. 41). Johnson (1975), defining empathy, stated that it is a practice of “Taking the perspective of another person . . . the ability to understand how a situation appears to another person and how the person is reacting cognitively and emotionally to the situation” (p. 241 as cited in Gehlbach, 2004, p. 41). Barker (2008), when examining empathy from a social work standpoint, mentioned that it is “the act of perceiving, understanding, and responding to the emotional state and ideas of another person” (p. 141 as cited in Gerdes, Segal, Jackson, & Mullans, p. 110). It is within a space where all of these definitions exist which constitutes what empathy is: the ability to have students relate to other individuals, both historically and in daily life, to understand their realities and actions. However, there is a body of

literature that discusses the dangers of “false empathy” and the dangers of what happens when many ignorant teachers practice it.

“False empathy” is the antithesis to actually teaching students empathy, particularly when teachers do not understand what empathy actually is and further advance the white dominant narrative in society. “False empathy” as defined by Warren and Hotchkins (2015), is known as a person’s “tendency to think, believe, and act as if he or she possesses more empathy than what can be personally confirmed or validated by (a) the beneficiaries of the empathetic response, or (b) positive outcomes resulting from the individual’s application of empathy in social relationships” (p. 267). “False empathy,” as a practice, emerges from “the failure to strategically consider the wants, needs, and desires of individuals most vulnerable in any given interaction, which may point to the imposition of a larger *dominant agenda*” reflected in the white dominant society (p. 271). Due to this practice that harms students, particularly students of color when a teacher does not teach students empathy, instead advancing negative thoughts and stereotypes advanced by the white dominant narrative, O’Brien (2003) fervently advocated for whites to develop a true empathetic stance for those who do not share their reality, allowing whites to “step across that perception gap, grasping the extent to which racism still exists, and validating the experiences of people of color . . . establishing *empathy* rather than false empathy” (p. 245 as cited in Warren, 2005, p. 573). While false empathy does exist, there are a number of positives associated with having teachers and students learn and practice empathy.

Teaching students and teachers how to foster an empathetic position has been found to have a number of positive effects in the classrooms. As Dolby (2014) stated,

“empathy can produce long-lasting change in both those who give and those who receive” (p. 40), especially when it is important to understand that the “capacity to empathize adeptly develops over time and is affected by numerous social variables” (Warren, 2013a, p. 178). Brooks (2009) stated that fostering historical empathy “might cultivate a posture of openness to the ideas, beliefs, and practices of others” (pp. 213-214). Barton and Levstik (2004) continued, mentioning that authentic historical empathy “invites us to care with and about people in the past, to be concerned with what happened to them and how they experienced their lives” (p. 208). Gehlbach (2004) expressed how important this is to foster in students, as “understanding conflicts in history and resolving interpersonal conflicts are increasingly important abilities for students to acquire their schooling” (p. 41). Gerdes, Segal, Jackson, and Mullins (2011) expanded upon previous findings, noting that not only is empathy “a critical component of developing a deep understanding of people’s life experiences and a necessary ingredient in becoming a civically engaged person,” but the authors reviewed the large body of literature that has shown the importance of empathy in the moral development of students and relationships between students and parents (p. 123). Kaya (2016) elaborated further, stating that empathy allows for students to “understand their intentions, predict their actions and experience emotions triggered by their emotional experiences. Empathetic skills facilitate effective communications in the social world” (p. 230) while also having students “establish a positive relationship with teachers so that they can understand problems and find solutions together” (p. 232). In regards to this link with the social world, Boler (1999) went one step further, stressing how empathy, as a production of “networks of power relations,” allows for empathetic individuals to be able to “sit with ambiguity . .

.being able to see that although we may have things in common with others, our feelings must not be carelessly mapped over theirs” (as cited in Ultman & Hesch, 2011, p. 624). When either teachers or students do not have a sympathetic approach to either history or their daily lives, a number of issues can (and have) occur. Dolby (2014), for example, stressed that people who are “more distant from the day-to-day struggles [of persons that have different lived realities of their own] have less empathy” than others (p. 41). For, as Gerdes, Segal, Jackson, and Mullins (2011) stated, a “Lack of empathy underlies the worst things human beings can do to one another; high empathy underlines the best” (p. 109). Hence, there is an overwhelming need for students and teachers to learn how to develop an empathetic viewpoint in the classroom and in their daily lives. However, students are not the only individual to receive the benefits of understanding and practicing empathy.

Teachers that have an empathetic viewpoint have a number of positive attributes for their students and their classrooms just from having such a viewpoint, especially when, as McAllister and Irvine (2002) stated, empathy is “seen as a desirable trait for teachers in diverse settings (p. 433 as cited in Ultman and Hesch, 2011, p. 607). Warren (2013a) went one step further, stressing how “Empathetic teaching is central to culturally responsive interactions, and by extension, essential for cultivating culturally responsive professional teaching practices” (p. 176). Warren (2015) specifically pointed out that teachers would be incredibly important topics to understand the importance of empathy as a tool to understand ambiguity, especially when dismantling the white dominant social norms; she noted that empathetic teachers, “especially White teachers; raise academic expectations; build substantive relationships with students; sustain productive partnerships with parents; and demonstrate culturally congruent forms of care” (p. 575).

Warren (2013a) also pointed out that empathetic teachers have “instructional flexibility and risk-taking” and help to establish “trusting student-teacher relationships [and] . . . teacher’s abilit[ies] to intervene proactively to ensure students meet high academic expectations” (p. 175). To foster empathy in their students, Warren (2013b) suggested that teachers engage their students in a number of different exercises, including having students engage in written and oral communication, having teachers and students understand the context of the community in which their school is located, having time in class where students can express their thoughts and emotions in front of their peers, having teachers be open and available to their students, fostering a closeness between teachers and students in the classroom, and getting to know their students personally. Darling-Hammond (2000) went a step further, stressing that it is necessary for teachers “to reach out to students, those who are difficult to know as well as those who are easy to know” as the first step to establishing the trusting classroom community that assists in creating an empathetic viewpoint, something that is also echoed in Warren’s (2013a) work (p. 170). Cunningham (2007) found that a number of environmental factors impact how teachers attempt to foster empathy in their classrooms, including their individual convictions, own knowledge of empathy, and their “emotional or physical state on a given day” (p. 229). While all of these tasks are essential, the literature shows that pre-service teacher programs have been problematic in instituting practices that foster and teach empathy.

Pre-service teacher education programs have had issues with helping pre-service teacher educators learn how to teach their students how to become more empathetic or how to help the pre-service teacher educators themselves become more empathetic,

especially since there has been a “40% decline in college students’ capacity for empathy of the past 4 decades” (Korath, O’Brien, & Hsing, 2011, as cited in Dolby, 2014, p. 39). This is an odd conception, as Pennington, Brock, and Ndura (2012) stressed that “Teacher conceptions of empathy as professional teaching disposition and its connection to producing student outcomes must be discussed explicitly beginning in teacher preparation programs” (Warren, 2015, p. 595). This is odd, seemingly, because one of the biggest issues to arise from the literature is that many pre-service teachers do not actually practice empathy and are unprepared to teach empathy when they become professionals (e.g., Ultman & Hesch, 2011; Warren, 2015; Warren and Hotchkins, 2015). Warren (2015), when addressing the deficit of pre-service teachers having an empathetic lens, offered the following explanation:

The *whiteness of good intentions* replaces humility with prerogative, as these young White teachers set out to teach without ever being truly primed or prepared for the experiences they will encounter. This scenario does little for producing better student outcomes, yet alternative certification programs such as Teach for America are built on this very premise (p. 595).

This point is only exacerbated by Ultman and Hesch (2011), researchers who found in their study that “many teacher candidates . . . foster pity rather than empathy. Pity establishes a power differential between the powerful one offering the pity and the less powerful other receiving it” (p. 616). As such, this creates an inescapable power dynamic that feeds into the notion of “white saviorism” that some pre-service teacher candidates have when wanting to teach students of color. In such an instance, Marx and Pray (2011) found that their pre-service teachers not only demonstrated “evidence of false empathy,” but also had racist misconceptions of Mexican students based on their assumptions and stereotypes of these students (as cited in Warren, 2015, p. 578). This, according to

Warren (2013b), showed that “the field has few models useful for training and preparing teachers to cultivate empathy as a professional disposition” (p. 395). While this statement may be true, there are a few suggestions for how this can be done.

In order to find ways of teaching pre-service teachers empathy, there must be some changes to how pre-service teacher education courses are taught, especially when Gordon (1999) stressed that empathy is “1 of 11 disposition the most talented teachers of urban students must acquire and utilize in their practice” (as cited in Warren, 2015, p. 575). Cochran-Smith (2000) called for pre-service teacher education courses to bring in “narrative about race and racism into the teacher education classroom, along with more intellectual arguments about social inequality” that also shows that “all of us have experienced hurt and frustration varying in degree but not in kind, that all of us underneath have the same issue, that all of us can understand racism as personal struggle, as individual instance of cruelty, discrete moment of shame, outrage, or fear” (p. 174 as cited in Ultman & Hesch, 2011, p. 608). These issues must be discussed and dissected, particularly for white teachers, in spaces within the teacher education program that will allow for them to “develop the skill of empathizing with others who may be very different from them; learning how to engage in perspective taking in cultural communities that are not their own” (Warren & Hotchkins, 2015, p. 274). The researchers continued, cautioning that any “teacher education program that caters to White cultural norms as the standard for what’s ‘right,’ whether through curriculum or instruction, undermines any attempts to make teacher candidates authentically aware of racial difference as an asset to their practice, and as a result leaves room for false empathy to develop unchallenged” (p. 274).

Finally, the literature has identified a number of gaps that need to be filled by future research. Brooks (2009) found that a current “limitation of much of the research on empathy instruction is the studies typically focus only on isolated intervention or unit instruction” (p. 226). Cunningham (2007) additionally found that the majority of studies have “focused on its philosophical meanings and students’ thought processes, while exploration of teachers’ knowledge and pedagogical reasoning about how to cultivate it has languished” (p. 600 as cited in Brooks, 2009, p. 229). This was supported by Gerdes, Segal, Jackson, and Mullins (2011) as the researchers found that there is a lack of a “driving strategy or conceptualizing that we can apply reliably and utilize effectively in education and practice” (p. 112). Finally, Warren (2013b) found that “there is little empirical evidence in the education literature for how empathy is developed and applied to improve the quality of teachers’ efforts to improve student outcomes” (p. 398). Above all, however, there was very little literature on how to teach students empathy. Instead, the majority of the literature focuses on pre-service teachers. This is an area that needs to be examined in the future.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

My dissertation research examined social studies teachers in both urban and suburban schools that elected to teach curricula that examined controversial classroom topics while employing non-white, non-Eurocentric voices as teaching tools in their classrooms. Urban classrooms, where what is taught is deeply political and always in “contention,” allow for “rich discoveries . . . [found by examining how] policy is imagined in everyday life, and how narratives are constructed in order to mobilize other social actors to coalesce around certain strategies or tactics” (Dumas, 2009, p. 99). This research went about conducting an examination of how these narratives, particularly those narratives that are privileged in the curriculum as what is deemed to be the “truth,” were questioned and challenged by the five social studies teachers who served as the study’s participants. Equally important, this study allowed for an examination of why these social studies teachers continued to use counternarratives in the classroom, despite the professional risk that accompanies such a political act.

My study utilized a general qualitative research approach, utilizing four major data points: teacher interviews, observations of classroom teaching, analysis of student artifacts, and a focus group that was, unfortunately, only attended by one white female teacher, which was problematic and should be considered to be problematic throughout the rest of this methodology section.

According to Stake (1978), the general qualitative approach allowed for my research to add “to existing experience and humanistic understanding” of the use of counternarrative in social studies classrooms and pre-service teacher education courses

(p. 7). Additionally, as Cannella and Lincoln (2009) wrote, the use of “Critical perspectives also inquire deeply in the usages of language and the circulation of discourses that are used to shape all of social life” (p. 55). Specifically, in addition to the aforementioned overall guiding questions, my research examined why these five teachers chose to implement a critical curriculum in their classrooms despite the social and professional risk that it carries, as such curricula are rarely presented in public schools (Ganim, 2015; Ravitch, 2010). The focus of this qualitative inquiry centered on the experiences of these teachers within their respective pre-service teacher education programs in an attempt to learn if a certain element of said programs influenced the teachers to utilize such a curriculum. Additionally, this research questioned their curricular decisions: if they were not influenced by their teacher education programs, what is the influencing factor(s) that motivated them to teach such materials to their students?

Epistemological Framework

Epistemologically, this research was approached from a position and understanding of reality from a postcolonial framework. Said’s (1995) work on the advent of “Orientalism” spoke to the establishment of a postcolonial lens; the creation of the term “Orientalism” referenced the Western European creation of a white/non-white racial binary that would influence the creation of systems of power in new nations, with whites controlling all non-whites under such a system (pp.1-9). Here, it is important to stress that language (and the teaching and dissemination of it) in a postcolonial frame is essential to understanding. As Urrieta Jr. (2014) stated, many postcolonial academics are “involved in analyzing literature, especially the language used in texts (mostly in

English) to construct the ‘Otherness’ of non-Western peoples . . . [while attempting] to reclaim the voice of once colonized people by decentering the locus of power and speaking from ‘the margins’” (p. 112). Quayson (2000) took the establishment of what constitutes postcoloniality a step further, generally stating that it is the examination and interaction with colonialism throughout its presence in a nation, both in the past, present, and future. It is at this junction of power and colonialism where Bourdieu (1997) stressed that a “‘postcolonial practice’ is characterized by people in opposition to the larger ‘fields of power’ . . . in which they interact” (as cited in Urietta, Jr., 2014, p.122). Additionally, Bourdieu (1997) stated that it is the job of academics who take up such a frame to use postcolonialism to “challenge [the] oppressive colonialist structures that still persist” (as cited in Urrieta Jr., 2014, p. 112).

When applying a postcolonial eye to the United States, under the colonial philosophy of Manifest Destiny, Americans justified the invasion of Mexico and the colonization of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and captured Mexican lands. The individuals living within these territories were then strategically assimilated (or Americanized) into mainstream white Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture. This assimilation allowed for the further establishment of the accepted "white" culture in the newly colonized territories, an action that Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) noted as a "way to benefit the dominated by promoting the culture, language, institutions, and traditions of the colonize as 'superior' . . . [by a process of] glorification, stigmatization, and rationalization" (as cited in Urrieta Jr., 2014, p. 115). It is here where the notion of counternarratives can disrupt the message of the dominant narrative. As Fanon (2008) examined French colonialism’s impact on his homeland and dissect its tenets using his personal story (itself a counternarrative to the

dominant white European discourse the French brought to Martinique), so too can individuals of color in modern day lend their stories to the task of combating dominant power structures that still uplift whites in modern America.

Theoretical Framework

My theoretical framework encompassed the use of counternarratives as tools to speak out against the white dominant narrative in American schools and society. Counternarratives, according to Lapayese (2014), are defined as “narratives that challenge the dominant version of reality and lead to the development and acceptance of epistemologies that recognize that People of Color make sense of the world in ways that differ from the dominant view” (p. 234). These counternarratives, as defined by Peters and Lankshear (1996), provide a tangible resistance to the white hegemonic version of society and history that examines alternative world views while also dispelling stereotypical thinking that whites have against individuals of color by telling the “little stories of those individuals and groups whose knowledges and histories have been marginalized, excluded, subjugated or forgotten in the telling of official narratives” (p. 2). As Collins (2009) wrote, a lack of exposure to counternarratives by whites has historically lead to the formation of stereotypes of individuals of color by whites that emphasize negative characteristics of individuals of color that become accepted as truth by the dominant narrative; stereotypical thinking by whites/the majority has emerged over time due to the “Intersection[s of] oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexuality . . . [due to] powerful ideological justifications for their existence” (p. 76). To dismantle such stereotypical thinking embedded within master narratives, counternarratives rely on the stories and histories of non-whites, professional historians, academics, and others who

have spent time investigating and researching subaltern voices to show how the aforementioned stereotypes and taught histories are not factual (e.g., Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Orelus, 2011). Regardless of what is factual and what is fallacy, such hegemonic thinking and stereotypical frames of reference are taught to students as they are socialized in school and society (Davis, 2012; Loewen, 1996, 2010; Orelus, 2011; Raphael, 2014; Zinn, 2003).

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) stressed that counternarratives come in the form of personal stories, other people's stories, and composite stories. Personal stories are self-exclamatory; much like the work of Delpit (1995), Lorde (2007), and Noguera (2003), personal stories "recount an individual's experiences with various forms of racism and sexism" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). Other people's stories are slightly different; other people's stories encompass the same aspects of personal stories but from a third person perspective (p. 33). Finally, composite stories, while not actual experiences of real people, utilize "forms of 'data' to recount the racialized, sexualized, and classed experiences of people of color" (p. 33). In essence, avatars are constructed that tell tales of people that do not actually exist. One such example, a study by Harper and Davis (2012), utilized counternarratives of black male students to show how black males do value education (as many social stereotypes stress that they do not). In their mixed methods study using survey data and document analysis, the findings of the study both challenged the dominant discourse and provided data that proved the stereotype was incorrect using the counterstories of their research participants (p. 111). Without such studies, the "black males do not value education" stereotype will be allowed to persist.

Counternarratives provide an avenue that allows for researchers to expose “deficit-informed research that silences and distorts epistemologies of people of color” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 23). Social actors who have power and access to the dominant narrative will attempt to manipulate the message in order to benefit their needs while attempting to “speak on [the] behalf of the ‘other,’ thereby misrepresenting them” (Orelus, 2011, p. 37). Throughout my study, I sought to make sure that I was allowing the voice of my participants to speak authentically, an ethical obligation that Foucault (2005, 2011a, 2011b) categorizes as *parrhēsia* and has been discussed at length in previous chapters. As such, and as part of the qualitative inquiry, a great deal of data are the words of my participants, offered without the interjection of my personal beliefs.

Counternarratives provide an avenue that allows for researchers to expose “deficit-informed research that silences and distorts epistemologies of people of color” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 23). Hence, the counternarrative is important as a liberatory tool. Counternarratives exist to give voice in spaces that traditionally have been muted by the dominant narrative (Yosso, 2006) and, at the same time, are used “to challenge, display or mock [master] narratives and beliefs” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 49). This ability to mock and poke holes in the dominant narrative allow counternarratives the ability to serve as tools of critique in both society and in the classroom, as educators adapted Critical Legal Theory and Critical Race Theory for use in the classroom and the academy.

Counternarratives serve as an excellent tool to critique structures of power (particularly hegemonic structures that impact whites and non-whites differently) in society, utilizing the life experiences and stories of individuals not served by the

dominant narrative (Calmore, 1992; hooks & West, 1991; Lapayese, 2014; Lynn, Yosso, Solórzano, & Parker, 2002; Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Counternarrative's critique of society comes from the amalgamation of voices and experiences of those that run counter to its majority culture and history, allowing for, as hooks and West (1991) summarized in a Foucauldian frame, "an intense and incessant interrogation of power-laden discourses" (p. 143). This unique space for social criticism (which is a reflection of *parrhēsia*'s obligation for truth-telling and criticism) gives traditionally silent voices a great deal of power. As Delgado and Stefancic (2012) stated, many "critical storytellers believe that stories also have a valid destructive function" that allows for counternarratives to "[attack] embedded preconceptions that marginalize others or conceal their humanity" (p. 48). The same critical story tellers can also expand that critique to the whole of society itself, examining the "social world [and its constructs]" that empower the dominant narrative (p. 48). When many individual stories begin to tell the same tale, the weight of the words point to issues that are the result of an inequitable society. According to Bell (2010), to change inequitable societal practices, groups of people must connect their "individual stories into a collective story [that discern patterns of racism]" (p. 51). This collective tale is then able to show how "dominance and subordination are engendered, even against [the public's] desires. We witness how our stories are interconnected [and] how advantage and disadvantage are constructed" (p. 51). This collective narrative, then, "can give [victims of racial discrimination that suffer in silence] voice and reveal that others have similar experiences. Stories can name a type of discrimination; once named, it can be combated" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 49). A number of authors suggested that the best way to

go about fighting discrimination and the dominant narrative is to do so in schools by engaging students with unique curricula that is multicultural and personable. As this study examined, teachers not only integrated counternarrative into their curricula, but also discussions of relevant controversial issues. Such a curriculum can provide students with multiple perspectives to learn from when in the classroom and not just one overwhelmingly white narrative.

Type of Qualitative Research

My research followed a general qualitative research approach. My research methods (discussed below) could be applied to any number of specific qualitative research approaches, hence the general qualitative claim and execution thereafter. However, as my research did not fully fit to any one method, general qualitative research was the most suitable term. Utilizing research techniques and views informed from the existing base of academic literature (Galvan, 2006; Merriam, 2009), my general qualitative approach added to the field while conducting research in an ethical fashion. General qualitative research allowed for me to create an ethical “space” where I could engage in research that “advance[d] the tenets of” general qualitative research (van den Hoonaard & van den Hoonaard, 2013, p. 116). Patton (2002) suggested general qualitative research’s “primary purpose is to generate or test theory and contribute to knowledge for the sake of knowledge” (p. 10). When done with a critical lens, general qualitative research can help address issues of social inequities and other issues regarding power and race (Pasque et. al, 2012). Thus, my general qualitative research approach “tend[ed] to be an effort to generate descriptions and situational interpretations of phenomena that the research can offer colleagues, students, and others for modifying

their own understandings of phenomena” (Stake & Trumbull, 1982, as cited in Stake, 2010, p. 57). My study consisted of an analysis of multiple artifacts and several research tools (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that included classroom observations, interviews with observed teachers, a “focus group” interview, and document or artifact analysis of student work that reflected the taught curricula

Research Participants

Participants in my study were selected due to their experience teaching within social studies classrooms and because they were known to teach a curriculum rife with counternarrative and controversial issues. Originally, I had planned to draw all of my participants from urban schools. Instead, three of the five participants taught in urban classrooms while two taught in suburban classrooms of a large, Midwestern capital city. Initially, I had intended to recruit an equal number of male and female teachers and an equal number of white teacher and teachers of color. However, due to a combination of “snowball sampling” and the unique population I investigated, this equitable distribution of participants was not achieved. Instead, the research population consisted of three white female teachers, one white male teacher, and one black female teacher.

As mentioned previously, when recruiting participants for my study, I utilized a similar “snowball sampling” method Ladson-Billings (2009) employed in her research regarding progressive teachers of black students. I sent several inquiries to education faculty professors, PhD students, current and former teachers, and school administrators, asking these individuals to identify exceptional social studies teachers in their buildings who had a reputation for teaching a critical social studies curriculum that included the use of counternarrative and non-white perspectives in their teachings. Once they were

identified, I sent my teachers an email inquiring about their interest in the study. Once a teacher expressed interest, I conduct a pre-interview, either by email or in person, to determine their fitness for my study (thus employing a “snowball” sampling strategy) (Mertens, 2010). During the interview, I drew from questions framed by Pohan and Aguilar (2001) that worked to “assess educators’ personal and professional beliefs about diversity” (p. 159). Additionally, I attempted to perform a classroom observation as part of the participant selection process to see if they taught counternarratives and controversial issues in their history and civics classrooms, but issues with school administration and central offices greatly delayed my gaining access to the teacher’s classrooms. Only one pre-study observation of a classroom was conducted. The final four participants were approved for the study after the “goodness-of-fit” interview that was outlined above. After the initial classroom visit and “goodness-of-fit” interviews that confirmed that the teachers were good fits for the study, I selected the aforementioned five teachers for deeper study.

Participant Biographies

My research was conducted with the help of five participants that were referred to me via snowball sampling due to their reputation for both being strong teachers and teaching controversial issues and counternarratives in their social studies classroom. Of the five, three were white women, one was a black woman, and the final individual was a white male. Below, I have included a short description of each and the environments/schools in which they teach.

Ray. Ray, the white male, is still a relatively young teacher, having taught for three years in a large, Midwestern capital city’s public school system. Ray teaches in a

unique environment, a school containing all grades from Preschool to 8th grade. Ray's school services a population that is predominantly of color, the majority of which is Hispanic and black.

Tasked with teaching 7th and 8th grade students, Ray is working on earning a Masters' degree with aspirations of becoming an administrator. Born in a small urban community, he remembers when he began to think historically about his place and his community: he watched a Klan rally in his hometown early in his life and questioned why it was happening in his town. He believes that the social studies are a powerful tool to prepare students to become global citizens and the development of a global humanity.

Michelle. Michelle, a white female, is an experienced secondary teacher, having taught for over a decade. Currently, she teaches in the same large, Midwestern capital city's public school system as Ray. She has earned a Masters degree in education and her Masters work centered around the study of teacher leadership. Currently, she is working on earning a second Masters degree in school administration. She has also taught several college classes in her free time. Recently, she was named the Teacher of the Year for the entire school system.

Teaching an International Baccalaureate social studies program to students grades six through eight, Michelle's teaches students in a school that is both overwhelming white (nearly 70%) and wealthy (Only 24% of students attending her school receive Free/Reduced Lunch). The curriculum that she teaches is both critical and full of counternarratives, and students explore controversial topics throughout their classroom experiences with her.

Marley. Marley, a white female teacher, has over six years of teaching experience across different schools in a sub-burb of the same large Midwestern capital city in which both Ray and Michelle teach. She has won awards for her teaching, and she became a mentor for pre-service teachers, allowing pre-service teachers to enter her classroom. She has also participated in curriculum writing both for her school and for a local university's online high school program while serving as part of a team to help open a new alternative school for the city. Additionally, she is nationally involved with the #TeachStrong movement. She is currently working on earning her administrators license at a local university. A dedicated teacher, her reasoning behind her unique teaching style came about during her undergraduate education.

Marley, at her suburban school, has been tasked with working with students from grades 9-12, teaching multiple courses. For this dissertation work, particular attention was paid to the teaching of her Geography and the History of the World class. In this suburban community, Marley's students are overwhelmingly white. The school, itself, is over 85% white with only 20% of students listed as receiving Free/Reduced Lunch. However, regardless of this seemingly troublesome classroom composition, Marley maintains a classroom curriculum that is critical and filled with counternarrative.

Sheryl. Sheryl, a black female teacher, took an interesting route to becoming a teacher. Formally a law student, she decided to become an educator after hearing her call to teach before finishing her law degree. Having tutored students at a local program during the summer, she took an alternative route to teaching, applying her already accumulated credits toward her teaching degree. As such, she has over ten years of

teaching experience in urban schools. In addition to her teaching duties, she coaches middle school basketball and track and field, having done both for both boys and girls.

Sheryl's teaching occurs at a suburban school district outside of a large Midwestern capital city. Said suburb has grown and developed around a large government facility in the past decade, leading to an influx of wealth into the district. Tasked with teaching 7th grade Social Studies and 7th grade Pre-Advanced Placement Social Studies to middle school students, Sheryl's classroom demographic reflected the overall demographic of the school in which she taught. Sheryl's middle school is majority black and Hispanic, consisting of touch under 65% of the entire school population. In addition, a touch over 63% of the students received Free/Reduced Lunch.

Christina. Christina, a white female teacher, believes that the social studies provides an avenue to help students begin to discuss important issues that work to humanize people that do not look like them. Having earned her teaching degree from a large, public university within the large Midwestern capital city in which she teaches, she noted that the urban focus of the pre-service teacher education program that the university espoused has helped shape her teaching philosophy, but only slightly so. This is her third year of being a full-time teacher on contract, and she has an additional year of teaching experience spent one year as a permanent building sub. Motivated by helping students learn to become empathetic of others and accepting of other people, she teaches US History and Economics to high school students. She has no inclination of entering school administration, but she is interested in eventually earning a Masters degree in Public History once her child has completed her collegiate studies. Her teaching situation, however, is an interesting one, as her grasp on her curricular choice is limited by the

school's strict adherence to following a standardized assessment plan for all students within a pre-medicated curricular plan. In short, her teaching of controversial topics and counternarratives is much more subversive in nature than her peers in this study.

Christina teaches in a large, suburban high school outside of a large Midwestern capital city. The school district that she teaches in is overwhelmingly white and economically privileged. Nearly 78% of students attending her high school are white, with only 7% of black and 6.3% of Hispanic students filling in the school's population. In addition, only 34% of students were categorized as receiving Free/Reduced Lunch.

Research Setting

My research was conducted in five different schools spanning three different school districts within and surrounding a large Midwestern capital city. Two of the schools were located within the city's public school system. Of these two schools, one catered to students in grades K-8, the other Pre-K-8. A third school, a public high school, was located in a suburban city of the large Midwestern capital city. The final two schools, one a middle school the other a high school, belonged to two different "metropolitan school districts" of the same large Midwestern capital city. The high school, however, was located in a heavily white, suburban area while the middle school was located much closer to the city center in a more diverse racial population. As I utilized observations of my teachers in their classrooms as one of my main data gathering points (as discussed below), I spent a significant amount of time in their individual classrooms. These classrooms were unique and important, as they served as spaces where unique lessons and curricula were supposedly being taught. To understand these lessons that students were having taught to them, I felt that I must enter the space and observe the teaching and

learning processes. Additionally, I worked with my teachers to find places to conduct interviews privately with them. To do so, I worked around my teacher's schedules and found time to interview them in the summer or during the school day when they had free time. All of the interviews, save two, were conducted in the teachers' empty classrooms. The other two interviews were conducted in an empty conference room in one middle school and on campus at a local university. The "focus group" interview was hosted online via Connect software on a weekend after discussing a date and time with all participants.

Data Collection

My research utilized three different data collection methods for my study. The three methods included classroom observations (Stake, 2010), formal and informal interviews with classroom teachers (Creswell, 2013), and one proposed "focus group" interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Such data collection methods were selected due to the fact that they were detailed from academic literature to help guide the scope of their use and the content of their use. Each individual method, and the frequency of their use, is detailed in the paragraphs below.

To begin, I conducted three classroom observations of each of the five teachers of my study. This amounted to a total of 15 classroom observations totaling 24 hours and 33 minutes of observed classroom instruction. Classroom observations took place in the field to naturally observe how my teachers and their students navigated the non-traditional curriculum (Patton, 2002). These observations allowed me to see how students respond to the lessons, how teachers implement their materials, and if controversial issues and counternarratives were utilized in each individual curriculum. These observations were

not confined to a regulated, set protocol; instead, the observations were open-ended, allowing for the researcher to explore any emergent themes that arose in the field during my observations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). During my observations, I created field notes written with “thick description” of the observed events that assisted in the analysis of my data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In order to be transparent with my results from this qualitative approach, I worked to employ a rigorous code of “trustworthiness and authenticity” while developing “reflexivity, rapport, and reciprocity” with my research population (Mertens, 2010, p. 18). While observing these classrooms, I made sure to pay particular attention to the materials used in the lessons by the teachers and students, particularly the use of primary and secondary source materials, the primary voice of the sources considered to be the expert voice delivering the content in the readings, and the creation of student artifacts. Photographs of some student artifacts were taken to assist in data analysis.

The second data point in my study was the utilization of both formal and informal interviews of my teacher participants. According to Stake (2010), interviews are utilized to obtain “unique information or interpretation held by the person interviewed,” to collect “a numerical aggregation of information from many persons,” and to find out “about ‘a thing’ that the researchers were unable to observe themselves” (p. 95). Additionally, as stressed by Jorgenson (1992), interview questions and protocol must be clear and explicit when in a formal setting, as “the ways in which interviewees make sense of and respond to the interviews depend in large measure on how those being interviewed represent the interviewer and her objectives to themselves” (Jorgenson, 1992, pp. 222-223). This notion is important, touching on the ethical issues regarding conducting interviews.

Because interviews allow access to the personal experiences of members of the research study, there was an ethical obligation regarding how I conducted each of the interviews, interpreted the results, and reported them to a reading public (in regards to interviewee anonymity) (van den Hoonaard & van den Hoonaard, 2013). Throughout the duration of my study I conducted two formal, voice recorded interviews. Additionally, informal interviews with my participants were conducted when possible, the results of which were recorded in the field notes alongside observation notes. Informal interviews occurred during every classroom observation, leading to roughly fifteen informal interviews. When space and time permitted (e.g., during passing period between class periods, during student-led work time, etc.), I was able to ask quick, informal questions of my teachers asking about the content of their daily lessons, questions I had about the presented materials, and general observations about their teaching styles.

The first formal interview focused on questions that were centered on attempting to understand why my participants decided to craft and maintain such a controversial curriculum in their classrooms. Some of my initial questions were:

- What influences led you to create the curriculum you teach to students?
- What impact, if any, did your pre-service teacher education program have on your teaching philosophy and implemented curriculum?
- What support structures do you have that support your decisions?
- What is the importance of utilizing a non-white, non-Eurocentric narrative in your classroom?
- What impact has this made on students?
- Is there anything you would like to add?

Analysis of the first set of interview answers, in addition to emerging themes from classroom observations, led to the creation of a second interview protocol that continued to explore emerging themes in my study. The second round of interviews asked the following questions:

- Can you tell me the various elements of your specific teaching style? Is it unique from other teachers?
- When you plan a lesson, how do you formulate it? How do you plan it? What elements do you want to see specifically imbued within it?
- Can you give me another specific example where you have used a counternarrative to examine a critical issue? Can you walk me through that entire lesson/unit/process?
- Do you think that the critical perspective you are teaching stays with your students? Not all teachers, even teachers in the same building, have the same goal to promote critical thinking and teaching controversial subjects. That being said, how do you continue to promote this line of thinking?
- A big notion from the first round of interviews was the importance of fostering empathy with students. Why is it necessary to help students gain an empathetic position? How do you do this?
- Another big takeaway from the first round of interviews was a personalization of curriculum: personal reasons for making the curricular choices that were made to teach the way you teach and what you teach. Would you care to share your reasons as to why you want to teach empathy, controversial issues, and counternarratives?

While the interviews stuck to this formal outline, additional questions organically emerged during the process. The voice recordings of all interviews were transcribed verbatim by a transcriptionist. The resulting transcription was sent to all participants as a form of member checking for their review, to make sure what was recorded reflects their true voice.

My final data point, a “focus group” interview, followed similar ethical obligations as the individual formal and informal interviews and occurred after all other formal interviews and observations were conducted. Mertens (2010) defined focus groups as “group interviews that rely, not on a question-and-answer format of interview, but on the interaction within the group” (p. 240). However, focus group interviews add a unique dimension that individual interviews cannot. Focus groups, as Creswell (2013) noted, are incredibly important as the “interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information” for interpreting collective social experiences shared (or not shared) by all focus group participants (p. 164). Mertens (2010) commented on the importance of focus groups, when she stated that such a method can serve both as a method of “understanding . . . how others interpret key terms and their agreement or disagreements with the issues raised,” as well as a method that can help oppressed or muted groups a way to craft a unified message to provide a counternarrative to traditional prevailing discourses (p. 240).

Given that my research occurred within secondary school classrooms and involved observations of both teachers and students in a normally protected space, I sought and attained IRB approval prior to conducting interviews. Additionally, as my research examined sensitive issues regarding politics, race, and racism in schools, there is

a chance that professional harm may come to my participants as a result of publishing my results. However, by providing anonymity to my participants by using pseudonyms and avoiding identifiable information, the professional risk was lessened.

Research Process and Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis transpired across six months. Additional research methods and research processes are described in the paragraphs below. Before doing so, it is necessary to clarify a personal belief in regards to conducting qualitative research. As it is my philosophical belief that the analysis of collected data cannot be independent of the research process during which it is collected, I must discuss both at the same time. Lather and Smithies (1997) wrote about this issue in their study of HIV+ women. It would be irresponsible of me as a researcher to attempt to not acknowledge this notion and attempt to write about each individually in a vacuum. Hence, both data collection and analyses will be discussed interchangeably in the paragraphs below.

After recruiting my participants, I integrated into their classrooms quickly, visiting each teacher's classroom all three times within a period of a week or two weeks, save for Marley, who was the only participant I could observe before the summer break. Classroom observations included an examination of the teacher's written lesson and unit plans (in addition to the actual materials they use when teaching). These notes were examined for salient themes during the coding process, in conjunction with the other data points (Creswell, 2007). Coding of classroom observations and interview transcripts was an on-going process. However, before coding occurred, a "master list" of codes was created by partner coding the data with a fellow PhD student and a member of the School of Education faculty. After meeting with the other "coders" after coding multiple

interviews and observation field notes separately, the “master list” was created and coding could begin. Field notes and interview transcripts were uploaded into NVIVO11 Qualitative Data Analysis software for coding. Once uploaded into NVIVO, the entries were coded utilizing the “master list” until all entries were coded. All codes were verbally shared with the individual teachers in an act of member checking, allowing each of my participants the opportunity to “test categories, interpretations, and conclusions” I had arrived at independently (Erlandson, 1993, p. 142).

An individual interview and the “focus group” were scheduled when convenient for my participants. Individual interviews occurred roughly two months apart due to issues with getting permission to interview my participants from the central administration of the school districts in which they worked. When finally granted permission, all of the interviews occurred within a private space. Interviews were semi-structured (Seidman, 2006), following a set protocol of questions. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for the interview to deviate away from the protocol to explore interesting topics that emerged during the interview. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interview transcripts were provided to teachers for their analysis as an act of member checking to ensure that the transcripts reflected what they stated in the interview accurately (Lincoln & Guba, 1993, p. 142). The “focus group” was conducted in a similar manner.

The “focus group” interview occurred at the end of data collection, following a semi-structured interview protocol. Questions for the protocol were developed after analysis of coded observation and interview transcripts. The same trustworthiness measures were employed to make sure what was collected was expressed accurately and

reflected the views of the interview participants, as well as the interpretation of the data. The “focus group” interview, because it was conducted online, archived both video and audio. Personal notes were recorded throughout the “focus group” interview, and were also uploaded and coded with the NVIVO11 software.

After data collection concluded, any necessary data analysis was concluded. Results and themes from my analysis was shared with my participants. They were given the opportunity to respond my findings, potentially adding a written component to my research in the future. This feeds into the notion of trustworthiness, which is discussed in the following section.

Trustworthiness Measures

Several trustworthiness measures that were used to establish that my research project was able to “make a reasonable claim to methodological soundness” (Lincoln & Guba, 1993, p. 131). Such trustworthiness measures included the use of member checks, triangulation of findings from multiple data points, and the use of thick description in my field and interview notes. While I have discussed many these measures above, I will discuss each of the three measures below.

Member checks, as discussed previously, allow research participants the ability to provide insight into the accuracy of a researcher’s findings while providing the community a viable opportunity to act as a check to the researcher’s power over the project. Lincoln and Guba (1993) noted that member checking is the “most important in establishing credibility” for a study (p. 142). The researchers stress that member checking, when done properly, must be done “continuously” in both “formal and informal” settings in a variety of ways: conducting informal conversations and

interviews, providing research participants with written transcripts for their review, and allowing for a general review of the report before it is published (p. 142). While incredibly important, there is a chance that member checking can lead to major issues in regards to the trustworthiness of the data “if all the members [of the research study being used for the member check] share some common myth or conspire to mislead” (p. 143). I conducted a number of member checks in my study by following the framework put forth by Lincoln and Guba, making sure to give my participants multiple opportunities to reflect on the research. This occurred in the days after the interviews and “focus group” had been transcribed; all participants were provided with a copy of the transcripts in full and asked if what was within was factual. Additionally, any findings were discussed verbally with participants, either before conducting an observation or through email. Only after no objections were raised by my participants was data coded for analysis.

Secondly, I employed triangulation in my study as a second trustworthiness measure. According to Denzin (1970), triangulation is the use of a number of different data sources, methods of collecting data, theories to collect and interpret data, and ways of conducting research (as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1993, p. 128). Stake (2010) stressed that utilizing triangulation in one’s research is important, as using such a measure allows researchers to feel “more confident that we need to examine differences to see important multiple meanings,” especially when one has a constructivist view of reality that results in researchers not being able to view a “construct . . . exactly the same” (pp. 124-125). When triangulation of multiple data points results in a great deal of “convergence” from the aforementioned pathways, the researcher may feel a great deal of “confidence in the observed findings” (Erlandson, 1993, p. 139). My research resulted in the collection of

three major data points (classroom observations and student artifacts, interviews, and a “focus group” interview) that allowed for such triangulation and convergence.

The third trustworthiness method that I employed in my study was the use of thick description in all of my field and interview notes. Thick description, according to Lincoln and Guba (1993), “provides for transferability by describing in multiple low-level abstractions the data base from which transferability judgments may be made by potential applies” (p. 145). Denzin (1989) believed that thick description must do “more than record what a person is doing. It [must go] beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another” (p. 83). This can be done by making sure to utilize “*all* of the senses . . . [to] stop and look, listen, smell, and feel the surroundings and interaction” (Lincoln & Guba, 1993, p. 146). Patton (2002) took the notion of thick description one step further, stressing how such a practice “forms the bedrock of all qualitative reporting” (p. 438). Such thick descriptions were employed within my research to best portray what I observed in my observations and interviews; this resulted in an analysis of my data by adding another level of rigor and trustworthiness.

Researcher Positionality

Before concluding my chapter on methodology, it is important to address my positionality as a researcher, especially considering the topic of and the location of my proposed research. As a white heterosexual male, I greatly benefit from the structural racism inherent in American society (Feagin, 2010). Considering that the majority of urban classrooms are filled with students of color (Boser, 2014), I will not be able to understand the lived realities of these students (and teachers of color), as I do not have

the lived experiences they have had regarding white racism. My topic of research also is impacted by my whiteness. As I examined non-white counternarratives, there is a real danger that the discourses I will be examining will be influenced by my white frame of reference and the power of the discourse within me. While my actions may appear to be a way to subvert the dominant narrative, there is a chance that my work will actually be co-opted by the narrative within me. There is a major issue with whites working with communities of color; I can only hope that my research participants felt that they became trusted members in my study and that they helped me with my research and my findings. My maleness is another issue. Teachers may not have interacted with me as they would have with a female researcher. Additionally, there is a great deal of power that accompanies being a researcher and entering a teacher's classroom space. While it cannot be eliminated, I worked the best that I could to create "strong horizontal relationships" with the teachers in my study that did not place the teachers in a state of powerlessness under me (Foucault, 2005, p. 390). Instead, by facilitating several trustworthiness measures that teachers in my study could have used as a check against me, these issues of power were, hopefully, minimized.

Limitations

There were several limitations that accompanied my study. To begin, there were issues with my data collection tools. As mentioned numerous times above, my focus group did not pan out because my participants were unable to find a time that was suitable for all of them. Instead of having a third focus group, I instead had a third interview with one of my white female teachers. However, in the wake of the ineffective

focus group, an internet discussion board was created so that the teachers could choose to interact with one another if they desired to do so.

Secondly, issues arose with my originally proposed timeline due to matters with the central administration of the school district of several of my research participants. For two of my teachers, after completing a district “research plan” for them to review before they would allow me to enter into their schools, I was given conflicting messages about which teachers could and could not be observed. However, when questioned about the process, school administrators and central office administrators originally would not approve my research, delaying my timeline significantly. It was only after months of negotiation and clarification with multiple district officials that I was finally granted access to the schools. By the time this was originally granted, the school year was weeks away from ending and summer vacation would last months. As a result, my proposed timeline was changed and how I administered my data collection tools was altered.

Finally, my research population was not as evenly distributed among racial and gender lines as I had sought to secure. As a result, the majority of my participants are white and female. This could potentially influence the results of my data due to a lack of diversity in my research population.

Conclusion

In short, my study examined why social studies teachers chose to teach a curriculum full of controversial topics and non-white European counternarratives in an environment that could cost them their jobs. To do so, I conducted a six-month study that targeted the practices of successful social studies teachers currently utilizing counternarratives in their classrooms, despite the political risk that accompanies it in

American public schools. Teachers for the study were recruited via “snowball sampling” when I asked education professionals for social studies teachers who had a reputation for teaching the aforementioned curriculum.

My research utilized multiple data points to best triangulate my data and the trustworthiness of my findings. In order to do so, I utilized classroom observations and student artifacts, formal and informal interviews, and a “focus group” interview. In addition to triangulation, I also used thick description and member checking to further the trustworthiness of my data collection before engaging in data analysis. Data analysis occurred only after the creation of a “coding tree” that was used to increase understanding of the qualitative data after coding. Results were shared with all participants throughout the duration of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine why established social studies teachers chose to teach a curriculum that examined controversial topics in their classroom while employing non-white, non-Eurocentric voices as teaching tools. Additionally, this study sought to examine what, if any, supports assisted the participants in their curricular choices and how the teachers taught their students. While this was the original purpose of the study, unexpected themes did emerge from the findings that were not previously anticipated.

Findings from my study have encompassed a number of areas for teacher selection of curriculum in regards to teaching controversial classroom topics and their pre-service teacher education program's overall effectiveness to prepare them for professional teaching while also supporting (or not supporting) their curricular decision making. Specifically, my research examined seven different themes that emerged from data collection. Specifically, these themes were fostering positive and professional teacher-student relationships, facilitating critical conversations, fostering empathy, teaching controversial issues within a social studies curriculum, structures of support, personal reasons for teaching critical social studies, and the impact of pre-service teacher education experiences. Each of these themes is described next.

Fostering Positive and Professional Teacher-Student Relationships.

Humanizing the Student, Humanizing the Teacher. One of the most common themes to emerge was that all of the teachers involved in the study spoke about the importance of creating a relationship between themselves and students that humanized

their students, humanized themselves as a person other than a teacher to their students, and fostered a sense of community and trust between all members of the classroom, hence creating a large community of learners. For example, Sheryl spoke about how the entire first month in her classroom is spent connecting with her students, understanding who they are, so that they can create an environment where they can talk about controversial topics later in the year. She stressed that the building of the student-teacher relationship is important because she isn't "telling them to do things just because someone has instructed [her] to. That they understand that I'm telling them these things, or we're coming to these conclusions. I'm helping them figure this stuff out because I care about them" (Shaver, interview, July, 26, 2016). Sheryl expressed that from the start of the year, students recognize the position of the teacher as an authoritarian. She stated that teachers have a great deal of power in the classroom, and that "kids are going to believe what you are going to say anyway just because you had this title of teacher, so they automatically put you on this pedestal" that could potentially re-enforce a traditional role of teacher as the master of knowledge and the students as the recipient of knowledge (Shaver, interview, July, 26, 2016). However, by humanizing students, this form of teacher-student relationship is cast aside for a more mutually beneficial one.

Christina also spoke of the importance of humanizing her students, especially for the importance of the entire classroom. She noted that the creation of an open classroom community at the start of the year is her "primary focus. "My primary focus is building a learning community where everybody contributes" (Shaver, interview, July 17, 2016). That community, however, may only exist in their individual classrooms and not on a school-wide level. An example of this notion of localized community and humanization

of students came about during a faculty meeting at Christina's high school. Christina was taken aback by some of the ideas that other teachers suggesting for how to punish students for not completing their homework. One idea, that had some support, was having the school put an official block on a student's work permit if s/he missed turning in a certain percentage of work. Reflecting upon this, Christina spoke about how many teachers do not take into account the lives of the students outside of the school; that many teachers do not see their students as humans. Christina, speaking against the permit block, offered rational reasons as to why students would need to be able to earn money. Instead of listening to Christina, a white male staff member completely disregarded her statement (and, to an extent, the reasons why a student would need to have transportation to potentially help make ends meet at home). The students, in this instance, were not seen as people. Christina angrily reminisced about the teachers who stated "that you said I get it, poverty, whatever, let's me know that you don't get it and you cannot pull their work permits for not doing their homework. Homework is 10 percent of their grade, they have zero incentive to do it, zero incentive" (Shaver, interview, May 12, 2016). Here, it is clear that the other teachers have little idea about the lives of their students; instead of seeing the students as people with real needs that must be met in the world, they see the students instead as individuals that must conform to the whims of the school. By also casually dismissing the students' reality as "poverty, whatever", it shows that the other teachers have an incredibly deficit-oriented mindset towards their students, thinking that they are only motivated by economic gain and nothing else (Valencia, 2010). It is the humanization of students that can create positive classrooms and school communities, something that clearly was not happening in the aforementioned example above.

Fostering the creation of learning communities, where students can interact with one another and feel safe in the topics they are exploring, they are able to, as Michelle noted, “feel connected to what they are learning” (Shaver, interview, May 17, 2016). However, the teachers also stressed the importance of humanizing themselves as people, having their students see them more than just a teacher expected to teach.

Humanizing themselves to their students was also expressed as a goal of the teachers when working to foster classroom community. Ray spoke about the importance of his teaching style sometimes leading to the creation of a classroom that would potentially be contentious, especially with him being a white male teaching primarily students of color. For example, Ray shared that:

I just want to make sure that . . . I also want, I try to really create an environment and this is for me too, where I can say something dumb, and you’re not going to use it against me. I’m not coming from a place of hate. If something comes out of my mouth that could easily . . . Because a lot of times I think stuff is taken out of context too (Shaver, interview, May 20, 2016).

He went on to further explain his view, particularly when race and racism emerges. Ray stated:

So if something were to come up where a student was unhappy, or thought that . . . Because stuff like you’re racist, that kind of stuff, it comes up all the time, all the time. And so I make sure that we’re not leaving the room until we’re all clear with each other. I’ll call a parent, and students talked to me concerned about the racial motivation of this teacher. And so I was like let’s get mom and dad in here, let’s sit down and talk about it, and we’re not going to leave until we figure something out. And that may mean that we need to go sit down with the principal and that other teacher. My job is to advocate for your kid, that’s my job (Shaver, interview, May 20, 2016).

However, he found it important to stress that students need to understand that his life did not “happen outside of [their lives]. . . . [and that there is] some sort of responsibility that

we have to each other that me living my life has an effect on you living your life” (Shaver, interview, July 27, 2016). On the other end of the spectrum, however, Christina stressed that there are some topics that she, as a person, didn’t want to address right away due to their impact on her personally. She noted that the murders of Philando Castile and Alton Sterling, black men killed by law enforcement officers, may not result in a productive conversation. She noted that she:

“...did not want to talk about Sterling and Castile. I just don’t. I feel so passionate about it that I just don’t think that I could even facilitate a productive conversation. So if I talk about things like the Tulsa Race Riots it gives us a way to touch on these current things without going there in a way that will make people, that will destroy my community. Because they’re kids, but they still have strong opinions . . . I have so much to say about it, but I just don’t want to say it to 17 year olds that are compelled to be in my classroom for a grade. I just don’t feel like that’s fair (Shaver, interview, July 17, 2016).

In addition, it is important that Christina’s students also understand that regardless of her position, that there needs to be a modicum of respect between themselves and her. She reminds her students that the school will make sure she is “paid whether you like me or not, I get paid whether you respect me or not, I get paid whether you pass or not. So if you . . . when we’re in here we treat each other with respect” (Shaver, interview, May 12, 2016). Here, by showing students and other teachers that they also have emotions, by humanizing themselves within their profession, it creates an environment where mutual understanding and trust develops into a community where difficult conversations can be fostered and enacted.

Professional and personal relationships when teaching. While observing classroom teaching, similar elements in terms of fostering positive teacher-student relationships were observed across all the participants in the study. To begin, all of the

teachers appeared to have cultivated and maintained personal and trusting relationships with their students. However, there was still a very real professional relationship or established classroom guidelines that were put in place to maintain the teacher-student dynamic. For example, during her teaching, Christina was observed to facilitate personable talk with her students when engaging in formative assessment around their knowledge and perception of a number of primary documents that the class was reading concerning the Progressive movement, proper etiquette for women, and the Americanization of immigrants. The verbal exchanges were questioning and easy, her tone playful but serious, and the students appeared to be at ease when engaged in questions regarding sexism, xenophobia, and racism they were working to deconstruct. The same “personable but serious” relationship was observed in Michelle’s classroom. For example, it was noted that Michelle appeared to:

have a really, really good rapport with students. It is still this playful, but professional back-and-forth with her students . . . the air is light, there is a levity, but it is a serious levity where it seems that all of the students are part of a larger learning community (Shaver, field notes, September 15, 2016).

The same teacher-student relationship was apparent in Sheryl’s classroom. Much like Christina and Michelle, Sheryl had the same observable rapport with her students. While teaching 7th grade students, there were a number of times that students loudly interjected and interrupted the flow of the lesson. However, the cultivated relationship allowed for Sheryl to quickly get students back on task:

It is apparent that she has developed a trusting rapport with her students; she calls students by name, the students are at ease in the classroom, and there is a playful/joking (yet apparent) respect. While it appears that, at times, the joking does create moments of disorganization and loudness, Sheryl is able to quickly focus the students back toward the lesson (Shaver, field notes, September 7, 2016).

The same was observed in Marley's classroom. When observing Marley interact with a group of students attempting to choose a war that had historically taken place in Africa, Marley was able to both guide students through the lesson, even though the group had already missed several deadlines that would impact their grade. She was stern with her students, reiterating her expectations for the project. Other groups were open enough to discuss issues of race, racism, postcolonialism, class, and the importance of counternarrative in small group and then with the class as a whole when their projects were completed. Marley also had developed a relationship with her students that allowed her to feel safe when discussing aspects of her life with her class. During an introductory lesson on the teaching of the major world religions to her 9th graders, she felt comfortable enough to discuss her relationship with Greek Orthodox Christianity as her partner is introducing her to the religion itself. While this could have been a vulnerable subject, and a controversial one to discuss in class, her relationship with her students was personable and professional enough that it could be discussed freely, eliciting questions concerning the religion in front of the rest of the class, which had the potential of being incredibly controversial, especially if any of the students in the classroom ardently followed a religion.

Such a situation occurred for James (2010) in her pre-service teacher education classes. James had two students, one an evangelical Christian and the other a devout Muslim, who rejected the curriculum of her methods class. On a number of occasions, these pre-service teachers rejected the materials being used to teach the class (for example, methods to teach students about climate change), stressing that various events were up to the will of God via fundamentalist teachings, not science. This resulted in a

disjointed learning environment between members of the methods class and their fundamentalist classmates. If such a student was present in Marley's class, and if she had not created a professional and personal bond with her students, her openness about speaking about the Greek Orthodox religion (and the other religions presented in her curriculum), could have resulted in a number of potential issues.

Facilitating Critical Conversations

A second major theme to arise from the study was the facilitation of conversations among students in the classroom, particularly surrounding the creation of safe classroom spaces to host critical conversations of controversial issues, guiding students to partake in critical conversations, and student self-discovery when exposed to counternarratives. These conversations showed up within each teachers' lesson planning and classroom teaching, regardless of the grades and subjects each taught.

Safe Classroom Spaces. The first noticeable aspect about the creation of critical conversations between students and the teacher was a dedicated effort by the teachers to create a classroom space where such conversations could even be conducted. When conducted, the teachers were responsible for guiding the students through the content of the conversations, regardless of whether the content was brought up by the teacher or the students. This ability to guide the students in conversation was a result of the teachers working to create the aforementioned positive teacher-student relationships. Ray, for example, in an attempt to facilitate a classroom debate the day after the first 2016 Presidential election, wanted his students to respond to five specific questions regarding if students agreed or disagreed with school-wide dress code policies/uniforms, if all U.S. citizens over the age of 18 should be required to vote, if all individuals who had

completed a crime should be given the right to vote, whether the United States needs to have “stricter immigration laws . . . to keep our country safe”, and if the police should have free reign to engage in stop and frisk policies to “remove illegal guns from the streets” (Shaver, field notes, September 9, 2016). In preparation for the debate with his 7th and 8th graders, Ray posted on opposite walls signs labeled with Agree and Disagree, True and False. Students would go stand under these signs to physically represent their position on a questioned subject; however, the labeling of the classroom itself does not constitute the creation of a safe classroom space. Instead, the space was fostered by the instructions that Ray gave before the students began their discussion. Ray stressed that:

When we start, be respectful. Do not talk over your classmates. And if you make a claim, you need to back it up. Progress comes from discussion. We get better . . . more sensible if we disagreed and talk. Question 4 and 5 . . . it’s going to get hot in here. So, remember, let’s be respectful here.”
(Shaver, field notes, September 9, 2016).

Using this discussion framework as a guide, the conversation between students and teacher was underway; while at times the answers only showed surface understanding of a topic, conversation did flow freely under Ray’s supervision. At one point, only a single student chose to agree with the notion of instituting a dress code. Instead of letting him argue by himself, Ray joined the student so he would not be alone, helping to point out different arguments that the students may not have considered (e.g., it does not create a system of “haves and have nots”).

Marley also deliberately worked to create a safe classroom environment where students could discuss controversial issues. When beginning a discussion on an investigation of different religions, she made sure to express to students what their conversation would entail, effectively guiding the conversation forward. As religion is a

controversial topic to discuss, Marley stressed that their conversations would not be looking at religious extremism, re-enforcing that many of the subjects that they investigate fall within a

spectrum . . . with different shades of grey. Whenever we talk about anything like that, you are going to hear me say that everything is on a spectrum. On both ends, we have black and white. But we are looking at the middle, most of the people are in the middle. We are going to look at some of the extremes, but I want you to remember that most people do not fall at the extremes. They are in the middle. Our thinking is spectrum-based (Shaver, field notes, September 8, 2016).

However, Marley also went one step further to make her students feel comfortable about discussing religion in an open forum. When asked by a student during the same class period if they will be able to ask which religion every other student in the class belongs to, Marley doubled down on her notion of creating a safe space for her students, stressing the following:

I want to make a commitment to you on the first day we are talking about this. I am not going to be persuasive about any of these religions or would views. This is purely investigative. We want to understand what is going on there. And I want to make sure that we keep an open mind and we don't say 'Well, as a Christian, that isn't true and actually . . .' A lot of times we have a very surface level understanding of things or misconceptions . . . oftentimes that breeds conflict. And what we fail to realize is that there is a lot of similarities between religions and world views that we fail to realize . . . We are trying in this class to get an understanding of what is going on out there in the world . . . and we don't perpetuate those conflicts. We want to understand what is true out there . . . and not perpetuate those misconnects and conflicts. That is the goal (Shaver, field notes, September 8, 2016).

In her statement, she not only states that her students will not have to disclose their personal religious beliefs, but also that their discussions within their classroom will not end with students having to hear a student proselytize to others. Not only did this make students feel safer, but it also served as a mechanism of self-defense. By stressing that

their conversations and investigations would only be exploratory in nature, her job security is not at risk if a parent or student would complain about the content of the lessons to an administrator or other party.

Michelle and Christina had similar established standards for their classrooms. For Michelle, the creation of a safe conversation space was wholly evident in regards to the governing of conversations that are spent unpacking current issues that the students pick to talk about every Friday in class. Each of her IB classes, grades 6 through 8, are expected to follow classroom discussion guidelines and “essential agreements” that the students and teachers have entered into a contract to follow. One such “essential agreement” is to not talk over another student, allowing for an organized discussion where all students can participate equally. While still moderated and guided by Michelle, all students are invited to participate in the weekly discussion (Shaver, September 16, 2016). As for Christina’s classroom, similar expectations were put in place and modeled by both the teacher and her students. In a large group discussion over sexuality and gender roles during the Progressive Era of the United States, students followed discussion guidelines, respectfully giving their classmates a space to engage in a free-flowing discussion.

Hence, while each teacher had different methods to enact a safe classroom space for critical conversations to occur, each teacher did facilitate and maintain such a space. As a result, their students engaged in conversations about topics that are traditionally not discussed in classrooms. That being the case, how these teachers went about directing and guiding these conversations was equally important.

Directing/Guiding Critical Conversations. The direction and guiding of the topic of discussion was a second important matter in this particular type of teaching. To keep students focused on the critical conversations at hand, the teachers each had different ways of facilitating communication between students, all the while continuing to introduce counternarratives to the controversial topics.

Many of the teachers took an active role in how they questioned students when conducting a critical conversation with their students, especially by posing questions to challenge student assumptions that arise during the discussion. Christina, for example, constantly would interject and ask questions that would attempt to link the materials being studied to the personal lives of the students. When having students investigate dance halls of the Progressive Era, many questions came up concerning a primary document that laid out a long list of expectations and rules for women attending these social gathering places, lest they are considered to be a prostitute. As students engaged in a back-and-forth about how society stigmatizes some individuals, Christina ushered the conversation along, asking the students why security guards seem to be overly concerned with their presence whenever the students enter a mall or other social space. This prompting leads to a discussion as to why people give in to stereotypes and stigmas, ageism, and deficit thinking (Shaver, field notes, September 15, 2016). However, this was not the final goal of the conversation. Instead, this topic had been building upon discussions had in previous classes, eventually resulting in a class where the students in the US History classed ended up digging into a temporary discussion of race, gender, social perceptions, control/vilification, and the media” (Shaver, field notes, September 15, 2016). It was with this end goal in mind that Christina steered the conversation over

multiple days and conversations; this type of conversation may not have been possible without the necessary teacher direction. It is also clear that the students felt comfortable enough to discuss these topics with their classmates over the same multiple sessions. This commitment to a long-lasting conversation clearly had some impact.

Similarly, Michelle could both direct and interject within the critical conversations in her classroom. When examining a current event depicting the police shooting death of a young black male holding a BB-Gun, her 7th grade IB class engaged in a long conversation about several topics, from police brutality to race and white privilege. Instead of turning down a discussion of the topic, Michelle fostered continued conversation by asking important questions to her students. When one white female student suggested that the police officers may have been acting in self-defense, Michelle countered with saying “True, but there are incidents where people are getting shot and they don’t have any weapons or anything at all on them. That is why we have such a tight lens on law enforcement right now” (Shaver, field notes, September 16, 2016). It was then that a white male student, raising his hand to participate in the discussion, stated that “Some lower class African American people like to play the race card . . . If someone pulls a gun on you, you are going to want to defend yourself, so it isn’t fair to play the race card” (Shaver, field notes, September 16, 2016). Instead of cutting off the student and ending the discussion, Michelle began asking questions of the student and others in the class by bringing up the notion of white privilege and a non-white perspective on law enforcement, stating “We need to think about a situation where you always feel like you are in fear or in trouble with the police. And . . . that has happened with people . . . because of the way a person looked” (Shaver field notes, September 16, 2016). The

conversation was further pushed forward by Michelle having students reason why Brock Turner, the wealthy, white male rapist and former Stanford swimmer, received an extremely light jail sentence for his crime. Michelle stated “He was caught in the act, only spent three months in jail, because he was white, came from an affluent family, and was an athlete (Shaver, field notes, September 16, 2016). Again, much like Christina, Michelle both directed and spurred on the conversation by asking questions of her students, having them consider alternative viewpoints they may not have previously considered. This very active and involved method, where students still dominated the conversation with gentle teacher input, differed from how the conversations were conducted in Ray’s classroom.

Ray was much more controlling of the flow of conversation. Instead of allowing constant, free-flowing talk, only a select few students were called on and asked to contribute to the conversation. While he did make sure that all of the students followed a set of classroom rules and discussion regulations by stating that “We will be talking. There will be no personal attacks . . . and if you say something, let’s make sure you back up your statement” (Shaver, field notes, September, 27, 2016), there was a lack of organic conversation (at least to the levels that were occurring in Michelle’s, Christina’s, and Marley’s classrooms). The observed conversations, at times, did center around controversial topics, but the involvement level of the students in these conversations was much lower than in the other classrooms, even with a physical component of having students stand and move around the classroom to visually display how they agreed or disagreed with a question or topic at hand. While using a different style, which was much

more controlling than what was used in other classrooms, conversation still did occur in Ray's classroom.

Reasons for Having Critical Conversations. The teachers have different philosophical notions as to why they believed it was important to engage in conversations about controversial issues and counternarratives with their students. However, while there were some philosophical differences between the participants, there was a theme that emerged that involved students feeling free enough to have these conversations along with the need for students to undergo a self-discovery or self-learning as a result of these conversations. Marley, for example, found that having these critical conversations could bring about an understanding of the structures of society that many people may not be able to see, as well as having students form opinions on matters that they have come to learn about through their self-studies and the class-wide conversations. When discussing her teaching of economics, Marley stated her motivations as such, stating that students and teachers must “have those foundational pieces so that we can have those theoretical conversations about - let's look at the world today, let's look at the distribution of wealth. Talk to me about what you think about that, and what you think is right and wrong, and how we can solve problems” (Shaver, interview, September 26, 2016). The same teaching philosophy and guided self-discovery translated to the other subjects that she teaches. When she had students engage in an examination of Africa within a Geography and History of the World class, Marley directed and pushed students to examine topics that few understood: colonialism's impact on the environment, the atrocities committed by Belgians in the Congo, the development and slaughter of the Hutu and Tutsis in Rwanda due to European colonialism's political void after leaving the continent, and the

racism and development of South African apartheid. Throughout the creation of these student-led projects, Marley would constantly have students question what they were learning, what they were finding, and what the historical significance of their findings entailed. To do so, she asked students simple guiding questions within their small groups, hoping to spur on conversation, the end goal being that all students would ask “What would you take away from this? What did you learn?” (Shaver, field notes, May 4, 2016).

Christina had the same end goal in mind, having students question what they learn as a result of their personal self-discovery, especially when planning a class-wide conversation into her lesson plans. When talking about critical classroom conversations, Christina spoke about the importance of students coming to the realization that:

every single person has an agenda, even me. Why do you think I gave you this? So in order to be able to formulate your own educated opinions what do you need to do? Do you just need to take my word for everything? No. Let's, you're allowed to process it. History happened, events happened, events are what they are, but the different perspectives, obviously, I just try to show them how to navigate that (Shaver, interview, July 17, 2016).

Hence, the conversations could become an uncensored vehicle for individual student learning and class-wide discourse.

Such a style however, seemed to be at odds in Ray's classroom. Ray stated that his reasoning behind the fostering of critical conversations began with the establishment of a safe classroom space (as discussed above) because he wanted his students to “feel safe enough to talk about things that people don't want to talk about, because they have the questions in their head. They're seeing the same things that I was seeing when I was a kid and they're trying to make sense out of it” (Shaver, interview, July 22, 2016).

However, there were a few observed instances where student observations were shut down, perhaps violating this notion of a totally safe classroom space. When a white male

student began to discuss why he supported increased immigration measures during a 7th grade social studies class, the white male said that he supported the measure because “Mexican people come into our country and taking our jobs and . . .” A black female student immediately countered the student by saying “That’s racist!”. The black female student was immediately cut off by Ray, saying that the racist statement was actually not:

No . . . that’s not racist. You’re smarter than that [student’s name].
Looking around this room, I don’t see hate. If someone doesn’t understand something, that’s fine. We need to talk about it. Go ahead, finish what you had to say, I understand what you were saying about jobs. (Shaver, field notes, September 17, 2016).

Here, while attempting to speak about a subject that many would find to be controversial, Ray ended up silencing a student who had made a legitimate claim about inherent racism in another student’s statement. Instead of discussing what the student had said, Ray immediately dismissed the black female’s observations, thoughts, and feelings while defending the white male student. Instead of what could have been a constructive point (the racism/nativism in the statement concerning “Mexicans” taking employment opportunities from Americans), Ray cut off one student to protect another, stifling the conversation thereafter. While Ray’s action may not have had an inherent racist intention, it did come off as an uninformed, potentially racist action against the black female student. This incident seemingly showcased Ray attempting to protect a white student from the negative connotation that he was racist, aligning with DiAngelo’s (2011) notion of white fragility in regards to being accused of racism. Additionally, I do not know if this reaction signifies that he inherently agrees with the white male student’s perspective. Aside from the reaction to protect the white male student’s ego and feelings, it could be that Ray meant well and didn’t see his action as racist, understanding how he is supposed

to act and think in a professional setting. More discussion of issues with race and racism will be discussed below.

Fostering Empathy

A third major theme to emerge from my study was a shared sentiment that the fostering of critical conversations, studying counternarratives, and investigating controversial issues allowed for the fostering of empathy and global humanism within students, many of whom, the teachers believed, did not possess empathy for students of color or students who did not look like them.

Imparting Empathy to Students. All of the participants in the study spoke of teaching and imparting empathy to students, in regards to racial, structural, and gender/sexual issues that impact people of color, both in historical and contemporary society. In order to do so, the teachers had to find ways to impart a system of class-wide critical thinking that students would enact throughout the school year. However, this procedure necessitated constant assessment of student thoughts and practices in the class, leading to a genuine assessment of whether they believed their students had developed empathetic tendencies and had developed a lasting, critical orientation. This, many of the teachers believed, was developed through their curriculum.

Specific choices and curricular decision making led some of the teachers to believe that they could impart empathy to their students. According to Michelle, she had an ardent belief that teaching students empathy is crucial because all individuals:

live in a community, and you don't live by yourself. I mean we'll interact with other people. If you can't feel for other people we have some serious sociopaths, so that's a scary thought. I think being, and of course it's called humanities, being able to look at the human experience, and realize that we're not all that different (Shaver, interview, August 31, 2016).

As a result, becoming empathetic would give her students “the chance to think outside themselves” in order to foster and create “good members of the community . . . [who become] more open, more understanding . . . people” (Shaver, interview, May 17, 2016). This empathetic viewpoint, hopefully, would be able to allow the kids to look at current and past society and be “able to see the humanity in people regardless of what the person’s background is, or their color, whatever, obviously is really important in our society” (Shaver, interview, August 21, 2016). To do so, Michelle points to her curriculum as a major cultivator for creating empathetic students.

Michelle’s curriculum, one appropriate for an International Baccalaureate program for students from grades six through eight, was composed of numerous multi-week units that resulted in students producing artifacts built on guided discovery and critical thinking. For example, Michelle’s 8th grade students, in an examination of American history, had to research and report on different Native American tribes. As part of this assignment, students had to respond to a number of questions Michelle wrote that would explore their various tribes. These questions included an examination of traditional gender roles and jobs performed by both sexes within the tribe, general location of the tribes before and after European colonialization, the religious beliefs and parables of the tribes, and (perhaps, most interestingly) a requirement to “look at the population [of the tribes]” over time, particularly at post-European colonialism and modern times (Shaver, interview, August 31, 2016). While helping students explore their tribe, Michelle was constantly teaching students historical facts from a Native American point of view. As a result, Michelle stressed that by studying “Native American history . . . from the Native American perspective . . .” students were able to understand that American colonialism

“sucked for [Native Americans], and that’s how we look at it. And they get fired up. They’re like this is messed up, this is messed up.” (Shaver, interview, May 17, 2016). As a result of this unique curricular counternarrative, students began to question previously held beliefs, including why Andrew Jackson, an individual who committed Native American genocide, should remain on the \$20 bill instead of Harriet Tubman (when it became a national issue for a few weeks). The same curricular philosophy dominated non-formal learning moments. One major item that Michelle brought up for discussion was the importance of demystifying social issues that normally were not discussed; in her classroom, she and her students “always talk about . . . [the] social” (Shaver, interview, May 17, 2016). In particular, Michelle constantly had students of all ages bring up the notion of policing and acts of police brutality that they were seeing in the news. She stated that it is important to make students “just think deeper about” a topic; having students stop and having the entire class and curriculum pause and think about an issue, produces “real conversations” with students (Shaver, interview, August 21, 2016). When speaking specifically about police brutality, by treating students like adults and having the aforementioned real conversations with them, Michelle stressed that:

I know what they are 11, 12, 13, 14 years old, but they can . . . Especially adolescents, their sense of justice, developmentally in their brains they are developing that sense of justice. That’s why you always hear teenagers be like, that’s not fair, you didn’t tell them to stop, and told me to stop. They are obsessed with things being fair, and equal, and all that. So if you can play on that sense of justice for them I think that usually just is right in their wheelhouse (Shaver, interview, August 31, 2016).

Hence, by creating lessons with the goal to foster empathy in students, and dedicated unscheduled curricular time to discuss issues that can make students explore alternative

viewpoints, Michelle worked to foster the creation of classroom community and empathetic students.

Sheryl, philosophically, appeared to have a similar philosophy concerning fostering empathy in students, especially around the creation of a community of critical learners. Sheryl stressed that it was important for students to attain an empathetic position because by becoming empathetic “is the quickest and easiest way to get to understanding your fellow human being’s plight” (Shaver, interview, July, 26, 2016). She went on to stress that it isn’t forcing a different ideology upon someone, but allowing a student to “at least be able to see someone else’s point of view, and get them to understand that just because I see your point of view . . . I’m not trying to get you to just agree with someone else’s point of view, that’s not the point” (Shaver, interview, July 26, 2016). Sheryl, using Donald Trump as an example of the dangers of not having an empathetic position for the alternative realities and lives of other individuals, stressed that a lack of empathy is the “whole reason [he] is a person of power . . . Whatever it is he’s doing he can say racist things, he can say hateful things, he can say hurtful things, and people will totally overlook it because it doesn’t affect them” (Shaver, interview, July 26, 2016). This is, of course, the antithesis of what Sheryl (and Michelle) advocated for teaching students empathy:

So you’ve got to get your kids that kind of information, you’ve got to get them to a place where they can have that, at least a tiny level of empathy passing through so that they can be productive members of society. There are so many people out there that don’t, and that any shape, form, or faction have never seen anyone else that’s different than them. . . . They’ve never lived in a position where they have not been in power, and so everything seems like it’s a limit on our power (Shaver, interview, July 26, 2016).

There is one other important note here to make. Sheryl made sure to stress that she attempts to foster empathy in students for other groups, not producing sympathy for other groups. Sheryl stressed that sympathy “can be condescending. Sympathy can be patronizing” (Shaver, interview, July 26, 2016). Thus, empathetic thinking is the goal of Sheryl’s teaching. However, as seen during observations of Sheryl’s classrooms, this philosophy did not translate to her teaching.

Observations of Sheryl’s classroom did not provide any moments or discussions that demonstrated the fostering of empathy for students. However, the lesson plans Sheryl shared showed various lessons and materials that she used at other times in the school year could allow her to foster empathy and counternarrative in her classroom for her students. To do so, she relied on video clips to provide students a window to past historical events that they were examining. Two main lessons revolved around an examination of the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic cleansing by using *Hotel Rwanda* as the centerpiece for her lesson. Students were required to fill out a lengthy packet examining the conflict, supplemented by the movie and classroom conversations. The same was done when she shows students a documentary about the Tulsa Race Riots, showing students an aftermath of the bombing of the wealthy black community by white police officers. She explained why she used the video clips, saying:

How do you think they portray it? Then I show them some video clips. Look, this is how they portray it. They’re like oh my gosh, that’s terrible, they think of us that way. I was like well think about it, you’re chilling at the crib, bombs start flying. Your next door neighbor gets blown to bits, this house is gone, the school is. And who did it? The United States (Shaver, interview, July 26, 2016).

It is important to note here that the majority of Sheryl's students are students of color. Hence, this examination of the Tulsa Race Riots may be more personable for these students due to the subject matter, something that Sheryl stressed.

Ray, much like Sheryl, expressed the importance of fostering empathy in his students, but classroom observations did not show him practicing his philosophy as evidently as was discussed in our personal interviews. Additionally, at times, Ray's personal philosophy didn't appear to be fully coherent, sometimes rambling toward a position where he seems to slip into a position of power in the classroom that mimics the master/student relationship extolled by Freire (2010) as part of the banking system of education where he had the knowledge he was attempting to present to students who did not have it. For instance, when asked how he fosters empathy in his students, he stated that he "felt like . . . a character in a movie" when addressing students in his class, idealizing an elevated position in his role of a teacher (Shaver, July 22, 2016). However, despite this inflated sense of his role, his intentions appeared to be genuine in regards to his teaching philosophy; it just appeared to lack proper execution, particularly around the language he used when talking about setting goals and teaching his students. For example, Ray stated that when teaching American history and examining American society, he stated that his end goal is to produce "productive citizen[s], that was my, I call it don't be the guy on *Cops* pedagogy" (Shaver, interview, May 20, 2016), that seems to assume that some of his students may end up on the television show that has a negative connotation toward individuals of color and people of color. Additionally, when discussing his pedagogy, Ray brought up the notion of the using of a "shock collar or something like that" in regards to students forming an "informed opinion that they

understand that your perspective is a very, very important tool, and also to keep them from hating each other” (Shaver, interview, May 20, 2016). While it seems that his personal teaching philosophy fosters empathy in his students (and he does stress that this is a method he would not want to use), the notion of a shock collar, an item used on dogs to inflict pain upon an animal until it models the correct behavior, paints a picture of students being treated like animals until they enact the proper answer sought by the teacher or enacting a correct action that the teacher is looking to see after modeling it. This, then, not only equates students to animals, but again puts the teacher in a position of power akin to the master and the student extolled by Freire (2010). He also meditated on the thought of how his students come into his classroom potentially filled with hate of other groups of people that do not look like them or believe what they believe. He stated that he sometimes wonders if he “overvalue[s] or undervalue[s] the amount of hate that some of these students come to school with . . . because some of them are some pretty fired up kids” (Shaver, interview, May 20, 2016). Regardless, Ray’s teaching philosophy, in regards to fostering empathy in his students, is idealistic in tone.

Ray believes that his end goal for teaching is for students to never end a lesson “with their students hating a certain group of people. I just want them to understand how these things happen, how they will continue to happen, and just try to build the knowledge base” (Shaver, interview, May 20, 2016). As a result, he hoped that by teaching social studies in a critical, progressive way, he showed how society consists of “the perspectives of individuals, the actions of individuals when all put together has a really big impact” (Shaver, interview, July 22, 2016). For example, Ray attempted to have students visualize themselves in past historical situations. Specifically, he attempted

to have students imagine what it would be like to live during the era of American slavery by having students talk about what it would be like if:

you grew up on a plantation, we talked about traveling, and how people communicated, so that's your world probably for a lot of kids growing up in the American south in the early, first half of the 19th century. It's like how you know that that was wrong, especially if you have never seen, you never saw a slave killed by someone that worked on the plantation, or something like that, you never saw those violent acts, how would you know that was wrong? So I asked them, I was like, we played make believe. I said close your eyes, and think about that for a minute. It was just a good conversation because they were way more empathetic than I think, not that I thought they would be, but way more empathetic than I think a lot of people think they would be. Indiana, this is a diverse group of students, and yes, I mean it was just a healthy, productive conversation about that. And the consensus was that you would not know. And it kind of helps them, it just lowers those barriers to learning. Again taking bullets out of the hate gun, that sort of thing (Shaver, interview, May 20, 2016).

He also stated that he enjoyed appealing to the senses of students in an attempt to get them grounded in the materials they are studying, having them attempt to understand what it would have smelled like living in Europe during the Black Death, believing that such an attempt to learn using their senses would assist in an empathetic notion. He would constantly ask students to answer "what does that look like? What does that sound like? What does that smell like? What do you hear? What's around you?" (Shaver, interview, July 27, 2016). While this approach was not held in common with the other five teachers, Ray ardently advocated that this was a pathway to the teaching of empathy.

White Students and a Lack of Empathy. Interestingly, when discussing empathy, two teachers, Marley and Christina, both believed that their jobs were incredibly important. That is, teaching in schools that are overwhelmingly white and economically privileged, they are attempting to have white students develop empathy for people of color and individuals who are not economically privileged. Each shared

similarly philosophies as to the importance of having students develop empathy, but each stressed how much more important it was for white students.

Marley, like Michelle, possessed a philosophical outlook centering on the importance of creating lessons that would foster empathy in students throughout her taught curriculum. Marley spoke about what it was like to teach in an overwhelmingly white school system and how the students lacked a great deal of empathy, particularly for students of color. Marley noted that teaching in an overwhelmingly white suburban high school is incredibly different than in an urban school: “when you’re teaching in an urban setting, [students in urban schools] don’t need to hear about counternarratives, and dominant narratives. They do, but not to the extent that [white suburban] kids do” (Shaver, interview, April 25, 2016). It is here, in a suburban white school, that a critically-oriented teacher could make a major impact on the perspectives of white students. She stressed that in the white community in which she teaches, the white dominant narrative is “pretty prevalent” and that many students could not understand or empathize with a different world view as they “live in this great little community with lots of other people like us” (Shaver, interview, July 26, 2016). However, relating back to the theme of facilitating and creating a global community where individual actions are interlinked, she realizes that many of her white students will not remain in this homogeneous white community, with many going to:

leave for college, they’re going to leave for jobs, they’re going to leave for whatever reason, and when we leave, what are we sending them with? Are we send them with this idea, again, that divisive mentality that I have and you don’t, so I’m going to treat you as lesser or whatever? I don’t know, I just, I find that very problematic (Shaver, interview, July 26. 2016).

She continues, discussing how she facilitated a curriculum that would resonate with white students. Marley stated that she, as a white woman (and she on multiple occasions discussed the social privileges her whiteness gives her), feels a “big responsibility . . . to have these conversations [about race, racism, and counternarratives] . . . because I’m basically staring at my own self 15 years ago” where she personally wished that someone would have had similar critical conversations about race and counternarratives when she was in high school (Shaver, interview, April 25, 2016). By exposing her white students to counternarratives that counteract the white dominant narrative, she believed that it would not only expose white students to “something different than they get most places,” but would allow them to begin interrogating (if students bought into the curriculum) how many whites “default to the dominant narrative, and so for them they have exposure to something different . . . [and] have a chance of learning some things about tolerance before they graduate high school” (Shaver, interview, April 25, 2016). To do this, her curriculum is rife with the views and stories of non-white individuals. She realized that there is a “power of storytelling” that many students seem to hang on to, especially when someone tells “a personal story . . . [sharing] those things as often as [she] can with [her] students” (Shaver, interview, April 25, 2016). As a result, these counternarratives have the potential impact to expose her white students to alternative “experiences [that] will actually mean more to them than just hearing oh this happens sometimes in the real world” (Shaver, interview, April 25, 2016). This, in turn, creates and fosters empathy for viewpoints of non-white, non-affluent people that creates an environment that does not breed “divisiveness, and this us versus them, or the haves and the have nots mentality” that helps foster racism and racial divides (Shaver, interview, July 27, 2016). In the end,

the goal is to make her students more empathetic, creating that global community that all the other teachers wished to build.

Christina, much like Marley, had the same views considering how important it is to foster empathy in white students while teaching in an overwhelmingly white suburban high school. Much like all previous teachers, her goal was to foster the creation of a community of empathetic learners, presenting to them historical and social inequities that she “can’t help but be appalled over” (Shaver, interview, July 17, 2016). However, she stressed that, regardless of color, her goal for her classroom and curriculum was to create students who are more “respectful and tolerant of each other than maybe previous generations have been. I have a diverse family, and it’s important to me that everybody is, even if you don’t get it you can at least try to see it” (Shaver, interview, May 12, 2016). In order to establish a classroom where such a process can occur, she stressed that her students must be open-minded when talking with their fellow students. In her classroom, she stated that “you don’t have to actually respect the person, or their viewpoint, but you do have to treat them with respect” (Shaver, interview, May 12, 2016). In regards to her white students, Christina has observed that many do not have an empathetic viewpoint toward people of color and people of low economic status simply because many white students “just don’t have [empathy]. We are, we’re, it’s super self-centered, we are not community focused” (Shaver, interview, July 17, 2016). However, she sees spaces in her curriculum where there is room to foster empathetic growth, even in a subject like Economics, that can serve as a “vehicle for [her] to teach [students] about how to be a live human being . . . understanding other peoples’ viewpoints, and creating empathy” (Shaver, interview, May 12, 2016). For example, when teaching her

Economics class, a number of students playing a modified game of Monopoly where different students are given different amounts of money or different types of preferential treatment depending on where they land on the board, fostered classroom conversations about equity and fairness, particularly after Christina revealed that the entire game relates “back to . . . legacies of discrimination,” further exacerbated when rules are changed to make it more fair, showing that a legacy of privilege is incredibly advantageous historically (Shaver, interview, May 12, 2016). Furthermore, in her classes, she works to break down abstract social concepts in an attempt to spur on discussion and foster understanding and empathy. Poverty, for example, is broken down by having students:

focus on people who look the most like them. So we talk about people that lost their house, lost their jobs, and whatever. But before that they were this. So it always comes up, the welfare queen at the store with the iPhone . . . and she’s using food stamps. So we talk about the different reasons that that might happen. Hey, do you know someone who abuses food stamps, or frauds welfare? Oh okay, yes. Well do you know anyone who had a nice job, and they had nice things, but then they lost it? Do you know anyone who got custody of their grandkids, and now they’re raising these other people’s kids, and so even they have a job maybe they need some help. Show them statistics about who is on welfare . . . demographic information, location, age. The type of occupations that people are in. So I try to make it look like them. I guess that’s the answer with how I try to promote empathy is I try to make these things, these horrible things or whatever look like them (Shaver, interview, July 17, 2016).

Thus, it is about painting a human face on abstract principals, making it realistic and relatable to foster an empathetic mindset.

All of the teachers, while possessing different philosophical stances, did, however, have similar goals in imbuing their curriculum and classroom with materials and discussions that can foster empathy for alternative viewpoints in their students. While the teachers did have different overall strategies with how to do so, the collective end goal for all of them was the same: the development of a community of empathetic

learners. Even more so, two of the teachers, working within white districts, specifically worked to have white students come to an empathetic position with students of color and students of low socioeconomic status since many white students were so taken by the dominant narrative in society that they lacked any sort of empathetic lens.

Teaching Controversial Issues within a Social Studies Curriculum

Another theme to emerge from the data was how teachers articulated the issues that arise when choosing to teach a potentially controversial curriculum. In particular, the teachers talked about how they had to work to navigate classroom spaces when teaching controversial issues, oftentimes working to correctly frame how they wish to examine an issue with their students. Additionally, matters concerning a “filtering” of content came into play, with the teachers having to, at times, pick and choose what should and should not be covered in their classrooms.

“Framing” Content. Several of my study participants discussed how, when approaching certain issues, they purposely worked to “frame” the issues in a way that would be educational and seemingly less of an issue to examine educationally. Christina, for example, brainstormed methods on how to discuss the Black Lives Matter movement within a massively white classroom and school environment. Christina spoke about how she wants her students to:

make sure that when I bring up race and Black Lives Matter, that they can see why there is activism on that part. And this group . . . this group was good about getting . . . they really jump to the conclusion that whites are dirt bags. And . . . that [false belief about the philosophy of Black Lives Matter] isn't at all like . . . Hello! I'm white. There is a need to examine what happened in the past and then work to make some changes. It isn't about reveling about whites in the past being dirt bags (Shaver, interview, September 14, 2016).

Here, Christina’s mindfulness about the topic and issue is multifaceted; she attempted to deconstruct false knowledge that many students have concerning the Black Lives Matter movement and what the Black Lives Matter movement is advocating to change at a social and structural level while also understanding that many of her students may have internalized the aforementioned stereotype. It is here, this working to “frame” the topic in an educative light, that other teachers stressed was important when examining controversial issues. However, Christina also spoke about how this “frame” may, at times, consist of a deliberate non-examination of some issues.

Marley showed similar direction and “framing” when assisting her students on a small group project. Multiple groups had issues with the topics of their presentations about a number of social and historical issues pertaining to Africa. Marley worked to have students “frame” their project on controversial issues, simultaneously helping students understand concepts they could not comprehend. For example, one group, examining the impact of South African apartheid on “the poor,” Marley directed to instead be:

Interested in learning about the ‘lower classes’ of people. The story we most hear is the story of the higher class of people. What you are talking about right now is the dominant narrative . . . the major story that we are told . . . and in this case it is talking about the privilege of white men and women. What you want to do is look at the counternarrative . . . there is another story here that doesn’t get told. What is making my skin crawl is that you are labeling them as the ‘lower class’ . . . you may not have the language . . . and that’s okay. You need to communicate that these are people. They are not as privileged as white people’ (Shaver, filed notes, August 31, 2016).

Again, there is work by the teacher to “frame” the topic of study in a manner that examines the topic in a productive, educative way. This is done to avoid issues that may arise in regards to students, administrators, or parents contesting what is being taught.

Similarly, to make sure the content is appropriate for students, the teachers noted that certain content should be examined before teaching to see if that content is important information for their students to learn at the potential risk and exposure to trouble that it brings for the teacher.

Choosing Content to Teach. In addition to the “framing” of issues, these teachers spoke of “filtering” or choosing content for their students that they believed would be responsible to teach for their students and for their classrooms. Michelle stressed the importance of teaching the truth in her classroom, regardless of if the official textbook or mandated curriculum stated otherwise. She showed her distain with how the middle school American history textbook began with “Columbus, and Europeans coming [to North America]. I don’t start there, because they were not the first people here” (Shaver, interview, August 31, 2016). In this instance, it is an ethical obligation on Michelle’s part that motivated her selection of what to teach.

Christina, however, spoke of this matter from her perspective; in particular, regarding content that may be too personal to cover (which also had ethical obligations). When we spoke, the shooting and murder of several Dallas police officers and of two unarmed black men (Sterling and Castile), were a little over a week old. Discussing these events in particular (in a discussion about when these topics should be brought up in the classroom), she candidly discussed a line that transgressed personal need versus professional practice. Christina spoke that she was glad for the summer break because if these events happened during the school year, she would have felt “compelled to talk about Sterling, and Castile, and Dallas, and I don’t want to” (Shaver, interview, July 17, 2016). She elaborated further, stating that discussing the topic “has the potential to really

hurt people, children who don't know how to deal with it. I'm not dealing with adults . . . because just a few days after Dallas, and just so much anger, and frustration, and confusion and hate" (Shaver, interview, July 17, 2016). Thus, to avoid tensions running high, Christina decided that the conversation should be had, but not when it was so fresh in the minds of students and adults as the discussion, while important, could have ended up becoming more counterproductive than productive. Ray had a similar experience, choosing to censor his personal thoughts concerning the election, giving students non-committal answers when responding to questions about who he planned to vote for. This self-censoring, this picking-and-choosing of what should and should not be taught or discussed, permeated how the teachers approached their classroom and their curriculum.

“Not Rocking the Boat”/Under the Radar. “A prevailing notion among the teachers was not to “make waves...to ruffle feathers.” (Shaver, focus group, October 1, 2016). By not doing so, they are allowed to operate their classrooms as they so wish. Sheryl expressed a similar disposition as Marley's; however, her viewpoint arose from a tacit understanding of what her administration was looking for from her classroom from year-to-year. She noticed that the administration was more concerned with the test scores of her students on standardized mathematics and English/Language Arts tests than what she was teaching in her classroom curriculum. In regards to this situation, Sheryl stated that she didn't necessarily have the freedom and consent from her administrators to teach her entire curriculum. Instead, by agreeing to follow her school's directive, she would remain “under the radar” to teach the curriculum she wants to teach, regardless of the constant from the standardized exam:

I just do it. We have these tests we have to give the kids, and I . . . We have these quarterly exams we have to give, we have these every two

week tests we have to give. It just has really dawned on me this year, no one looked at my data, so I did all that for nothing actually (Shaver, interview, July 26, 2016).

Regardless of this attempt to not “make waves,” there are times where actors from outside of the classroom attempt to exert their influence to change what is being taught to students because they are not accepting of the teachers’ curricular choices. Sheryl spoke of an instance when parents attempted to have her discontinue using *Hotel Rwanda* in her classroom, white parents/grandparents who were “upset, [questioning] why was I showing that? . . . are you going to explain to them that’s not the only place that happens . . . [and] to white folks too?” (Shaver, interview, May 9, 2016). It was only after telling the parents/grandparents that Serbia (and other locations) were mentioned in her curriculum (in addition to Native American genocide) that the parents were appeased. In Sheryl’s words, she believes that sometimes “you’ve got to be a renegade . . . as long as I’m not putting anything in here that has got any lewd images, or cussing, or things like that,” she feels that she will not have any pushback from parents (Shaver, interview, May 9, 2016). However, this seems to be a response to her learning how to navigate the school environment and the social environment; she discussed at length how she learned to navigate the white dominant narrative as a black woman in society:

I hate to say it but being a black woman all my life I’ve gotten used to navigating the white man’s world. I understand the things that I have to do to get through, get on to the next thing, and I’ve prepared for it since my parents first started teaching me things like that when I was young. It’s something that you just, as a black person in America, you get used to it. You get used to the ideas of racism, you get used to, you understand that there are going to be people that think you can and cannot do certain things because of your skin color, and because of the fact you’re a woman. You just get used to that. *Sometimes I have the strength to buck the system, and other times I just, I’ve got to do what I’ve got to do in the moment to get by* [emphasis added] (Shaver, interview, May 9, 2016).

This navigation of the system, a picking-and-choosing of where to fight, showcases why the teachers discussed why “laying low” would facilitate the ability to teach controversial issues in their classroom. As long as they were not banned from doing so, and all relevant actors are satisfied, they have the relative freedom to teach what they wish to teach, even if their choices may result in fear for their jobs.

Fear. Fear and the consequences of teaching controversial issues also was an issue that the participants in my studies discussed. Michelle, harking back to the discussion of the Dallas shooting, remarked that she would be “afraid to talk about” the incident due to the “toxic” nature of it (Shaver, July 17, 2016). Ray also felt some trepidation in regards to teaching controversial issues, generally exposing that educators “work in fear” at times of losing their job because of what they choose to teach, a reality that is “so counterproductive” (Shaver, interview, May 20, 2016). Marley discussed how her individual views have led to some of the older white teachers at her school creating an unproductive tension between themselves and her, earning her the title of the “angry female liberal” on her school’s teaching staff (Shaver, focus group, October 1, 2016). Regardless of this sense of fear, the teachers realized that there are a number of support structures in place to assist in teaching.

Structures of Support

In order to teach a curriculum full of counternarratives and controversial issues, some of the teachers worked to develop various structures of support, both within the school, within the administration, and outside of the school. However, the networks of support were very individualized to each teacher, with differing school policies and

procedures impacting the amount of support each teacher received when teaching a curriculum that encompasses controversial topics.

Teacher-Teacher Support. To begin, it appears that the most prevalent of support systems occurred between the teachers and other professional educators who had similar (or somewhat similar) teaching styles or teaching philosophies. However, Christina stressed that in her building and in her department, she felt almost no support for her curricular decision (Shaver, interview, May 12, 2016). This teacher-teacher support system either was facilitated by different school districts providing additional professional development and planning time for teachers or other like-minded teachers that my participants happened to locate and befriend. In the instance of the former, Sheryl discussed how her school district facilitated time for teachers to collaborate on lesson plans while doing curriculum mapping, particularly with other social studies teachers outside of her building (but still within her school district). As a result of this collaboration, Sheryl was able to supplement some of her existing lessons with materials that other social studies teachers were able to provide her. Additionally, ideas were swapped around planning units around the study of special topics, including the election that could potentially examine some issues that would not normally emerge.

Michelle and Ray had a similar teacher-teacher support networks in their buildings that was facilitated by school policy. Michelle, teaching in a smaller middle school, attended meetings twice a week with other teachers from each of the different subject areas. In these meetings, the teachers were able to collaborate on interdisciplinary lessons. Michelle noted that such meetings allowed all of the teachers to understand “what’s happening . . . [so that they are able to] co-plan” (Shaver, interview, May 17,

2016). For Ray, the planning and in-school network was similar. While he noted that his fellow teachers were “light on collaboration,” they were, instead, “heavy on communication. We’re an advocacy group” who share information on the achievement of their shared students. He continued, saying that the other teachers in his school are “a young group, we see the world . . . similar enough. We’re different people, we have some different motivations . . . and we’re always talking about having courageous conversations, and that sort of thing” (Shaver, interview, May 20, 2016). While this may not have translated into Ray’s actual observed teaching, he believed that there was a supportive network that supported a teaching style that had “courageous conversations” about controversial curricular topics.

Marley, however, had a somewhat different teacher-teacher support network than the previously mentioned participants. Marley first noted that while her school does provide her time to reach out and plan lessons with other teachers, it is not a network that she felt fully supported within. Instead, she felt like her teacher-teacher support network was one that she had “built for [herself]” composed of teachers who happened to be in her “friend group . . . [after meeting as] colleagues first, but it became apparent that we could be much more than colleagues” after they shared their like-minded views around what should be taught in school, including finding ways to teach “critical race theory for high schoolers, or how do we embed that into what we already have to teach, and how do we address” controversial topics (Shaver, interview, April 25, 2016). This creation of her own network of teacher-teacher support came about from her recognizing that her school district did not provide any opportunities to help her create a curriculum based around counternarrative and controversial topics. She noted that:

It's not that I feel like I'm being mentored to teach these things, or anything like that. But I think that I'm collaborating, and in conversations with like-minded teachers that are willing to have these hard conversations, and to me that's invaluable. To be in conversations, hard conversations with other teachers first, and to navigate with them how do we respond when these things are said, I think that's the big support structure (Shaver, interview, April, 25, 2016).

Thus, when she realized that the school was not providing her enough opportunities to improve her teaching and her curriculum, she sought help elsewhere with a like-minded teacher.

Administration. A second potential structure of support mentioned by my study participants was the school administration themselves. However, this greatly varied from building-to-building, as several teachers in my study indicated that their administration either provided minimal or no support for their personal teaching philosophy and curriculum.

Supportive Administration. A few teachers in my study expressed that their building administrators were fully supportive of their curriculum and teaching styles, allowing them to feel comfortable in their classrooms and safe in retaining their jobs. For example, Michelle immediately identified her principal as one of the primary support mechanisms of her teaching. She stated that her principal is “the most supportive principal I’ve ever, ever known. She lets me do whatever I want,” without threat of negative consequence (Shaver, interview, May 17, 2016). Besides the “hands-off” approach about being told what to teach, she also appreciated how her principal was able to assist in “blocking” any issues that central administration raises that would impact her teaching, mainly because the school in which she teaches “is the crown jewel [of the

district], so they don't mess with us. But I have had lots of pressure at other, when I have been at other schools" (Shaver, interview, May 17, 2016).

Sheryl appreciated the same "hands off" approach, allowing her "carte blanche to do whatever [the teachers] want" in regards to planning her curriculum (Shaver, interview, May 9, 2016). However, this support may be a result of a perceived focus on other subjects by the administration; Sheryl stressed that her administrators "don't care if I teach social studies at all, they just really care that I support language arts" (Shaver, interview, July 26, 2016). Ray reports a similar appreciation for his school administrator, believing that the administrator "trusts [his] judgement" in regards to how he handles his classroom.

Non-Supportive/Non-Existent Administration. On the other hand, several participants mentioned that their administrators were either non-existent or non-supportive of their classroom choices. Christina, teaching in a district that adheres to an incredibly strict curriculum scope-and-sequence, immediately noted that she received no support in her curricular decision making. Of course, the curriculum mapping is a major factor in this observation, with Christina remarking about the fact that all social studies teachers are "required to give the same tests on roughly the same day. So I have to fit my stuff into the mold that's already there" (Shaver, interview, May 12, 2016). She continued to elaborate upon the fact that she receives no support from her administrators when she decides to discuss a potentially controversial matter in her classroom. When it comes to her curriculum, Christina stated that she feels incredibly "restrained" as to what she can and cannot teach because

this is a very white school . . . I just feel like I can't get as much into [controversial discussions] as I want to because it starts to feel like I'm

hearing some kind of agenda. And it's important to me, I don't want [students] to just write off what I'm saying as some liberal agenda, because it's not about that for me (Shaver, interview, May 12, 2016).

Because of this, a great deal of Michelle's teaching of controversial topics is done in a subversive manner without the administration's knowledge, particularly when projects or extra assignments accompany the content. Christina expressed some fear of being discovered by the administration and punished for her curricular choices. She continued:

If they find out that I'm doing something different, or any teacher is doing something different than what they expect, or what they feel everybody is doing, they approach you and ask about it. And the kids know that too. So if I want to do this project, and they don't like it, they can so oh [Christina]'s making us do this project, it's so dumb, nobody else has to do it, and it just brings questions (Shaver, interview, May 12, 2016).

However, she stated that when a parent was angered in the past about an Advanced Placement World History teacher in her building who was teaching students about the Islamic faith, the administration "was supportive of her. So, standard. So I don't feel like . . . But I guess some of the discussion that I have in here I just kind of hope they stay here" (Shaver, interview, May 12, 2016). As such, the administration does offer token support, but does not approve of what may be being taught in her classroom.

Supportive and Non-Supportive Administration. Marley, however, has an administration that is both supportive and non-supportive of her classroom teaching. They fully support what content she chooses to teach; however, they do not support outreach efforts and professional development she wishes to offer to other teachers within the school. Marley generally felt "completely supported by [her] administration . . . in terms of [her] day to day instruction" and that "nobody is really pushing back on the fact that I'm not following the understanding by design curriculum map to a 't'" (Shaver,

interview, July 26, 2016). She said this, even though she does not really care if the administration does not approve of her content:

I don't feel like I'm in a situation where when my door closes I can teach whatever I want kind of thing, because I really try hard to always have a very open door policy. You don't need to tell me when you're going to come evaluate me, just come and do it because I don't care. I'm going to be teaching this regardless of whether you're here or not (Shaver, interview, July 26, 2016).

She also voiced how the administration supported her when parents contacted the school when they were angry about what was being taught in her classroom. She remembered one instance after crafting an elaborate, angry email to a parent, was given permission to “send my response as it was. I didn't have to modify anything . . . [but the] administration totally had my back” (Shaver, interview, July 26, 2016). While supportive in her individual teaching, when Marley wanted to impact some school-wide change, her administration immediately became much more obstructionist and non-supportive.

In a number of instances, the administration at Marley's high school did not support various ventures that Marley sought to undertake in regard to community outreach and professional development. For example, Marley's school was subject to a national news story when a white student tweeted a photograph of a black male being lynched to a black male student with a racist caption telling the black male student that he (and other blacks) were the ones “taking losses” now. In the immediate aftermath, she discussed her thoughts as a private citizen on her personal Twitter. The next day at school, she dropped all of her previous plans to have students talk about what happened (Shaver, interview, April 25, 2016). A few days later, Marley attempted to submit a proposal to host a community panel to discuss the incident with the community, discuss how it was a racist act, and have a counternarrative to the overwhelmingly white

community as to why the Tweet was so incredibly offensive. Marley wanted to have “the NAACP to be a representative on my panel. I want these voices to be heard, I want people to come and be able to share their personal experience about how they are discriminated against today for being a person of color” (Shaver, interview, April 25, 2016). Instead of an administrator approving this panel soon after the proposal was submitted, the proposal was never reviewed nor discussed until after the school was out for the summer; thus, it did not cause an issue for the school or the community. The same “radio silence” response from the administration occurred when Marley and an English teacher proposed a professional development session for district teachers that would help teachers begin to “address people of color in a curriculum, and how do you deal with a racist student . . . [The administration] won’t let me. They won’t tell me. I have documentation and they won’t even let me” (Shaver, focus group, October 1, 2016). To Marley, this is entirely unacceptable, even after the administration attempted to utilize her to “turn [older, uncritical teachers] around, share some of [her] ideas . . . [instead of facilitating time where she and other teachers can] make really good curriculum. Let’s brainstorm together and come up with good shit” (Shaver, interview, July 26, 2016). She also constantly pointed out issues of racial inequity in her school, including questioning why many of her “at-risk senior [remediation students are] predominantly boys, and students of color. Has anyone noticed that here? Because I have, and I think that’s a problem” (Shaver, interview, April 25, 2016). These multifarious issues are, to Marley, the result of her administration wanting to make sure that she (and other teachers) did not “ruffle the feathers” of parents or other members of the community. As part of her earning her Masters degree in school administration, she has inferred from her post-

secondary education that by placating parents and other community members, the school and administration are able to show that everything is just “running smoothly” and not creating any newsworthy issues that would reflect poorly on the school as a whole (Shaver, focus group, October 1, 2016). Marley did not want this to happen. In her words, letting everything “run smoothly” is the:

antithesis of [her] job. [Her] seniors are about to leave the bubble and they are going to have a bad time . . . and parents are going to be upset because I am going to say something they are not going to like. [Parents and administrators just want her to create] good little academics (Shaver, focus group, October 1, 2016).

As a result, she has had to navigate both spaces, picking battles to best appease the administration while working to continue to find space to teach her curriculum.

Outside-of-School Support. A third structure of support to emerge from the study would occur outside of the teacher’s schools. For example, Marley spoke about the need to create a professional organization for like-minded teachers who want to learn how to teach controversial topics in their classrooms, as like-minded individuals are not in many classrooms in the same building. Instead, she has joined a number of groups that provide curricular materials covering a number of social justice issues that help to shape her curriculum, including a number of local activist groups who have taken part in the political process that may speak to students directly (Shaver, focus group, October 1, 2016). Michelle also spoke of the importance of fostering bonds with parents; by gaining their support, she has the ability to feel free in teaching the curriculum she wishes to teach. She elaborates on this fact by stating that:

any time that [she’s] teaching something really controversial, like the memoir of a child soldier, that book, there are some tough, tough things in that book . . . So I always give parents, I send a letter home, or I communicate, we have an online email, communicate to them if you don’t

want your child to participate in this we will find alternative projects for them. I've never had a parent opt out (Shaver, interview, May 17, 2016).

Thus, these out-of-school structures of support can also lend a hand to helping teachers foster critical conversations over controversial topics.

Personal Reasons for Teaching Critical Social Studies

Interestingly, the teachers in my study all shared that, besides the aforementioned ethical obligations, all had very personal reasons as to why they teach their individual curriculums. Sheryl, for example, found her calling to teach while on an alternative career path: earning her law degree. Her switch to becoming a social studies teacher came about when she realized during a side-job of tutoring students in her free time away from studying, that she should have gotten into teaching “in the first place. I actually had an opportunity when I was an undergrad. I could have gotten my political science major, my government major, and gotten my teaching license” (Shaver, interview, May 9, 2016). It wasn't until she was working on summer tutoring with “those 10, 11, 12 year olds at the camp . . . [that she] started feeling that pull back” (Shaver, interview, May 9, 2016). It was this desire to help children, especially children of color, understand the society in which she lived, that Sheryl's teaching philosophy (as she stated) tended to be more critical than a normal teacher.

Michelle's calling was more of a need to utilize the social studies to eliminate a general sense of ignorance that she realized many Americans seem to have, particularly at the global stage. Michelle shared an instance that drove her down the road to developing her personal teaching philosophy when she was still completing her undergraduate degree in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks. Michelle shared that:

On 9/11 I was with some of my friends at [my undergraduate institution], my girlfriends in my sorority who I knew were really bright women, but were really clueless about what was going on in the Middle East, and/or our relationship to the Middle East. They didn't know who Osama Bin Laden was, they'd never heard the name. They didn't know about the terrorist attacks in '93. There was one girl that didn't know the difference between Palestine and Pakistan, she thought it was the same place . . . And I was, that's when I realize that there is a gap in understand world events, global events, and globalization, how we're all connected these days. And I just realized that nobody had ever taught these girls, or exposed these girls to that kind of information, and I thought that I could do that, so that's why I became a teacher (Shaver, interview, May 17, 2016).

By examining global interactions, current issues, and matters of race, gender, and sexuality in her day-to-day curriculum, Michelle constantly worked to fulfill this personal pedagogical goal of hers with middle school aged students. It will, in her mind, hopefully result in a better society where the students understand their connections to other global entities and persons.

Christina, as discussed previously, is personally motivated to create a more equitable and just society. As she stated, she enjoys teaching counternarratives in her classroom because, foremost, such an approach to teaching is “super interesting to [her]. That's what [she's] interested in, and so [she] feels like that's what [she's] best at teaching” (Shaver, interview, July 17, 2016). Overall, she hopes that a critical curriculum that examines controversial issues can help to have things “move in a direction that [she's] comfortable with in the next 100 years. So, that's what [she does] . . . Then maybe we will have a better world for [her] great grandkids to be in” (Shaver, interview, July 17, 2016). The fact that she mentioned family was relevant, as she has extra motivation to teach her personal curriculum. This motivation comes from the fact that she has a daughter of color. Christina, when talking about treating people justly, was fiercely protective of her daughter when discussing her personal vs. professional life on social

media. She spoke about how people “don’t get to smile at my daughter, and say she’s pretty, while you’re screaming about savages in Dallas . . . Be upset about Dallas. Dallas is disgusting. But you can’t remain silent on everything else” (Shaver, interview, July 17, 2016). All of this encompasses her overall goal of creating a more equitable and just society, for her children and for the children of others. Christina’s philosophy deeply intertwined with the personal philosophy of Marley, who spoke about how it is her goal to speak to students who are deeply influenced by the white dominant narrative, to create a more open, accepting, global society. Marley’s personal philosophy was discussed in depth in previous sections and, therefore, will not be expanded upon here.

Impact of Pre-Service Teacher Education Experiences

In line with the initial research questions asked for this study, each of the participants were asked about how their pre-service teacher education programs impacted the way they teach; in particular, they were asked if their pre-service teacher education programs impacted their decisions to teach controversial topics in their classrooms. Overall, all five of the teachers stated that their pre-service teacher education, as a whole, did little (to nothing) to influence their teaching philosophies. For example, Michelle rated the quality of her pre-service teacher education experience by noting that “It was horrible” (Shaver, interview, May 17, 2016). She noted that the quality of her program was reflected by the overall goal of the university that she attended:

it’s not a college of education. I mean it’s not, go there to be an engineer, go there to be a pharmacist, but don’t go there to be a teacher. I was not prepared at all, and I was a straight A student, it’s not like I was slacking (Shaver, interview, May 17, 2016).

On the other hand, Marley expressed some positivity about her overall college experience (not specifically her pre-service teacher education), in that her college experience was “much more liberal, much more progressive” than her upbringing.

All of the teachers believed that their pre-service teacher education was not a major factor in their choosing to teach controversial issues and counternarratives in their classrooms, regardless of their how they defined the overall impact of their general college-going experience. Within these sentiments, many were able to point out significant faculty members or classes, or a particular moment that stood out to them (both positive and negative), that helped to mold their teaching philosophies and curricular choices. As a result, it appears that these teachers did not believe that their pre-service teacher education made a significant impact on their decisions to teach controversial topics in their classrooms.

Specific Teachers or Classes that Made an Impact. To begin, it is important to note that while all of my participants stated that their pre-service teacher education program did not have a significant impact on their teaching style as a whole, a number of my participants did mention a specific class or professor that provided them with a critical lens to teach social studies to students. It is also important to note that Ray, Marley, Sheryl, and Christina all attended the same school of education to earn their teaching degree, albeit during different years. Christina, for example, talked at length about being exposed to critical social studies methods only after taking her social studies methods course with a nationally renowned scholar whose research agenda pushed for the teaching of critical social studies, particularly critical geography, in primary and

secondary schools. He, along with two other professors who were known to have a critical pedagogical philosophy, were each:

very focused on critical thought. And that is the most influential thing, because that did teach me, it did make me better able to pull out, how do you make econ critical? So trying to figure out what I can pull out, and the things that I can talk about definitely had a big, it didn't occur to me before to look for it . . . So a shift in thinking. Obviously my methods class was a big part of that. (Shaver, interview, May 12, 2016).

The same professor was mentioned by both Ray and Marley due to how he had them examine critical social studies within his social studies methods class. Ray spoke about how the professor was “just one of those dudes that just keep learning . . . I felt like my teaching voice was very similar to his teaching voice” (Shaver, interview, May 20, 2016). He continued, stressing how this professor pushed him to “really dig deep into some, not dirty topics, but hard to talk about topics sort of thing, and how to just not be . . . scared” (Shaver, interview, May 20, 2016). Marley mentioned how the same professor (and other members of the faculty) was able to help her see how she had a great deal of “deficit thinking in [her] personal life. Then because of the influences [of the faculty], it opened doors for me to pursue things as an actual practicing teacher after [her] pre-service ed that [she] probably never would have experienced otherwise, or I wouldn't have tried” (Shaver, interview, April, 25, 2016).

It is important to mention here, however, that Marley was the only participant that believed that her pre-service teacher education program had a great impact on her teaching philosophy, particularly centered around how she viewed her students. As mentioned previously, Marley discussed how her pre-service teacher education faculty had her examine her deficit perspectives toward students of color and work to overcome such thinking. In fact, her teaching experiences within the program led her to want teach

in an urban setting, something that she never would have considered previously. Thus, the urban goal of her program, and the critical orientation of some of the faculty that taught within the program, were enough to help her confront some major personal issues in regards to her perception of her students. In this way, she viewed her pre-service teacher education program to be a positive influence. However, the other participants did not share her positive sentiment about their pre-service teacher training.

Negative Experiences with Pre-service Teacher Education. When discussing their pre-service teacher education program, some participants had a number of negative experiences that they shared that caused them to feel that their pre-service training was ineffective and not suited to their development as critically-oriented teachers. For example, Sheryl and Michelle both discussed that elements of their field placements during her pre-service teacher education were disastrous, both having to do with their mentor teachers in the field. Sheryl's mentor teacher, a white male social studies teacher in a classroom full of black students, did not, in her words "teach a second. I never saw him teach, ever" (Shaver, interview, May 9, 2016). Her mentor teacher, during her observations, did nothing but lecture next to his overhead projector with terrible classroom management and a lack of relationship building with his students. Her second placement, for her student teaching, went in a similar manner. Her mentor teacher, on the second day of teaching "folded up a newspaper and said I'll see you later this afternoon, and walked out . . . I didn't know where that cat was. I found him at lunch time up in the English lounge" (Shaver, interview, May 9, 2016). Both of these experiences resulted in a major lack of observing a mentor teacher model critical teaching. Instead, in the absence of the model teaching, Sheryl developed her teaching style and curriculum planning on

her own. As a result, the absentee mentor teaching, in her opinion became the “best thing to ever happen to me” in regards to her learning how to teach (Shaver, interview, May 9, 2016).

Michelle, in the same vein, had a terrible relationship with her mentor teacher, resulting in her having to go outside of her original mentor teacher’s classroom to find help during her student teaching. After meeting her mentor teacher for the first time, Michelle discovered that the white male teacher was:

probably the biggest misogynist I’ve ever met in my life . . . I don’t think he knew that he was getting a female. And if he would have known I don’t think that he would have picked or gotten me. . . And it was awful, it was awful, it was awful (Shaver, interview, May 17, 2016).

Thus, she had to seek assistance on her own as her host teacher refused to assist her more than the bare minimum. Luckily, Michelle found “one of the high school social studies teachers that was willing to adopt me a little bit . . . that teacher was a really positive experience” (Shaver, interview, May 17, 2016). Yet, despite the “foster teacher” that would provide her with some needed one-on-one help, she stressed that her pre-service teacher education program left her “completely unprepared. It’s actually a miracle that I’m still here today” (Shaver, interview, May 17, 2016). In addition, when asked about her critical orientation and her decision to study and discuss controversial issues in the classroom, she again stressed that these decisions were all inherently personal and were not, at all, influenced by her pre-service teacher education program. This, then, leads into the notion that many of my teachers had concerning how their own personal agency and ability to “find a fit” in the field of education, which did not emanate from their pre-service teacher education program.

Personal Decisions within Pre-Service Teacher Education/Finding a Fit. A

third item to emerge when discussing pre-service teacher education with my participants was the notion of personal decision making within their pre-service teacher education programs to fill the gaps that their programs were not filling or providing. Michelle spoke about how she was personally motivated when she went to college to become “a teacher myself. That was something that was always really important to me, to not narrow the curriculum to one viewpoint, so that is a personal reason” (Shaver, interview, May 17, 2016). Due to her perceived lack of a quality pre-service teacher education program, she had to learn when she started teaching professionally. Michelle stated that:

Everything I learned about how to teach, and especially how to teach in an urban school district, was on the job my first year. I started off teaching exactly how I was taught; lecture, notes, tests. And my kids were getting in fights every day, I mean it was miserable, it was miserable, and I was like something has got to change. So I just figured it out, I just did it on my own. I said something has got to change, I’ve got to figure out how to engage these kids (Shaver, interview, May 17, 2016).

She additionally sought out additional professional development opportunities that aligned with her personal teaching philosophy that were not offered to her during her pre-service teacher education program. She chose to attend the Harvard Project Zero classroom, attending a summer’s worth of classes at Harvard, on her own volition, because she believed it would make her a better teacher. Marley, similarly, sought out additional professional development opportunities and groups that would better align with her teaching philosophy that were not offered to her in her during her pre-service teacher education program. Groups, such as #TeachStrong, furthered her teaching ability and philosophy.

Conclusion

As a result of data analysis examining why and how five social studies teachers utilized a curriculum that examined controversial issues and counternarratives in their classrooms, seven major themes emerged from observations of their teaching, personal interviews, and examination of the products of student work. In order to teach such a curriculum, the five teachers all noted that it was critically important to first foster positive and professional relationships between themselves as teachers and their students. Secondly, the teachers talked about how important it was to go about facilitating critical conversations in their classroom, both as an educative and formative assessment tool but also as a method to bring about empathy in their students for individuals who do not share their worldview or their experiences, particularly white students. The teachers also spoke about how they went about teaching controversial issues in their curriculum and identified a number of potential risks that accompanied their personal decisions to teach in such a manner. The teachers also identified various structures of support, both inside and outside of the school building or district, for teaching a social studies curriculum full of controversial issues and counternarratives. Finally, the teachers all disclosed personal motivations for teaching their curriculum that they teach, before discussing the general ineffectiveness of their pre-service teacher education programs in regards to their curricular choices and overall preparedness to teach a critical social studies curriculum.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine how a select group of secondary social studies teachers, in both urban and suburban school settings, chose to integrate and use what they considered to be controversial issues and non-white counternarratives in their classrooms despite several institutional and structural barriers that encouraged them not to do so. Additionally, this study sought to discover what these teachers saw to be structures of support that assisted their ability to teach their individual curricula and how they underwent planning and teaching the students in their classrooms. The existing body of research, particularly research stemming from the pre-service teacher education field, was limited in offering explanations for why social studies teachers teach controversial issues in the classroom. Research is also limited regarding the social, personal, or institutional structures that support teachers to pursue such an endeavor. Findings from this study begin to provide some answers to these questions, adding to the existing body of literature. Emerging from the seven themes presented in the findings of this study, this study also has shown how the teachers embodied and enacted *parrhēsia* in their classrooms, despite having no prior knowledge of that philosophy.

Findings and Interpretations

Theme One: Fostering Positive and Professional Teacher-Student Relationships

One of the findings from this research was reflected in the importance of the five social studies teachers working to actively create a positive relationship between themselves and their students. All five participants stressed that this approach was critical in humanizing the teachers to the students and vice versa. By establishing these relationships, they stressed that it would allow them to create a sense of classroom

community that would allow them to go about teaching the curriculum with little student resistance, particularly if they taught within mostly white classrooms. It must be noted, however, that while all five of the participants stressed that this was a key part of their classrooms, Ray and Sheryl were not observed to have exhibited the same level of dedication to fostering a classroom-wide community, despite the importance of it as mentioned by academic literature.

A number of academics have written about the importance and impact of teachers creating a cohesive classroom community, resulting in positive learning attributes for the students within (e.g., Kiuru, et. al, 2015; Rey, Smith, Yoon, Somers, & Barnett, 2007; Newberry, 2010; Wang, Brinkworth & Eccles, 2013). Delpit (2012) initially stated that “*nothing* makes more of a difference in a child’s life than a teacher” (pp. 71-72). She expanded upon this this by mentioning the critical importance of fostering classroom community, explaining that teachers who have invested enough time into developing a classroom community are:

visible in the classroom. They held students’ attention. They were explaining concepts and using metaphors to connect the knowledge students brought to school with the new content being introduced. They used different kinds of media. They asked students to explain concepts to their peers. They posed questions that required thought and analysis and demanded responses. *No one* was allowed to disengage (p. 75).

Ladson-Billings (2009), in her seminal work examining the work of incredible teachers known for their multicultural classrooms that work to educate all students, specifically noted the importance of teachers creating a classroom community, one that encompasses the mantra that the teachers and students are “All in this together” (p. 64) and exist in a classroom that is both “Culturally Relevant . . . and Humanely Equitable” (p. 66).

Additionally, the creation of a classroom community, and the care of and humanization

of students, fights against existing bureaucratic structures that only attempt to examine teacher effectiveness in terms of student achievement on standardized exams. Valenzuela (1994), when examining existing research regarding teacher-student relationships and caring, wrote that “When teaching effectiveness gets reduced to methodological considerations and when no explicit culture of caring is in place, teachers lose the capacity to respond to their students as whole human beings and schools become uncaring places” (p. 74). In terms of *parrhēsia*, this establishment of classroom community does two things: first, it puts in place a strong vertical and horizontal relationship of power between the teacher and the students (Foucault, 2005), but also facilitates an environment where truth-telling and critical conversations can be fostered. Without the establishment of these relationships, *parrhēsia* could not occur. A final factor that contributes to the formation of these strong classroom relationships, as will be explored in a future section, are teachers with empathetic positions towards their students (Warren, 2013a). Simply put, teachers “create a classroom environment that supports or inhibits the expression of student opinion” (Evans, Avery, & Pederson, 1999, p. 219). Nevertheless, as all of these authors have shown, the creation of these positive relationships between teachers and students produces a number of positive effects, something that all of the participants in this study said they implemented on a daily basis. However, this was not the case.

For the most part, this type of teaching and sense of community was observed in the classrooms of Christina, Marley, and Michelle, and the results appeared to be in line with the aforementioned literature regarding positive student outcomes. In all three of their classrooms, the three women had professional but personable, horizontal and

vertical relationships with their students, all the while building up a form of social capital and trust that would allow these women to discuss controversial issues with their students. Such a method was discussed by Washington and Humphries (2011) when they discovered that teachers would place a major emphasis on:

building strong relationships with students before approaching controversial issues with them . . . [due to the fact that] if students viewed her as a fair and supportive teacher, then differing viewpoints could be more freely shared, and more importantly, students would not be inclined to 'rat her out' or misrepresent what was really happening in her classroom (p. 104).

Such actions and rapport between the teachers and their students appeared to foster a positive environment where they were able to hold conversations and teach lessons that traversed a number of controversial topics. Throughout the observations of their classrooms, students were observed to be highly engaged in classroom discussions, classroom work and lessons, and showed a willingness to participate in structured discussions. However, this was not observed to have happened in two other classrooms.

Ray and Sheryl, when observed, did not appear to have the same level of a personal or professional relationship with their students. It appeared that, overall, they were more focused on keeping students orderly to present their teaching materials for the day. That is not to say that they did not work on fostering a positive relationship between themselves and their students. In fact, Sheryl attempted to foster a playful, but professional relationship with her students; when her students were working, her reaction (and the relationship she appeared to have with her students) was overwhelmingly positive. Yet, when students became disengaged from their work, the relationship shifted away from one of positivity to one that emphasized teacher control. Students were told to remain quiet and were threatened with disciplinary action unless they fell into line. Such

treatment resulted in students withdrawing, becoming disengaged from the classroom lesson, and actually increased the amount of off-task behavior as students seemed to test how far they could misbehave before Sheryl would attempt to correct the behavior of the class, often in a loud, seemingly angry manner. Ray, in practice, worked to establish positive relationships with his students; however, his actions and some of his words appeared to make it seem as if there were some underlying issues with students of color that he did not wish to address (or did not realize he needed to address).

These “color-blind” actions, particularly on Ray’s part, could have been a result of his ignorance towards his racist acts and statements, or his selective sharing of what he thinks about students of color in a given setting (much like many other white teachers who teach students of color and commit racist acts in the classroom). To clarify, Ray equated the students he teaches (a majority of whom are students of color) to animals, invoking the image of using a dog collar, stressing that his minimum idea of education would be to make sure that students do not end up on the television show *Cops*, and vehemently defending a white male student’s feelings after the student made a racist statement in class and was called a racist. Returning to the notion of ignorance about racial issues, Pohan and Aguilar (2001) spoke of a:

two-dimensional (personal and professional) approach to assessing [racial] beliefs was based on the notion that there might be a situation in which one’s personal beliefs about a given issue could be in direct conflict with his/her beliefs in a professional context (p. 160).

Perhaps Ray, with his comments about having his students “not end up on *Cops*” or using “shock collars” as methods of education, in addition to his defense of the white student in his class who was called racist by a student of color, shows that in the professional realm, he is attempting to be anti-racist. However, in his comments outside of the classroom, his

personal feelings toward his students of color are different, showing a side that is different from his professional one. Perhaps his conversation with a white male allowed for him to be at ease when making these comments. However, his comments were not outright racist in interviews; instead, his frame of reference could be much more rooted in a form of “color-blind racism” as put forth by Bonilla-Silva within the overly white racist society of the United States (Feagin, 2010). Bonilla-Silva (2010) wrote that many whites are susceptible to color-blind racism’s “frames . . . because they do not rely on absolutes . . . and allows for a variety of ways of holding on to the frames—from crude and straightforward to gentle and indirect” (p. 48). Additionally, color-blind racism also uses “crude ways of displaying resentment and anger toward minorities . . . or *in compassionate ways* [emphasis added]” (p. 18). This use of color-blind racism, both the presence and philosophy, was very much reflected in the experiences of several teachers, which can eventually be a pathway to understanding racist thoughts and practices if given the opportunity to reflect upon them (e.g., Obidah & Teel, 2001). Regardless, color-blind racism as a frame of thinking allows for whites to “tiptoe around the most dangerous racial minefields because the stylistic elements of color blindness provide them the necessary tools to get in and out of almost any discussion” (p. 49). There is also the notion of “white fragility” that arose when Ray fervently defended his white male student from being called a racist by a black female in the classroom, insisting that the white male student’s comment about how immigrant Mexicans were talking away American jobs both was not racist and “not coming from a place of hate” (DiAngelo, 2011). Instead, the defensive action and statement made by Ray met the very definition of “white fragility” as defined by DiAngelo. DiAngelo stated that:

white fragility is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of *defensive moves*. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, guilt, and behaviors such as *argumentation*, silence, and *leaving the stress-inducing situation*. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium (p. 54).

Finally, Ray is not embodying *parrhēsia* if he is not being morally compared to not only speak about the racist actions in his classroom and how he attempted to handle it, but also he is not attempting to continue his moral transformation to understand himself, or for students to come to understand themselves by discussing these acts of racism and discussing race. Clearly, Ray is at a crossroads. In speaking about his students, he means well. He wants to teach students tolerance, to unload “bullets from the hate gun,” but his more casual, perhaps, unconscious words display different results.

Ray is a well-meaning teacher. However, his actions are a major issue, particularly when looking at the overly white teaching force, as Ray was suggested for my study as a teacher who addresses issues (such as race) in his curriculum. He means well and did attempt to have students talk about some controversial classrooms issues. However, his actions show that he is deeply influenced by the white dominant narrative and social norms of the United States. If he is an example of a good teacher who is cognizant of issues of race and racism, what of teachers who do not have pre-service teacher training to examine racial issues and work to become anti-racist? What of issues of growing waves of nativism and populism that may work to actively sabotage the creation of positive teacher-student relationships and cause massive divides along race, especially within urban settings, when the teachers are white and the students are of color?

Theme Two: Facilitating Critical Conversations

A second major finding from this study was the importance of finding ways for the teachers to structure their classroom and learning spaces in order to foster and have critical conversations with their students, a finding that is again reflected in current academic literature. In all five classrooms, the participants each took steps to ensure that their classrooms would be safe spaces, including setting various rules that would govern the conversations, taking leadership and direction of the conversations, and stressing that there are multiple perspectives that need to be considered and given weight. By creating a “safe space” for these conversations to happen, by allowing for certain teachers to model the practice of *parrhēsia* for their students, students’ opinions and comments (in theory) were given consideration for classroom-wide reflection (e.g., Boler, 2004; Foucault, 2011a, 2011b, hooks, 1994). Hess (2002), when writing about facilitating student discussion of controversial issues, stressed that the:

Teachers work to make the discussion the student’s forum . . . [and that their] roles as facilitators of the discussions most clearly demonstrate how the teachers work to enhance the likelihood that students will view the discussions as their own forums (p. 30).

Between the five teachers, two drastically different modes of facilitating critical conversations were utilized, with differing results and effectiveness (e.g., Michelle’s weekly free-flowing forum of discussion versus Ray’s fully directing the conversation one student at a time). The discussion style, however, was only one piece of the puzzle, as there were also very different approaches to the content and issues discussed between students and the teacher.

The overall content of the conversations varied from teacher to teacher. Michelle, Marley, and Christina constantly worked to bring issues of race, gender, and historical

fact into their classroom conversations, enacting a ‘speaking of truth to power’ approach. In these instances, each was clearly practicing aspects of *parrhēsia* in their teaching and striving to have students critically work through social structures of power that govern their lives. Additionally, these three teachers facilitated conversations in a way that students could undergo their own questioning and self-discovery, and the teachers’ choice of topics to teach and discuss was the clear pathway to their self-improvement. If the students came to their own opinions about matters of race, religion, and other topics, these teachers believed that a critical stance could be taught and fostered to maturation. Ray and Sheryl, however, had only had limited conversations with their students about critical issues and the content of the conversations did not match with what was being asked in the aforementioned three classrooms. What’s more, Ray’s conversational style seemed to alienate some of his students, having them disengaged from the conversation instead of participating within it. While Sheryl stressed that these conversations happened in her classroom, they were never observed to have occurred. Instead, Sheryl would interject general lecture with interesting points, but would not have students discuss them. While she did work to create a classroom space in which to have controversial conversations, they just did not occur. These deliberate choices, as Hess wrote (2002), influenced how the conversations would be led and experienced by the students, as the selected “discussion model and facilitator style . . . creates tensions and tradeoffs that influence the type and quality of discussion in teachers’ classes” (p. 31). Clearly, the more free-flowing, open conversations conducted by Michelle, Marley, and Christina had more buy-in from the students. An array of student voices were heard, students were debating topics democratically, and the teachers only chimed in to help move the

conversation forward. Ray and Sheryl's format, from a best-practices standpoint, cut off student interaction and conversation, leading to a much less impactful lesson (had it even occurred) with much less student dialog and learning.

Again, this finding is important for both pre-service and in-service teacher educators due to how it illustrates the differences among teachers' perceptions of their performance of how and what they teach versus the reality of their performance and their content. As Bickmore and Parker (2014) attempted to explore teachers who "wanted to (and believed they did) infuse conflictual conversations into their curriculum," the reality was that they observed nearly no episodes of "really passionate, unfettered conflictual conversation," a statement that could easily be used to define what Ray attempted to conduct in his classroom (p. 321). Ray and Sheryl, on the other hand, may have inflated notions about how critical their teaching actually is, a phenomenon that has previously been researched. Hess (2008), in regards to Ray and Sheryl's personal teaching philosophies not being critical, stressed that there are some teachers that report that their "social studies classes . . . [are] rich with controversial issue discussion" but when actually observed for content, as was done in this study, have a classroom where one would "rarely find discussion of any sort and little attention to controversial issues" (p. 127). Sadly, Hess appears to be correct in this instance with these teachers. And, for *parrhēsia* to be embraced and modeled in the classroom, these conversations about controversial issues must occur. Although each stressed that their daily curriculum examined such topics, in reality, they did not. Why is it, then, that there is a trend where social studies teachers will say that they cover these issues when they do not? Is it a matter of general ignorance as to what is considered to be a controversial topic? About

what is considered to be a taboo topic? Is it a matter of pride or a lack of growth in the field? All of these questions need to be asked and examined.

While all five of the participants in this study set up spaces where critical conversations could occur, there was some extreme deviation between methods used, resulting in some classrooms being more productive, engaging, and critical than others. Clearly, there is some room here to examine best practices for facilitating not only classroom conversations for new teachers, but also showing new and veteran teachers how to engage their students in critical conversation about controversial topics.

Theme Three: Fostering Empathy

A third major finding to emerge from the research was a collective notion from the participants that they believed that many of the students they taught, particularly their white students, needed to be taught how to empathize with the points of view of persons who do not look like them. This need for empathy, the teaching of empathy, and the understanding of another individual's reality, is inherent in the self-transformation and improvement of an individual engaging in *parrhēsia*. Interestingly, when examining the current body of literature, there is little written concerning the teaching empathy to white students. While the literature does promote the importance of teaching empathy and the many benefits it may have for students (e.g., Dolby, 2014; Kaya, 2016), there is a lack of literature examining why white students lack empathy toward people who do not share their racial and social realities. Additionally, there is few pieces of literature that offers suggestions on how to best teach white students empathy. The literature does, however, contain a number of studies that examine "teaching empathy" and its impact with the

education of pre-service and in-service teachers, and the impact that empathetic teachers have on their students (e.g., Warren, 2013a, 2013b).

Again, there is no agreed upon definition for what is constituted to be “empathy” (e.g., Bohart et. al, 2002; Brooks, 2009; Warren, 2013a; Warren, 2013b). However, within the social studies, there is also a place for teaching students “historical empathy” in an attempt to have them understand the actions of historical figures in the context of their environments (Brooks, 2009). It is within this area where social studies teachers can attempt to bring about empathetic thinking for both present and past individuals and peoples as they enact the tenets of *parrhēsia* in their classrooms. However, as mentioned by Warren and Hotckhins (2015), “false empathy” is pervasive in some instances within the development of pre-service teachers and in-service teachers and students. If this is the case, both the students and the teachers are not actually attempting to understand the reality of another individual. Instead, using stereotypes and false information, they are creating a judgement of another individual based on information being fed to them by the dominant narrative. It is this notion where the teachers in this study started to push back with their individual curriculums. They were, as O’Brien (2003) stressed in his work, attempting to make sure that their students, especially their white students, were developing empathy for students and people of color (as cited in Warren, 2005).

Returning to the participants in my study, the three white women, Michelle, Marley, and Christina, all spoke about the importance of having white students come to understand the realities of people who did not look like them. By introducing counternarratives into their classrooms via classroom assignments and discussion, they were able to provide their students with messages that challenged the dominant narrative

by examining these controversial topics and modeling *parrhēsia* (e.g., Banks, 2009, 2010a; Collins, 2009; Solórzano, 1997). Marley, in particular, was extremely cognizant of her position as a way to have white students gain an empathic lens for people of color, as she teaches in a prominently white community that may not have teachers with a critical social justice orientation. Without her offering counternarratives in her classroom, there is a realistic chance that they would not have a single teacher challenging their world view until college (if it even happens then). Christina and Michelle both offered similar opinions on the matter, each noting that it is their ethical obligations to promote for their students the need to care for others in the communities. Meanwhile, Sheryl stressed a similar viewpoint, but it was not observed in her teaching.

This commitment and practice is at odds with what the literature mentions about pre-service teachers. Pennington, Brock, and Ndura (2012) called for pre-service programs to teach students the importance and impact of being empathetic and understanding how students' lives may be different than their own, a practice that can be done if pre-service teacher education programs and pre-service teacher educators commit to modeling *parrhēsia* throughout the entire pre-service teacher curriculum and field experiences. The issue, however, is that this is not being practiced. Instead, as Adler (2008), Zeichner (1999), and Zeichner and Gore (1990) showed, existing pre-service teacher education programs do little to force pre-service teachers to change their existing mindsets, mindsets that may be full of stereotypes and “false empathy” for students that they will eventually teach, and then teach these false assumptions to more and more students. Instead, many pre-service teachers enter the classroom unprepared to teach students how to be empathetic (e.g., Ultman & Hesch, 2011; Warren, 2015; Waren and

Hotchkins, 2015). In order to combat this, existing in-service teachers who have been observed teaching students pathways to become empathic must share their abilities and experiences with pre-service teachers and pre-service teacher educators. If not, many white students will continue to have racist and racialized thoughts towards people of color that may never be challenged. Nonetheless, there remains a serious gap in literature here that needs to address the question: How do teachers teach white students how to be empathetic?

Theme Four: Teaching Controversial Issues within a Social Studies Curriculum

A fourth finding from my study involves the practices with which my participants approached teaching controversial issues within their individual social studies classes, including how to frame their content and choosing what to teach, which is one of the foundational tenets of *parrhēsia*. Additionally, this finding showcased the issues that arose for my participants while teaching controversial issues in their classrooms, including a feeling of fear and a need to not “rock the boat” and to be “under the radar,” all comments that have been associated with others in the academic literature. There are, however, some instances in which participants have gone against published literature, specifically in regards to the teaching of controversial issues in the classroom.

To begin, it is important to note that several researchers have stated that discussing controversial issues in the classroom has a number of positive effects, both academically and socially (e.g., Barber, 1989; Hahn, 1998; Hess, 2002; Parker, 1996). The choice to teach controversial issues seemed to grow alongside the experience of the teachers in the classroom, an observation found in the work of Washington and Humphries (2011). This ran counter to the findings of surveys examined by Evans,

Avery, and Pederson (1999) who found that the majority of teachers who taught controversial issues in their classrooms had little professional experience and were more likely male (p. 219). Instead, experience played a great role in how the teachers in my study (the majority of whom were female, and with the three white females being the most critically-oriented when teaching controversial classroom issues) brought issues up in the classroom.

Individually, as the teachers in my study learned how to navigate their classrooms within the larger school context, many began presenting the material of their choice when they could. However, there are some specific differences in the environments for each of the different participants that influenced how they went about their teaching. For example, environmental factors clearly played a role in how the participants went about choosing what topics to teach and how to go about doing so. Michelle, for example, was given free reign with her curriculum, allowed to co-teach when she wanted and to discuss topics she found to be relevant and important. In comparison to Christina, however, (and Sheryl to a degree), this is entirely different. Christina taught in a district where uniform curriculum mapping and similar assignments were to be given throughout the entire department, leaving her little “wobble room” to teach more controversial topics. However, she still chose to do so, and went about teaching “under the radar” when her schedule afforded her an opportunity to do so.

Here, however, the notion of what is being taught, and the level of comfort with what the teacher chooses to teach, is very much a personal and public issue. Byford, Lennon, and Russell (2009) conducted 67 surveys of Indiana and Oklahoma high school social studies teachers and found that “60% of these teachers . . . felt compelled to protect

themselves by avoiding topics that were controversial within their communities” (as cited in Bickmore & Parker, 2014, p. 294). Hence, the fact that my participants experienced a need to both teach controversial issues covertly and a sense of fear, at times, for teaching the issues, regardless of the consequence, falls in line with other teachers in the literature. However, unlike what is defined as a controversial issue in the academic literature, the teachers appeared to consider issues that are not academically categorized as controversial, or issues that were not controversial but taboo, to be controversial in their own definitions of the terms. Seemingly, these topics became “controversial” because of the blowback they received from parents, students, or administrators who questioned what they were teaching, the perspective they were teaching from, or the methods used to facilitate discussion of the topic. This is fascinating, as the literature does not discuss this personal blending of issues and definition of terms by the teachers themselves. In regards to the teaching of these issues, however, each teacher found ways to work the system to their advantage. Sheryl, for example, does not ask for permission to teach her final unit on the Rwandan genocide. Instead, she asks parents for permission slips to have their child view a movie and then answers any questions that arise from parents, keeping the administration out of the loop. Ray discussed doing something similar, stating that he would rather sit down and talk out an issue with a parent instead of letting the complaint move up to the administration. Marley and Michelle both did outreach work with parents, hoping that transparency would prevent parents from having issues with what was being taught. These approaches, however, did not always work.

Take, for instance, the discussion with Christina involving potentially teaching the Dallas, Texas police shootings to her students, or Marley discussing world religions with

the students of her overwhelmingly white and conservative school community. Hess (2002) wrote that teachers may feel pressure to not teach some issues due to a “personal discomfort with the issues, concerns about whether students could discuss particular issues in a sensitive manner, or worries about community disapproval” (p. 36). Christina refused to talk about Dallas because she not only thought that it was a “toxic” issue to bring up right away, but also because she did not believe that a number of her white students would be able to discuss the matter rationally. She had shared similar thoughts about how she would discuss the Black Lives Matter movement in a way that would not cause a classroom divide. Because of these factors, she chose not to teach the lesson; if she did not believe that teaching these topics would result in a positive change or transformation for her students or herself, then she is correctly modeling *parrhēsia* as Foucault (2005) argued one properly should. Instead of burning all the social capital she earned with her students on one topic, she bided her time and found places in the curriculum to build up to having discussions on other controversial issues she found to be important (e.g., sexism, racism). Marley, on the other hand, despite external pressure from her community that arose when parents or community members contacted her or her administrators with a concern with what she was saying in her classroom, chose to teach the world religions unit in an open and questioning way that centered on critical conversations over the materials (as well as other lessons on racism and sexism). Both teachers had planned in advance and dealt with the fear and community concern when they arose.

Additionally, multiple teachers in my study (Marley, Michelle, and Christina), when discussing controversial issues in their classrooms, brought in counternarratives to

provide students with a different lens than their own. Marley, for example, encouraged her students to find and use narratives of Africans impacted by the role of Leopold I in the Belgian Congo, accounts of Hutus and Tutsis, and other non-white perspectives in their group projects in an attempt to understand what happened in the past and the terrible consequences of these actions. Christina provided her students with several primary documents written by various individuals during the Progressive Movement in the United States that explored matters of sexism, racism, racial politics, and the immigrant experience during this era of American history. Michelle had her students examine the rich history of Native American tribes; they learned from their lore and their written experiences while also being directed to examine facts that few other teachers would have their students examine (such as gender roles within the tribe and the population of the various tribes pre and post-white colonialization and genocide). In each instance, counternarratives were used to provide students a way to face a different reality and appreciate these different realities as a fundamental part of each teacher's curriculum (e.g., Lapayese, 2014; Villeans, 2014). This is an important finding, as there is very little literature that examines the use of counternarratives in the secondary classroom and the integration of counternarratives into normal classroom practices and teaching. If anything, these examples can provide a starting point to show how counternarratives can be mainstreamed into the secondary social studies classroom, the benefits of doing so, and the best practices to do so.

Now, coming back to the notion of needing to teach the truth and teaching the truth regardless of the consequence of doing so, it is clear that the teachers in my study, to various extremes, exercised the use of *parrhēsia* in their classrooms. Foucault (2005,

2011a, 2011b) wrote that the three pillars of *parrhēsia* consist of a general frankness of and freedom of speech by a speaker, the importance of speaking the truth regardless of the potential danger of doing so, and the act of coming to a personal understanding of oneself through the other two tenets of *parrhēsia*. Clearly, *parrhēsia* was observed to have been practiced in the classrooms of Marley, Michelle, and Christina. Each mentioned the importance of teaching students the historical truth in an attempt to begin deconstructing previously held social conceptions, openly discussing controversial issues with their students in class (and being aware of the potential dangers to their position by doing so), and all three underwent personal introspection as they discussed their personal teaching styles. Again, Ray and Sheryl, in personal interviews, voiced that they had similar practices; however, observations of their classrooms did not show that they were actually employing *parrhēsic* practices. Here, again, it is critically important to note that three established, excellent teachers were able to embody Foucault's interpretation of *parrhēsia* without ever having been taught how to do so. Instead, due to an ethical obligation to themselves, their students, and the global community, these three teachers became truth-tellers within their classroom. If it is possible for these women to undergo a personal growth process to embody and use *parrhēsia*, in their classrooms, then it is possible to begin to integrate *parrhēsia*'s tenets and practices into pre-service teacher education programs and professional development workshops targeting in-service teachers. By presenting how these teachers approach the teaching of controversial issues, how these teachers enact and embody *parrhēsia*, and the positive ethical and social impacts of teaching in such a manner to new and veteran teachers, there can be resulting changes that can make classrooms and teachers more critical and ethical.

Theme Five: Structures of Support

A fifth major finding from this study is the result of the fact that there were no overlapping structures of support that helped the participants teach controversial issues and counternarratives in their social studies curriculum. Overlapping, in this instance, constitutes that there was no single structure of support that all of the participants noted was important in their learning to teach controversial issues and counternarratives. While various networks were identified by individual teachers (Teacher-Teacher Support, Administrative Support, and Out-of-School Support), others experienced more invasive structures that served as barriers that had to be bypassed in order to teach the materials that they wanted to teach. Nevertheless, there was not one universal structure of support embodied by all five teachers, showing again that this type of teaching is very dependent on the environments in which a teacher teaches.

To begin, it was apparent that Teacher-Teacher support networks were something that required buy-in from all parties involved in order to be effective. Marley, for example, had little support from teachers in her own department. Instead, she found like-minded individuals in her school's English department and other like-minded teachers outside of her school, and began working with these individuals to create professional development activities and lessons plans that could be used in the classroom. This network was entirely self-created and self-sustaining, away from the influence of the school. In short, Marley was the only one of the teachers to have both Teacher-Teacher and Out-of-School support networks that she actively sought out for personal development. Michelle and Ray, however, were given facilitated time within their individual schools to work and plan lessons with fellow teachers, oftentimes producing

positive results. Michelle's school and teachers emphasized the use of interdisciplinary lessons, featuring multiple subjects and viewpoints that helped students understand topics in a more holistic standpoint. Michelle also stressed the importance of making parents a partner in the learning process, extending her network, as well, to one that included Out-of-School support. Ray was given planning time with other young teachers that he stressed were also of a critical orientation, allowing for the planning and execution of "courageous conversations" in their classrooms when they believed it would be impactful for their students. It is important to note that this extra planning time and cooperative teaching philosophy was purely a result of the individual school environments; if placed in a different location, this extra collaboration may never have had a chance to occur.

A major conflict, however, arose in the notion of Administrative support networks assisting my participants in the teaching of the curriculums. As Hess (2002) stated, "Teachers receive support for the CPI discussion teaching from school administrators, the overall culture of the school, and the school's mission. Thus, their CPI discussion teaching is aligned with, not in opposition to, what is expected in the school" (p. 33). As such, again, my teachers' experiences with the administration was deeply environmentally influenced. Michelle, Sheryl, and Marley, for the most part, had supportive administrators that allowed them to teach whatever they wanted within reason. However, as was shown by Marley's experiences, the administration did not support any professional development or meetings that would result in the administration losing the ability to control what was going on (e.g., allowing the public into the school to discuss a racist Tweet involving the inferred lynching of a black student by a white student). In Marley's case, the school would support her classroom teaching but not her extra-

curricular ambitions to bring the community into the space of the school to discuss the issue.

Christina, however, had an entirely different experience working within the confines of an incredibly strict administration that forced her to teach to a planned curriculum. As Pace (2011) stated, school administrators often apply frequent pressure on teachers in order to “narrow standardized tests and mandates to cover vast amounts of content in breadth as opposed to in depth” (as cited in Bickmore & Parker, 2014, p. 249). It was this pressure, this push of a standardized curriculum, that forced Christina to do a great deal of her teaching covertly, hoping that her students did not bring up the topics of her conversations to the administration. Interestingly, Christina did note that she felt that her administration would protect her from angry parents if a complaint arose. However, this defense would have been due to the need to defend the school’s image instead of her individual liberties as teacher.

This, too, raises a question concerning the roles of school administrators in the facilitation of teaching controversial issues. Clearly, all of the teachers continued to teach controversial issues in their classrooms, but those with administrative support were able to be more open and felt more supported in their choices to do so. However, if given the full support of their teaching of these issues and fostering critical conversations by their administrators, would Michelle’s style of teaching been more prevalent? Would Ray have felt more open in teaching his classroom? There is, then, a new piece to consider: What do school administrators need to feel comfortable to allow this type of teaching to occur in their schools? Are they modeling *parrhēsia* by allowing others the right to practice frank and open speech in their curricula?

In short, this finding provides researchers with insights regarding necessary structures of support for teachers who teach controversial topics. Simply put, support structures are deeply contextual and environmentally influenced. Unless schools provide positive administrative support to their teachers, something that varies due to individual school philosophies and support by principals, or gives time for teachers to plan with likeminded individuals, these teachers are alone. They have to create and sustain their own networks of support to allow them to continue to teach what they want to teach. Thus, there must be a push to create some structure of support for teachers wanting to teach controversial issues and counternarratives, be it established professional development that is brought into schools which has provided established results (Bickmore & Parker, 2014), or a Professional Learning Community where like-minded teachers can meet outside of their schools to talk, debate, and plan lessons. Unless these types of professional developments and professional learning communities exist, they must be established and examined for overall effectiveness. If they do already exist, research must be done to further best practices that can then be used for pre-service and in-service teacher development.

Theme Six: Personal Reasons for Teaching Critical Social Studies

A sixth finding from this study involves the notion that all of the participants in this study had a number of personal reasons (and shared professional attributes) that greatly influenced why they chose to teaching controversial topics in their classrooms. Clearly, this personalization of curriculum has different roots for each participant, but serves as an overall guiding morality for fostering the notion of “global humanism” that they have attempted to create via their teaching. It is here where we can see the influence

of the individual human experiences, experiences that drove each of the individuals toward the moral imperative to speak the dangerous truths in their classrooms as they constantly went about their personal transformations. These listed goals are deeply rooted in the ethical philosophical imperatives of *parrhēsia*.

As it has been shown in the literature, all teachers have preconceptions of students and issues with which they are concerned (e.g., Feagin, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Sleeter, 2013; Woolley, 2011). hooks (1994) wrote such a mantra and guiding morality for individual teaching that allows for teachers to feel good about what they are doing in their profession: “if the helper is unhappy, he or she cannot help many people” (p. 15). As such, all five of my participants did voice that they had some personal drive behind their teaching of controversial issues. Marley, Michelle, Christina, and Sheryl all voiced similar reasons for their content, mainly working to have their students struggle with the notion of race, racism, sexism, and other historically-rooted social institutions that govern social thought and social processes. As such, it is very much a nod toward anti-racist and multicultural education. Ray did say that his goal is similar to the other four; however, his motivation was to have his students get rid of the “hate” they bring with them to school. In short, these individuals were intrinsically, morally, and ethically compelled to offer students a curriculum that confronted both controversial educational issues and social structures that prompted and sustained inequality, hence modeling *parrhēsia*.

Additionally, there were some other interesting similarities that all five of the teachers in my study shared. First, all had either attained a higher educational degree (e.g., Masters), were in the process of earning a higher educational degree (e.g., Masters focusing in Educational Administration), had received some higher education classes in a

non-educational field (e.g., classes in law), or were eventually planning to attain a higher secondary education degree. Additionally, all five teachers have significant experience in the classroom, with Ray having the least amount of teaching experience (four plus years). Also, all five teachers hold teaching licenses earned from schools of education at major, accredited universities; Sheryl is the only individual that did not earn a degree in the traditional manner. Sheryl, who left law school when she found her passion for teaching, was able to enter and successfully complete a large urban university's school of education's "Transition-to-Teach" program to earn her teaching degree. Clearly, there is some benefit to earning a teaching degree when it comes to a belief about the content one teaches. Perhaps the teachers teach this way because of the unique experience of a school of education's focus on pedagogy (when compared to alternative licensing programs such as Teach for America or other state agencies that do not focus on teaching philosophies and pedagogy). Hence, one could infer that, alongside the importance of general experience, that the teachers needed to improve their teaching abilities from year-to-year during their professional careers, and that the quality of the education they received could have an impact on the fostering of a critical educational philosophy. Sleeter (2013) stressed the importance of pre-service preparation as she established her own critical school of education and teacher education program. This would lead one to consider that a pre-service teacher education program would help teachers form an educational philosophy that would guide the content of their curriculum. However, as will be examined in the next section, this was not the case, as my participants unanimously noted that their pre-service teacher educations did not influence their choices to teach

controversial issues in their various classrooms, something that has been highlighted repeatedly by the academic literature.

Theme Seven: Impact of Pre-Service Teacher Education Experiences

The final, and, perhaps the most fascinating finding from this research is the fact that all of my participants stressed that their pre-service teacher education did little to nothing to motivate them to teach controversial issues in their classrooms. As such, the decision to do so was, as previously explored, more of a personal motivation and choice. To learn how to teach such topics, the teachers worked to and learned how to integrate and teach controversial topics on their own, either via tapping into professional learning communities/teacher-teacher peer relationships or by gathering experience as they learned how to teach.

The general ineffectiveness of pre-service teacher education programs, especially when looking at the creation and fostering of critical orientations that would reflect the type of teaching that the subjects of this study actually used (or claimed to use), is well documented. Adler (2008), Richardson (1996) and Zeichner (1999) wrote at length about the effect of pre-held belief systems of pre-service teachers, all of which note that these thought processes are overly traditional and, by extension, influenced by the white dominant narrative that governs society. Going a step further, Webeck, Field, and Salinas (1997) noted that these non-critical frames of reference will not change unless they are constantly being interrogated and questioned by the pre-service teacher educators within the program, hopefully *en masse* by the entire faculty. Instead, as both Marx (2006) and Zeichner and Gore (1990) noted, there are many pre-service teacher education programs that are not critical and only exist to reinforce stereotypes about students of color and

students of low socioeconomic status. Sadly, however, even if the pre-service teacher education programs managed to impart criticality to the pre-service teachers, many lose such an outlook when they begin teaching; unless the school is supportive of a critical frame of reference and the use of controversial topics in the curriculum, the critical orientation begins to fade over time (Wade, 1995; Webeck, Field, & Salinas, 1997; Zeichner, Tabachnick, & Densmore, 1987). These issues, in addition to many others that impact pre-service teacher education, such as the lack of any national “scope and sequence” for a uniform teacher education program across the country, as Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) pointed out, have shown that pre-service teacher education programs are not as effective as they can be in their current form. Additionally, to create more critically-oriented multicultural educators, pre-service teacher educators must begin to change their existing practices, lest more uncritical teachers enter the field.

Turning to the in-service literature, multiple studies have illustrated the end results of this lack of critical teacher education programs, when these pre-service teachers have become established teaching professionals, and lack a critical perspective due to the faults in their pre-service teacher education. Additionally, the literature deeply stresses the need to establish relevant professional development to teach in-service teachers how to teach lessons involving the discussion of controversial issues. Both Bickmore (2008) and Hess (2009) found that the supposedly critically-oriented teachers stated that they “were not exposed to conflict dialogue learning as students and thus lack models of what such teaching might look like” (as cited in Bickmore & Parker, 2014). Furthermore, a number of other academics have found that there is “at best, minimal support for professional development in areas related to teaching with conflict dialogue (Bickmore,

2005; McLaughlin, et al., 1986; Torney-Purta, Richardson, & Barber, 2005 as cited in Bickmore and Parker, 2014, p. 294). These findings resonated with the experiences of the teachers in my study.

All five study participants noted that their pre-service teacher education did little to teach them or influence them in regards to choosing to teach controversial issues in their curriculum. As a whole, they were displeased with their entire pre-service teacher education experience, except for a few incidents or favored professors they encountered in their classes. Other studies have found similar results. For example, Washington and Humphries' (2001) interviews with experienced in-service teachers revealed that some teachers could not identify "any specific experiences" that would help them learn to teach controversial issues (p. 110). The authors do argue for pre-service teacher educators to encourage "controversial issues discussion" in the school classroom, which is done by using "engaging methods for controversial issues discussion while also openly discussing [pre-service teachers'] fears and helping them reconcile the information they may be getting from" their education that challenges their habits of thinking (p. 110). The same teachers also stated that not experiencing any relevant professional development during their teaching tenure exacerbated this issue. Turning back to the participants in my study, while they were unsatisfied with their pre-service training as a whole, the teachers did, however, identify specific classes or specific teachers that engaged them in critical thinking that pushed them to begin thinking about controversial issues in the college classroom, slowly showing how the same issues can be taught to middle and high school students. When specific professors were identified by the participants, the participants mentioned that these individuals appeared to be critically-oriented and taught either

social studies methods or multicultural education classes. Social studies methods classes, according to Lee (2011), are excellent vehicles for teaching pre-service teachers “theoretical concepts and teaching strategies . . . [to assist with the] development of new understandings” (p. iii). Aside from these specific professors that they only had for one or two classes at most, the rest of their professors did little to provide them with methods on how to teach controversial classroom issues to students. Additionally, both Sheryl and Michelle reflected upon their terrible field placements, both with teachers that had entirely different teaching philosophies than their own. Thus, instead of receiving quality “on-the-job” training, the two teachers had to learn how to teach via “trial and error”. Instead, methods must be put into place where pre-service teachers have the opportunity to connect with someone who will support their teaching style and have similar critical teaching philosophies. Not only does this answer the call put forth by Washington and Humphries (2011) to have pre-service teachers teach controversial issues to secondary students in a classroom setting, but it provides opportunities for modeling and facilitation that could take some of the fear out of using these methods after graduation from the program. However, in the current form of teaching placements that many school of educations have, the type of rapport necessary between pre-service teachers and their students may require months to establish before productive critical conversations can be had. Thus, extending the length of the field teaching experience, as recommended by Ladson-Billings (2009), could result in both a normalization in schools and communities that accept the teaching of these issues as well as providing the pre-service teachers tools to avoid losing their critical orientations after graduation when they attain teaching positions outside the more liberal-learning sphere of influence that is the university.

Revisiting the Governing Epistemological and Theoretical Framework

This dissertation work was governed by three different major theories that share a number of similarities: Foucauldian *parrhēsia*, postcolonialism, and the use of counternarrative. As such, *parrhēsia* and postcolonialism have a shared philosophy of truth-telling, with the former being for the moral and ethical improvement of the self and telling the truth (Foucault, 2005, 2011a, 2011b) while the latter works to de-colonialize and de-construct the knowledges thought to be legitimate by the white dominant narrative (Quayson, 2000; Urrieta Jr., 2014). Counternarratives share the same goal of those that use the epistemological framework of postcolonialism; each work to use the experience and stories of non-white individuals to challenge the white dominant narratives in society, simultaneously working to understand and deconstruct the “other” as framed by dominant society (e.g., Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Lapayese, 2014; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, Urrieta Jr., 2014). Finally, in order to model *parrhēsia* in the social studies classroom, a number of teachers in this study utilized counternarratives in their classrooms as a pathway to host critical conversations examining critical issues while telling dangerous truths that many other teachers simply will not teach. It is the conflux of these three frameworks of thought that have governed this work.

Recommendations

As a result of this study, a number of recommendations can be made in regards to in-service teacher professional development and pre-service teacher education and learning how to teach controversial issues in the secondary social studies classroom. In order to do so, proper methodologies concerning the aforementioned themes must be taught to both in-service and pre-service teachers. As a result, there must be a number of

philosophical and structural changes to how we train and educate social studies teachers throughout their entire careers, starting first in the university and then throughout their professional teaching lives.

Recommendations for In-Service Teachers

As the existing body of academic literature has stated, there is a major lack concerning the ability of in-service social studies teachers' desire and ability to teach controversial issues and counternarratives in their classrooms. This, generally, was found to be a result of not having exposure to or not being taught how to use the proper methods to teach controversial issues, how to create and foster critical conversations about controversial issues, and a general fear of losing their jobs in a tumultuous learning environment that could potentially impact their ability to attain and keep a stable teaching position because they chose to teach controversial issues and counternarratives in their classrooms. In order to rectify this issue in regards to in-service teachers, a number of professional development and outreach programs must be established to both impart necessary knowledge and methodology from critically-oriented teachers who do teach controversial issues in their classrooms, as well as to begin socially fighting the stigmas that make various topics (such as race, gender, politics, and religion) considered too controversial to teach.

To begin, I recommend that a curriculum for a professional development program or workshop be developed between university professors and established teachers that outlines the best practices necessary to teach controversial issues and counternarratives in the social studies classroom. The classroom teachers must have been observed to teach controversial issues in their curriculums, thereby proving that they understand what they

are doing and not just “critical in thought only” as has been documented in the literature. In particular, as Hess (2004) found in her work, there must be a special emphasis in the professional development curriculum that focuses on how to best create and sustain impactful conversations between students, as one of the major roadblocks preventing this from already occurring in schools is that in-service teachers simply do not understand how to direct classroom-wide discussion on controversial issues (as cited in Neimi & Neimi, 2007). Additionally, professional development must underscore the critical importance of developing the positive and professional teacher-student relationships that are necessary in creating safe classroom environments where the aforementioned conversations can occur. Finally, as a part of the general curriculum from professional development and workshops, a discussion of the best practices for how to teach students, especially white students, how to become empathetic, is necessary. As part of this professional development, there must be some discussion about race, gender, and privilege within the various teachers attending in order to model how a critical conversation should flow. Additionally, this conversation can identify overly resistant teachers that may push back against the content being presented so that the individual leading the professional development activities can provide additional attention or instruction if they believe that it can make a significant impact on the attendees.

Once the professional development’s curriculum has been written, the next recommendation is to gain access to as many influential educators and decision-makers as possible in order to begin shifting public perception of the topics being presented. In particular, administrators, pre-service teachers, members of the board of education, and in-service teachers must all be given access to this information. In other words, it is

important to educate those who are in positions of power about the benefits of teaching social studies in this manner and to push back against the social stigma that accompanies controversial issues counternarratives in the classroom. The stigma, even in this neoliberal educational environment, is unwarranted; Niemi and Niemi (2007) found that “school boards and parents need not be so concerned with teachers’ proselytizing about controversial subjects” because many simply do not talk about them in the manner that is of concern to “parents, as portrayed in mainstream media” (p. 54). Additionally, if school administrators and leaders were exposed to positive professional development, they may be more supportive of teachers that wish to teach in this manner, unlike some of the administrators in this study, because they are afraid of public backlash by parents. By educating the curricular gatekeepers at all levels of the school system (teachers, administrators, bureaucrats, and lawmakers), these issues could, potentially, become more welcome to be taught in schools and would allow students to participate in informed, critical discussions about historical events and social systems that benefit and harm people in different ways.

If schools are resistant to such professional development, as we have seen by Marley’s multiple attempts to plan and instruct a professional development workshop to talk about race during her district’s professional development day, other spaces must be explored for access by willing teachers who want to acquire this knowledge. Willing colleges and schools of education that wish to host the professional development can become one such route of access, as well as any willing educational company or funders that will handle the costs of such workshops. If this is still an issue, the professional development may become more of a support group for teachers willing to meet outside of

the school building on their own time. If this is the case, grassroots methods for how to influence other faculty members, administrators, and parents must be highlighted as part of the best practices. Additionally, methods for how to teach these issues in a more covert or subversive manner as done by Christina, must also be shared if this is to be a true Foucauldian practice of *parrhēsia*. Hopefully, then, the change can occur from the bottom-up instead of the top-down model of change suggested previously.

Finally, there must be a concentrated effort to locate individuals who are already teaching social studies in this manner and continue to explore their teaching practices. These teachers, then, must work to find positions within their various schools and school districts where they can both serve in leadership positions and help to influence the curriculum being taught. If possible, school-university partnerships must be established to provide these teachers with additional resources, including the protection offered by the university's partnership, if necessary, in order to allay any fears about keeping their teaching positions.

Recommendations for Pre-Service Teacher Education Programs

Recommendations for pre-service teacher education programs resulting from this study revolve around a change to currently presented curriculum in order to provide additional modeling opportunities and university support for teachers once they have finished their pre-service teacher education. Additionally, there must be a push to make sure that teachers find some part of their pre-service teacher education to be relevant to their individual (and potentially critical) personal philosophies, especially if truly critically-oriented teacher education programs want to have their students remain critically-oriented once they've left the university.

To begin, there must be a push to create a new curriculum for schools of education nationally that focuses on producing teachers and staff who will model and enact *parrhēsia* throughout the entire educative process. The higher education curriculum must, in essence, be stripped down to the following questions: What type of teacher do we want to produce? How do we go about producing critically-oriented social studies teachers that have the ethical and moral drive to teach using *parrhēsia*? How can this become the backbone of a teacher education system? Such a curriculum must be planned, shared, and enacted to produce teachers and students willing to speak the truth to bring about social equity.

Secondly, there must be a concerted effort to make sure that pre-service students are given the chance to model and teach controversial issues and critical conversations during their pre-service classes. As was shown in this study, while the teachers did not have a favorable view of their teacher-education program as a whole, the only memories of value that the participants took away from their pre-service teacher education programs were specific professors that not only were critically-oriented, but also had the teachers think about how to teach and talk about controversial issues with their future students. It is this first step of modeling that must be built in, both in university classrooms and the field experience components, to make sure that pre-service social studies teachers will eventually feel confident enough to teach these issues in their future classrooms.

Thirdly, *parrhēsia* and the practices of *parrhēsia*, must be modeled by pre-service teacher educators to their students if new teachers are to become as morally and ethically driven to teach the truth as Marley, Christina, and Michelle were in this study. To do so,

pre-service teacher educators must come to understand Foucault's commitment to the ethical-side of teaching the truth by allowing students to practice doing so in safe university classroom spaces. If this is done correctly, it has the opportunity to extend to the secondary classroom.

Fourthly, there must be an effort by schools of education to identify and pair pre-service students with experienced in-service teachers who teach controversial issues as part of their daily routine, teachers who can provide pre-service teachers completing their student teaching a model for how to teach controversial issues and counternarratives, facilitate critical conversations, and foster empathetic views in students. As there were a number of mismatches in the field placements of my study participants (Michelle and Marley), they had to learn how to develop their own teaching style and curriculum planning on their own. Many pre-service teachers who have had similar, negative student teaching experiences, however, may have changed their mindset and slipped back into a traditional teaching practice as modeled by their host teachers. If the host teacher is not critically-oriented and does not wish to teach controversial issues and counternarratives, and instead potentially teaches material that is either "color-blind" or avoids discussing critical issues all together, the new pre-service teachers may follow suit upon graduation. Hence, better mentoring for students must be offered within their field experiences.

Finally, in order to combat the loss of critical orientation due to leaving the college environment that Wade (1995), Webeck, Field, and Salinas (1997), and Zeichner, Tabachnick, and Densmore (1987) proved, schools of education must extend resources, teaching materials, and access to professors to students during their first few years of teaching. By creating such an "outreach" program for new teachers, not only can the

former students discuss problems that they face as new teachers in their classrooms with familiar, supportive faces that they already trust, but school of education faculty can further continue to influence the curricular decision making and teaching styles of these students until they become competent professionals that understand all of the mechanics of both teaching and running a classroom, something that takes four to five years of practice to accomplish (Feiman-Nemser, 1983). This learning process, as argued by Feiman-Nemser, is done without a great deal of institutional support, leaving the new teachers to, as Wise, Darling-Hammond, and Berry (1987) stressed, “sink or swim” (p. 95).

Sadly, however, as has been shown that even if the pre-service teacher education programs managed to impart criticality to the pre-service teachers, many lose such an outlook when they begin teaching. Unless the school is supportive of a critical frame of reference and the use of controversial topics in the curriculum, the critical orientation begins to fade over time (Wade, 1995; Webeck, Field, & Salinas, 1997; Zeichner, Tabachnick, & Densmore, 1987).

Hence, there is also a need to fight against the pre-service student teachers’ loss of critical perspective, which is caused when they acclimate to their individual school communities upon learning the university. Students who lose their critical perspective avoid, as Marley aptly stated, “rocking the boat” by refusing to teach issues that may cause problems with the administration or the local community, which provides an easier route to the first five years of success. However, if students have extended access to their professors, they may be more motivated to teach controversial issues and counternarratives their first day in the classroom.

Suggestions for Further Research

As a result of this study, there are a number of questions that arose that require additional future research.

- Due to the lack of literature on the topic, what are the best practices to learn how to teach students empathy? How does one teach white students empathy?
- Arising from the work of Washington and Humphries (2011), and due to the general lack of other established research, more studies must be completed to continue to find out “what motivates teachers to infuse controversial issues discussions into their instruction, what they think it means, and how they make it work,” encompassing all subject areas (p. 92).
- How can schools of education work to integrate *parrhēsia*, controversial issues, and counternarratives into not only social studies courses but also into courses throughout the entire pre-service teacher education program?
- Why is it that outside pressure on a teacher’s curriculum tends to make them believe that some issues are controversial or taboo when they, academically, are not?
- What are the positive academic outcomes for secondary social studies students when taught a curriculum that heavily relies on controversial issues, critical conversations, and counternarratives?
- What are the best practices to integrate *parrhēsia*, controversial issues, and counternarratives into in-service teacher professional development? How and where are effective access points to teach these methods to in-service teachers and others?

- What type of training or socialization do school administrators need in order to feel comfortable with having their teachers teach controversial issues in their schools?
- Why do many social studies teachers report that they teach controversial issues when they clearly do not? How can this be changed?
- What are other structures of support that will encourage teachers to teach a critically-oriented curriculum?
- In a resulting wave of populist and pro-white sentiment, how will the aforementioned type of curriculum be valued? Will teachers still teach controversial issues and counternarratives? Will the new populist and pro-white wave further scare teachers from teaching controversial issues and counternarratives in their classrooms?

Conclusion

This qualitative study sought to explore reasons why social studies teachers chose to teach controversial issues and counternarratives in their classroom in an era where doing so is dangerous for teachers and their job security, and how they go about doing so in their classrooms. The theoretical framework of this study encompassed the notion that the five selected teachers embodied and practiced elements of Foucauldian *parrhēsia*, teaching the truth despite the risk of doing so, despite not having knowledge of the particular philosophy, and utilized counternarratives and controversial issues as a means of challenging dominant social norms to bring about a more just and equitable society. The existing literature suggested that their pre-service teacher education provided little influence on their decisions, despite the positive historical, personal, and democratic

outcomes from teaching a curriculum exploring controversial issues and counternarratives. Five teachers were recommended for study due to their reputations for teaching controversial issues and counternarratives in their social studies classrooms. After interviewing and observing these teachers, several interesting findings came to light, including a list of best practices for how to teach controversial issues in the classroom, reasons for why the teachers taught controversial issues in the classroom, structures of support and barriers for teaching a critical social studies curriculum, and differences between those who believed they taught controversial issues in their classroom but did not, and those who actually did teach controversial issues.

Chapter 5 provided a discussion of the seven major themes surrounding why and how the social studies teachers taught their unique curricula: a) fostering positive and professional teacher-student relationships, b) facilitating critical conversations, c) fostering empathy, d) teaching controversial issues within a social studies curriculum, e) structures of support, f) personal reasons for teaching critical social studies, and g) impact of pre-service teacher education experiences. Recommendations include the creation of relevant professional development opportunities for in-service teachers, structural changes to the curriculum of pre-service teacher education programs, and increased support for teachers once they have left the university.

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- West, C. (2004). *Democracy matters: Winning the fight against imperialism*. New York:

Penguin Group.

Wilkinson, S. (2011). Analysing focus group data. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 168-184). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Wise, A.E., Darling-Hammond, L., & Berry, B. (1987). *Effective teacher selection: From recruitment to retention*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

Woolley, R. (2011). Controversial issues: Identifying the concerns and priorities of student teachers. *Policy Futures in Education*, 9(2), 280-291.

Yosso, T. J. (2006). *Critical race counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano educational pipeline*. New York: Routledge.

Zeichner, K.M. (1999). The new scholarship in teacher education. *Educational Researcher*, 28(9), 4-15.

Zeichner, K.M. (2006). Reflections of a university-based teacher educator on the future of college and university-based teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 57(3), 326-340.

Zeichner, K.M. (2009). *Teacher education and the struggle for social justice*. New York: Routledge.

Zeichner, K.M., & Conklin, H.G. (2005). Teacher education programs. In M. Cochran-Smith & K.M. Zeichner (Eds.), *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education* (pp. 645-736). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Zeichner, K.M., & Gore, J. (1990). Teacher socialization. In *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education* (1st Ed.). Retrieved from <http://education.msu.edu/NCRTL/PDFs/NCRTL/IssuePapers/ip897.pdf>.

- Zeichner, K.M., Tabachnick, B.R., & Densmore, K. (1987). Individual, institutional, and cultural influences on the development of teachers' craft knowledge. In J. Calderhead (Ed.), *Exploring teachers' thinking* (pp. 1-20). Eastbourne, England: Cassell.
- Zinn, H. (2003). *A people's history of the United States: 1492-present*. New York: Perennial Classics.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Erik James Shaver

EDUCATION

- Ph.D.** Major: Urban Education, *Indiana University*, Indianapolis, IN
Dissertation Focus: Teaching Controversial Social Studies Topics
Chair: Dr. Patricia Rogan
- M.S.** Major: Education w/ a focus in Educational Technology, *Indiana University School of Education-IUPUI*, Indianapolis, IN (2013)
Capstone Research: Crafting an Effective Online Class: Student Insight as to what Constitutes the Most Effective Aspects of Online Education
- B.A.** Major: History and Educational Area of Concentration, *Wabash College*, Crawfordsville, IN (2009, *Magna Cum Laude*)
Capstone Research: The Evolution of the Societal Perception of Greek Pederasty: A Literary Analysis of Pederasty's Social Evolution from Greece's Classical Age to Imperial Age

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Pre-Service Teacher Education ♦ Social Studies Teaching/Education Cultural Politics and Curricular Decision-making ♦ Structures of Power and their Educational Influence ♦ Technology Implications for Education

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- August 2014-present **Adjunct Instructor**, Indiana University School of Education-IUPUI [Social Studies Methods, Middle School Methods, & Diversity and Learning-Multicultural Education: Reaching Every Adolescent]
- August 2013-present **Graduate Research Assistant**, Center for Urban and Multicultural Education, Dr. Samantha Paredes-Scribner, Director, School of Education, Indiana University-IUPUI, Indianapolis, IN
- January 2010- June 2013 **High School Social Studies Teacher**, Grades 9-12, Ben Davis High School Extended Day Program, Metropolitan School District of Wayne Township, Indianapolis, IN
- June 2010-June 2014 **High School Social Studies Teacher**, Grades 9-12, Achieve Virtual Education Academy, Metropolitan School District of Wayne Township, Indianapolis, IN
- June 2012, June 2013 **Summer School Social Studies Teacher**, Grades 9-12, Ben Davis

- May 2010-July 2011 High School Summer School Program (Credit Recovery Model), Metropolitan School District of Wayne Township, Indianapolis, IN
Summer School Social Studies Teacher, Grades 9-12, Indiana Online Academy, Central Indiana Educational Service Center, Indianapolis, Indiana
- August 2009-Dec. 2009 **First Call Substitute Teacher**, Grades 9-12, Metropolitan School District of Perry Township, Indianapolis, IN
- January 2009-April 2009 **Student Teacher**, Grades 10-12, Crawfordsville Community School Corporation, Crawfordsville, IN

LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION

Secondary Social Studies Teaching License, State of Indiana; Highly Qualified Teacher, State of Indiana

Subject Proficiency: AP Macroeconomics ♦Economics ♦Government and Citizenship ♦Historical Perspectives ♦Psychology

PUBLICATIONS

* Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles & Book Chapters

Scheurich, J. J., Phelps, J. A., Williams, N. A., Cannon, M., Sosa, T., & **Shaver, E. J.** (In Press). Racism in pk-12 schools. In K. Lomotey (Ed.), *Contemporary issues for people of color: Living, working and learning in the U.S.: Education: Pk-12 and higher education* (Vol. 1). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Books Department.

* In Review

Shaver, E. J. (2015). The pipeline grows: Over-criminalization and inequitable policing and sentencing of Latin@s within America's judicial system.

*In Preparation

Huckaby, F., & **Shaver E. J.** (2016). *Parrhēsia* as pedagogy.

Shaver, E. J., & Helfenbein, R. (2015). Book review: "Start where you are but don't stay there": Understanding diversity, opportunity gaps, and teaching in today's classrooms.

Shaver, E. J., & Robbins, K. (2015). The effects of losing curricular differentiation on the perceptions of middle school after-school program participants.

Elfreich, A., & **Shaver, E. J.** (2015). The hermeneutic circle: Curriculum, interpretation, and the Cultural politics of the mentally ill.

Medina, M., & **Shaver, E. J.** (2015). "On fire" or "lacking the spark": Four types of self-directed critical thinking of pre-service teachers.

***Non Peer-Reviewed**

Shaver, E. J., & Stuckey, S. M. (2016). Evaluation of the Christel House Academy After Hours Academy Community Learning Centers Grant Summative Year-End Report 2015-2016. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Shaver, E. J. (2015). Annual report: Evaluation of the Christel House Academy After Hours Academy 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant Formative Mid-Year Report 2014-2015. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Shaver, E. J. (2015). Annual report: Evaluation of the Christel House Academy After Hours Academy 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant Final Report 2014-2015. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Shaver, E. J., & Morgan, Z. S. (2015). Annual Report: IPS Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs (ATOD) Use. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Shaver, E. J., & Elfreich, A. (2015). Indiana History Medical Museum Curriculum Writing for Department of the Interior. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Paredes-Scribner, S. M, Elfreich, A., Morgan, Z. S., **Shaver, E. J.,** Flowers, N., Willey, C., & Sosa, T. (2015). *Advancing Medically Underserved Student Training (A-MUST) Report: Barriers Reflective Responses.* Indianapolis, Indiana. Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Elfreich, A., Morgan, Z. S., **Shaver, E. J.,** & Scribner, S. (2015). *Year-end report 2014-2015 Advancing Medically Underserved Student Training (A-MUST): Breaking Barriers Reflective Responses.* Center for Urban and Multicultural Education (CUME), Indianapolis, IN.

Elfreich, A., & **Shaver, E. J.** (2015). *Comprehensive report 2009-2015 Robert Noyce Teaching Program.* Center for Urban and Multicultural Education (CUME). Indianapolis, IN.

Morgan, Z. S., Wakefield, D., & **Shaver, E. J.** (2015). College Goal Sunday National Report. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Morgan, Z. S., Wakefield, D., & **Shaver, E. J.** (2015). College Goal Sunday State Report: Alabama (and 32 other individual state reports). Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Helfenbein, R., **Shaver, E. J.,** Robbins, K., & Haywood, J. M. (2014). Annual report: Evaluation of the Christel House Academy After Hours Academy 21st Century Community Learning

Centers Grant and Cumulative Grant Cycle Reports: 2010-2014. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Helfenbein, R., **Shaver, E. J.**, Robbins, K., Shuck, J. & Medina, M. A. (2014). Annual report: Evaluation of IMPACT After School Program and Cumulative Report 2010-2014. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Shaver, E. J. (2014). Annual report: Evaluation of the Christel House Academy After Hours Academy 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant Formative Mid-Year Report 2013-2014. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Shaver, E. J. (2014) IMPACT after-school program year-end report: Andrew Academy 2013-2014. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Shaver, E. J. (2014) IMPACT after-school program year-end report: Central Catholic 2013-2014. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Shaver, E. J. (2014) IMPACT after-school program year-end report: Holy Angels 2013-2014. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Shaver, E. J. (2014) IMPACT after-school program year-end report: Holy Cross 2013-2014. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Shaver, E. J. (2014) IMPACT after-school program year-end report: Padua Academy 2013-2014. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Shaver, E. J. (2014) IMPACT after-school program year-end report: St. Philip Neri 2013-2014. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Shaver, E. J., & Dunn, T. (2013) 2013 Evaluation of the IMPACT Great Spirits Camp. Indianapolis, Indiana: Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Shaver, E. J. (2008). Engineering within medieval warfare. *The Social Studies Magazine of Wabash College*.

RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Co-Primary Investigator. (PIs Dr. Samantha Paredes-Scribner & Dr. Monica Medina). *Christel House Academy After Hours Academy Evaluation: 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant*. Conducted observations, interviews, focus groups, qualitative data analysis, and assisted with quantitative data analysis, to facilitate program evaluation. Wrote multiple annual, semiannual, and site reports for both the IDOE and the school itself (2014-present).

Co-Primary Investigator. (PI Dr. Patrica Rogan). *Teaching Controversy and Counternarrative in the Social Studies*. Dissertation work. Conducted observations of participants' classrooms and

teaching, conducted multiple interviews, and conducted a focus group, leading to draft of dissertation. (2016).

Investigator. (PI Dr. Rob Helfenbein). *IMPACT After-school Programing for the Arch-dioceses of Indianapolis: 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant*. Conducted observations, interviews, focus groups, qualitative data analysis, and assisted with quantitative data analysis to facilitate program evaluation. Wrote multiple annual, semi-annual, and multiple site reports for all six sites for both the IDOE and the school itself (2014-2015).

Investigator. (PIs Dr. Monica Median & Dr. Jim Grimm). *Near Westside Community Schools Project*. Conducted interviews with key school personnel and observations of offered school programming. Assisted in qualitative data analysis to facilitate evaluation (2016-present).

Investigator. (PI Dr. Samantha Paredes-Scribner). *Advancing Medically Underserved Student Training (A-MUST)*. Provided qualitative data analysis of written module summaries (2015-2016).

Investigator. (PI Dr. Samantha Paredes-Scribner). *Next Generation 2.0 Leadership Initiative, IUPUI*. Conducted observations and provided qualitative data analysis to assist in program evaluation (2015-present).

Investigator. (PI Dr. Jim Scheurich). *Indianapolis Children's Museum Evaluation of Impact in Gentrified Neighborhoods*. Participated in community meetings and conducted research in regards to housing prices in the area (2015).

Investigator. (PI Dr. Philip Scarpino). *Oral History/Curriculum Development for the Indiana Medical History Museum*. Developing curriculum and providing feeding to museum for K-12 curriculum implementation. Funded by the U.S. Department of the Interior (2014-2016).

Investigator. (PI Dr. Monica Medina). *Act Out: Anti-Bullying Program*. Participated in observations. (2015-present).

Investigator. (PI Dr. Dexter Wakefield). *USA Funds: College Goal Sunday*. Conducted qualitative analysis of survey data, assisted in quantitative analysis, and assisted in writing the final report (2015).

GRANT PROPOSALS

Paredes-Scribner, S., Stuckey, S., & **Shaver, E. J.** (2016). IUPUI Arts and Humanities Internal Grant (IAHI). *Toward a revitalization of the Politics of Education Association through multifocal histories*. Requested amount: \$5,000. **(In Process)**

Paredes-Scribner, S., Stuckey, S., & **Shaver, E. J.** (2016). Latino Youth Collective Afterschool Program. Request amount: Not yet determined. **(Seeking Funding)**

PRESENTATIONS

(Referred)

Shaver, E. J. (2017, May). *Controversy and counternarrative in the social studies*. Paper to be presented at Texas Christian University School of Education AERA Spill-over Conference, Fort Worth, TX.

Elfreich, A., & **Shaver, E. J.** (2017, May). *The hermeneutic circle: Curriculum, interpretation, and the cultural politics of the mentally ill*. Paper to be presented at the American Educational Research Association Conference, (AERA) San Antonio, TX.

Medina, M. A., & **Shaver, E. J.** (2017, May). *“On fire” or “lacking the spark”: Four types of self-directed critical thinking of preservice teachers*. Paper to be presented at the American Educational Research Association Conference, (AERA) San Antonio, TX.

Huckaby, F., & **Shaver, E. J.** (2016, October). *Parrhēsia as pedagogy*. Paper presented at the Bergamo Conference, Dayton, OH.

Shaver, E. J. (2016, April). *The pipeline grows: Over-criminalization and inequitable policing and sentencing of Latin@s within America's judicial system*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Conference, (AERA) Washington, D.C.

Shaver, E. J., & Robbins, K. (2016, April). *The effects of losing curricular differentiation on the perceptions of middle school after-school program participants*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Conference, (AERA) Washington, D.C.

Medina, M., & **Shaver, E. J.** (2016, February). *Four types of self-directed critical thinking processes of pre-service teachers in an urban preparation program*. Paper presented at the 2016 Annual Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators. (ATE) Chicago, IL.

Shaver, E. J. (2015, October). *“On fire” or “lacking the spark”: Four types of self-directed critical thinking of pre-service teachers*. Paper presented at the Midwest Regional Noyce Connections Conference, Omaha, NE.

Elfreich, A., & **Shaver, E. J.** (2015, October). *The hermeneutic circle: curriculum, interpretation, and the cultural politics of the mentally ill*. Paper presented at the Bergamo Conference, Dayton, OH.

Medina, M. A., & **Shaver, E. J.** (2015, March). *Supporting students in social ventures: Preparing students for a life of career and service*. Paper presented at the 5th Annual Campus Compact Summit, Indianapolis, IN.

Shaver, E. J., & Bhathena, C. (2014, October). In R Helfenbein (Chair). *Answering Apple's question: Can education change society? Differing perspectives*. 35th annual journal of curriculum theory conference on curriculum theory and classroom practice, Dayton, OH.

Scheurich, J., Williams, N., Priester, M., Robbins, K., Gatzka, A., **Shaver, E. J.**, & Portillo, W. (2014, October). In J Scheurich (Chair). *White educators talk about their white racism: Educators of color critique their talk*. 35th annual journal of curriculum theory conference on curriculum theory and classroom practice, Dayton, OH.

Shaver, E. J. (2014, September). In L.M Burlbaw (Chair). *The control of female public school teachers by international patriarchal bureaucracies at the turn of the 20th century*. Organization of educational historians 2014 annual conference. Chicago, IL.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

Shaver, E. J. (2015, March). *The pipeline grows: Over-criminalization and inequitable policing and sentencing of Latin@s within America's judicial system*. Presentation given for the Center for Urban and Multicultural Education (CUME) Colloquium.

Shaver, E. J. (2015, January). *Modern models of schooling: The business and factory model of education and how they influence curriculum*. Presentation prepared for Introduction to American Educational Systems class at the Indiana University School of Education, IUPUI, Indianapolis, IN.

Shaver, E. J. (2014, October). *The control of female public school teachers by international patriarchal bureaucracies at the turn of the 20th century*. Presentation prepared for Introduction to American Educational Systems class at the Indiana University School of Education, IUPUI, Indianapolis, IN.

TEACHING

Teaching Assignments

UNDERGRADUATE

S420 Teaching and Learning in Middle School w/ a Focus in Critical Literacy-
Two Sections (Spring, 2017)
M442 Social Studies Methods in Secondary Education (Spring, 2016)
M332 Diversity and Learning-Multicultural Education: Reaching Every
Adolescent (Fall, 2015-Spring, 2016)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

National

Proposal/Submission Reviewer. Critical Race Studies in Education Association (CRESA)
2017 Annual Conference (2016-present)

Student Reviewer. International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (QSE)
(2015- Present)

Graduate Student Advisory Council. Annual Bergamo Conference (2015-present)

Support Staff. 2013 Bergamo Conference (2013)

University

Graduate Student Member. School of Education Faculty and Budgetary Affairs Committee
(Fall 2014-Spring 2015)

School of Education

Social Studies Pre-Service Teacher Benchmark 2 Evaluator. (May, 2014)

Social Studies Pre-Service Teacher Benchmark 3 Evaluator. (May, 2015)

Graduate Student Panel Member. Urban Education Ph.D. Program: Orientation for New
Students Questions Panel (July 2014, July 2015)

Adjunct Faculty. Indiana University School of Education—IUPUI (2015-Present)

Community

Research Participant. Research with Kheprw Institute to examine several issues with the local
community: Children’s Museum Research Project, Community Needs
Assessment interviews with community members.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Member. American Educational Research Association (2013-present).

Member. National Council for the Social Studies (2015-present).

Member. Association of Teacher Educators (2015-present).

Member. Phi Alpha Theta History Honors Fraternity (2009).

AWARDS

Research/Presentation Grant Awards

2016 Urban Education PhD Conference Presentation Travel Grant (\$750)

2016 *Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* Conference Presentation Travel Grant (\$1,000)

2015 Urban Education PhD Conference Presentation Travel Grant (\$1,000).

2014 Urban Education PhD Conference Presentation Travel Grant (\$1,000).

Other Awards

Recipient. Outstanding Future Educator Award from the Indiana Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Recipient. 3-year letter winner and 2-year starter on Wabash College Football Team, Four conference championships, Three playoff appearances, one trip to the “Elite Eight”.