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CRITICAL DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY ON CONTROVERSY
DELIBERATION AND ITS EFFECTS AMONG PRE-SERVICE
ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

by

Shouqing Si

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Education

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Logan, Utah

2023

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ABSTRACT

Critical Democratic Education: A Case Study on Controversy Deliberation and Its Effects
Among Pre-service Elementary Teachers

by

Shouqing Si, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2023

Major Professor: Steven P. Camicia, Ph.D.
Department: Teacher Education and Leadership

In an increasingly polarized society of the United States with racial, public health, and social justice unsettlements, education for democracy is in urgent need of advocacy, protection, and promotion. Classroom discussion and deliberation of controversial public and social issues greatly contribute to democratic education; however, pre-service teachers in social studies have been poorly prepared in teaching in this area. This qualitative case study collects multiple sources of data from 14 participants, pioneeringly exploring pre-service elementary social studies teachers' perceptions of deliberating controversial issues and its effects on their civic ideology in education and critical consciousness. Coupled with a constant comparative strategy, within-unit and cross-unit analysis revealed that the deliberation of controversies had a positive relationship with one's civic ideology in education and tended to convert the latter to be more critical. After deliberation, prospective teachers' critical consciousness increased, and they claimed that they

became more competent in disrupting inequalities and unequal power relations. However, specific instruction on how to define controversial issues is needed. Teacher educators must continue to devote efforts to developing student teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge and skills in incorporating controversies in the K-12 classroom. The disjuncture between the everyday teaching of K-12 instruction and theoretical methods courses in higher education remains wide.

(173 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Critical Democratic Education: A Case Study on Controversy Deliberation and Its Effects
Among Pre-service Elementary Teachers

Shouqing Si

The state of democracy facing expanding political division and pervasive racial and social inequalities. Discussing and deliberating controversial social and political issues functions help foster students' civic contribution. I conducted a qualitative case study and recruited 14 participants, with whom I conducted interviews, self-reflection, observation, and autoethnography. I targeted the primary research question: How do pre-service elementary teachers experience and get influenced by discussing social and public issues? I broke it down to six operational questions:

1. What issues are considered controversial by pre-service teachers in their future social studies classrooms?
2. What challenges do pre-service teachers perceive in controversial issues teaching?
3. What are pre-service teachers' perceptions of their preparedness for teaching controversies from one to five (e.g., 1 = Not at all)?
4. How might deliberating controversial issues affect pre-service teachers' civic ideologies?
5. How might deliberating controversial issues affect their critical consciousness?
6. What approaches are viewed as the best ways to teach controversial issues?

I utilized a two-fold data analysis, in which I extrapolated individual-level initial codes and inferred common group-level themes. I finalized six sets of themes to answer the research

questions accordingly. First, most participants presented inconsistency and confusion over defining controversy. Second, the participants reported five categories of challenges, including fear of retribution. Third, unpreparedness was pervasive due to four reasons such as lack of practice in the elementary classroom. Fourth, the deliberation of controversial issues was perceived to positively affect civic ideology in education. Fifth, I found that deliberation increase one's critical consciousness in five modes such as multiple perspectives and critical thinking skills. Sixth, most of the participants recommended take a stand and SAC (structured academic controversy) activities to address issues of controversy.

I expect its findings to meaningfully extend the scholarship on the discussion and deliberation of social and public issues in social studies teacher education programs. I hope to inspire colleagues to further explore this area of research and provide critical suggestions and ideas to better prepare prospective educators.

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First and foremost, I would like to convey my tremendous gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Steven Camicia for his caring, professional, and patient support and guidance during my entire doctoral study. He has rescued me at the edge of the precipice right when I was about to err from the right path. I also owe special thanks to my committee members, Dr. Alyson Lavigne, Dr. Andrea Hawkman, Dr. Clayton Brown, and Dr. Ryan Knowles, without whom my dissertation would not have been feasible at all. I would like to thank my charming wife, Jinghui Jiang, and my family for their unconditional trust, encouragement, and love.

Shouqing Si

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT, PROBLEM, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Introduction

Recent events have highlighted the need to increase students' understanding of the purposes and principles of democracy. Many (e.g., Bremmer, 2022; Everett et al., 2021; Mitchell, 2021; Pew Research Center, 2022; Salvatore, 2020) have surmised, since early 2020, that public health in the United States and its economy have been severely impacted by the global pandemic of Covid-19, with people's lives and jobs being in danger. A social movement striving for racial justice has exploded in many parts of this country, and racial unrest remains. Millions of American citizens hold tremendous doubts about the integrity of the 2020 election, and some high-ranking politicians, including former President Donald J. Trump, have tried hard to overturn the election (Pew Research Center, 2022). The United States is suffering political divisions, and the partisan divide is projected to be widening in the next few years (Pew Research Center, 2021, 2022). In addition, a violent mob attacked the Capitol on January 6th, 2021, causing a loss of lives and further jeopardizing faith in democratic governance (Gramlich, 2022). Put simply, the state of democracy is facing alarming challenges.

Teaching students how to contribute to democratic communities is vital for education for democracy (Camicia, 2007; Ersoy, 2010; Hess, 2005, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Misco & Tseng, 2018; National Council of Social Studies (NCSS), 2016; Pace, 2019; Parker, 2003, 2006; Ollila & Macy, 2019). Deliberating about controversial social and political issues functions as a vehicle to help foster students' civic knowledge and engagement, and as a result, an informed citizenry (Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Parker, 2006). While U.S. education is "clearly moving in a non-deliberative direction" (Hess, 2009, p. 12), schools are not politically neutral, neither are teachers (Apple, 2018; Au et al., 2016). Many social studies teachers avoid controversial issues discussions, and as a result, education for democracy suffers (Hess & McAvoy, 2015). Most students are not encouraged to discuss and ponder controversial topics at school (Demir & Pismek, 2018; Hahn, 2008). Although calls to make the social studies curriculum more critical of inequitable power relations are increasing within the field, social studies standards and textbooks demonstrate much misrepresentation and exclusion (Brown & Brown, 2010). Similarly, instructional materials communicate a narrow range of

perspectives that serve to exclude individuals, communities, and groups from the social studies curriculum (Camicia & Zhu, 2019). As a result, students lose opportunities for building the knowledge, dispositions, and values that support democracy (Hess, 2009). Lacking proper discussion, deliberation, and instructional materials, students are not supported in their understanding of how to participate in democratic communities.

Today, many pre-service social studies teachers have not been well prepared and display very limited knowledge and skills in how to address controversial issues, discussion, and deliberation in their future classrooms (Misco & Tseng, 2018; Nganga et al., 2020). Meanwhile, teachers' civic ideologies influence their curriculum and instruction, impacting students' views on democracy and the future of their society (Knowles & Castro, 2018). Very few studies have traced the relationship between deliberation of controversial issues and civic ideology. In addition, classroom deliberation can improve critical consciousness of oppression and privilege regarding race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Castro, 2014). Critical consciousness is at the intersection of deliberation and civic ideology as it connects the two and can strengthen the relationship of the two through its examination of power relations and social structures.

The U.S. Context: Lacking Knowledge and Skills Among Pre-service Teachers

A number of recent studies have argued that many prospective social studies instructors are not well-prepared to teach controversial issues and deliberation, and the studies call for improvement in both knowledge and skills (Pace, 2019; Hawkman et al., 2015; Misco & Tseng, 2018; Ollila & Macy, 2019). Standardization policies and standardized testing have increasingly produced pressure upon schools and teachers to concentrate more of their effort and time on the "core" subjects of English language arts and mathematics. In particular, under the influence of three significant national reforms: the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA), and the subject of social studies has been continuously marginalized. It is reported that only 12 states assess social studies and that social studies instructional time has decreased dramatically. Ollila and Macy (2019) warned, "American children now receive very little or no formal education of basic social studies subject areas such as economics, civics,

geography, and history” (p. 34). For democratic governance to thrive in the U.S., students must receive more social studies education and understand how to build and maintain democratic communities.

Romantic Goal of Teacher Neutrality in Education

Secondly, U.S. education is “clearly moving in a non-deliberative direction” (Hess, 2009, p. 12), and public schools are not politically neutral, nor are teachers (Apple, 2018; Au et al., 2016). Teaching controversial issues in public school settings can have risks (Foster, 2014; Pace, 2019). For instance, such teaching can lead to possible “partisanship and politicization” (Alongi et al., 2016, p. 27). Some communities and teachers may perceive these controversial issues as “inappropriate for the curriculum or because there is pressure to deal with only one perspective on an issue” (Misco & Tseng, 2018, p. 1). Therefore, many social studies classroom teachers avoid controversial issues instruction involved in education for democracy, and most students are not encouraged to broach controversial topics at school (Demir & Pismek, 2018; Hahn, 2008).

With classroom instruction, one prevalent concern, resided in many prospective and in-service teachers, is that instructors must be neutral. It is both a moral and professional obligation for a teacher to avoid imposing their own beliefs onto learners (Journell, 2016). Teacher partiality is simply wrong and accusable, whereas neutrality is noble and applaudable. To this day, this mentality has been circling around in education. However, the absence of neutrality should not and is not equal to indoctrination (McAvoy & Hess, 2013). Apple (2018) illustrated how political the profession of teaching is in reality, in which every teacher innately contributes to the political partiality in favor of those in power. How can a teacher possibly remain neutral in teaching activities? The lessons taught are by-products of official standards and curricula that are designed by individuals with power, endorsing certain political agendas while excluding those of certain individuals’ and communities’. Now, teachers must understand that neutrality is not simply in a binary state with non-neutrality (Journell, 2016). With neutrality on one side of a coin, many educators consider no indoctrination to be on the opposite side—exclusive partiality termed by Kelly (1986). There is no denying that teachers are inherently political beings (Apple, 2018). As the political divide worsens in the United States, many feel anxious

disclosing their political views in the classroom, to which, in part, a fear of retribution from colleagues or families is attributable (Goldston & Kyzer, 2009; Journell, 2012). For some, this anxiety prevents some teachers from teaching controversial issues, thus learners losing opportunities to practice important democratic skills (e.g., deliberating with diverse perspectives) essential for navigating in a politically divided society (Hess, 2009, 2016; McAvoy & Hess, 2013; Parker, 2010). Despite critiques, some teacher educators have been guiding pre-service teachers to dispute teacher neutrality and take advantage of its absence (Journell, 2016).

Teacher Education and Controversial Issues Teaching

Researchers (Andrews et al., 2018; Kerr & Huddleston, 2015; Montgomery & McGlynn, 2009; Pace, 2019) across the globe have been calling for the effort of university-level education programs to prepare teachers competent in teaching controversial issues. A number of teacher educators have answered this call, but the number has been too small (Ersoy, 2010; Woolley, 2011). More time and attention are in urgent need for better preparation of teachers regarding teaching about controversies to young citizens in the United States. The scholarship, examining teacher education programs' work on such preparation, appears to be severely sparse. Two prototypical studies, carried out in the United States, offer pioneering insights into teacher education efforts in this area. For one, Hess (2003) provided her student teachers with structured discussions about controversial issues in a formal classroom setting. She picked some video recordings of some exemplar controversies at the time and showed them to her students. Then she facilitated discussions in which the pre-service shared their thoughts and ideas about how they would like to teach these issues. Small groups and whole group formats were utilized for discussions. In this case, all prospective teachers obtained content knowledge—conceptual understanding of the target controversial issues. Next, Hess led the class to discuss instructional strategies—pedagogical knowledge—for approaching the controversies. The student teachers understood what their roles should be and how they should allow for student participation in tackling controversial issues in a real classroom. Later, each student teacher designed a lesson plan concentrated on a particular controversial issue. They taught the lesson plans at their practicum. Afterward, Hess asked them to

write self-reflections on this experience and gave feedback for improvement. In the same year, Parker (2003) explained how he guided his students to teach public and social issues discussions. He employed modeling for appropriate teaching of these issues. His students rehearsed after him in class, and he provided suggestions for adjustments. Besides, He mentored them to write lesson plans for pragmatic discussions about social and public issues.

More recently, Dahlgren and two colleagues (2014) conducted one study in the United States that touched on controversial issues inclusion by several pre-service teachers during their clinical experience. They assigned some issues of controversy to the student teachers for practice purposes. In the end, their study findings indicated that those who made attempts at teaching controversies developed a solid disposition to incorporate these issues into their future education career. However, their experience of controversial issues teaching was short and limited in various ways, its full potential was never achieved. In addition, specifics about how the teacher education program prepared these prospective teachers for controversies were not mentioned in the published article. Another qualitative study explored pre-service teachers' perceptions for their preparedness of teaching controversial issues in the country (Nganga et al., 2019). Their findings suggested that social studies methods courses were useful for teacher preparation. The participant pre-service teachers reported progress after taking the methods course; however, they still were not well-prepared and confident in teaching controversies in the future. Their perceived sense of readiness was quite low because they needed additional content knowledge of a wide range of unfamiliar controversial issues and pedagogical skills in approaching them during instruction.

Outside the United States, I have thus far found three studies that targeted controversial issues teaching and teacher education jointly. In Turkey, Ersoy (2010) interviewed pre-service teachers about their preparation in teaching controversies, and the results turned out to be negative as zero effort was made by the teacher educators. In England, similarly, pre-service teachers reported not receiving formal instruction or lessons on how to teach issues of controversy to students even though they understand the significance of teaching these issues (Woolley, 2011). One study, conducted in South Africa, focused on teacher education endeavors in

promoting controversial issues teaching returned cruel outcomes too (Chikoko et al., 2011). During social studies teacher education, the involved pre-service teachers were never formally introduced to controversies instruction during their four-year education program. They would have to navigate on their own when they became an official classroom teacher.

To sum up, researchers from four countries expanded the scholarship on teacher education related efforts in training pre-service teachers to teach issues of controversy; however, teacher educators in the latter three countries put forth zero energy to explicitly train their pre-service teachers in this regard. Hardly any discursive and explorative instructional strategies connected with the integration of controversies into K-12 settings could be drawn. Moreover, because social studies instruction and topics are discussed infrequently in education programs in general, crucial knowledge and concepts in this area cannot be granted sufficient instructional resources and space (Chikoko et al., 2011). Within this context, the quality of field experiences of preservice social studies teachers may decrease as these teachers observe very few social studies lessons, and the mentor teachers that student teachers observe seldom apply any familiar pedagogical practices advocated in teacher education methods courses (Ngange et al., 2020; Shanks, 2017). To make matters worse, social studies standards and textbooks demonstrate much misrepresentation and exclusion (Brown & Brown, 2010). Similarly, instructional materials, as an indicator of power relations, communicate a narrow range of perspectives that serve to exclude individuals and communities from the social studies curriculum (Camicia & Zhu, 2019). Ultimately, lacking proper controversial issues discussion and deliberation, young American citizens are deprived of a good source of support in their understanding of how to participate in democratic communities. Camicia and Knowles (2021) cautioned, “Classroom discussion and deliberation are important components of education for democracy and civic inquiries for social justice” (p. 83). Conducting discussion and deliberation of controversial public and social issues help young citizens to explicitly analyze power relations and identify missing voices in a democratic dialogue (Hess & McAvoy, 2015).

Incorporation of Controversial Issues in Teacher Education

Taken into account of the importance and benefits of integrating controversial issues into K-12 instruction, all teacher education programs and teacher educators should provide pre-service teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to teach these issues by deliberately planning and integrating controversial issues in their corresponding courses. Novice teachers will establish a critical foundation for complex controversies through intentionally designed education of controversial issues, creating a base for similar controversial issues in future teaching. However, research has shown that teacher preparation programs often include very few teaching policies and practices that support the teaching and learning of controversial issues (Ersoy, 2010). Despite the warnings of Oulton and colleagues (2004), before novice teachers are capable of addressing controversial issues to their students, they must initially develop a comprehensive knowledge of multiple standpoints and acquire the skills to approach these issues in a supportive, open, and safe learning environment. It is rather necessary for learners to feel comfortable rusting the classroom environment, only when can educators consider introducing potentially controversial issues into teaching. Other scholars (McLaughlin, 2003; Waliaula, 2011) have acknowledged a foundational function of social studies teacher education programs that is to provide all prospective teachers with direct access to content that encourages a comprehensive study of global social and public issues. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent, teacher education programs should take the lead in helping their novice teachers study local and global controversies concerning essential knowledge, skills, and disposition. After these teachers take charge of formal classrooms, they can effectively impart crucial knowledge and skills to future students for critical engagement in democratic communities as qualified global citizens. However, quite inadequate knowledge and skills in teaching issues of controversy is frequently reported by many pre-service teachers who are soon graduating from teacher education programs (Nganga, 2016; Weinstein et al., 2004). Consequently, many novice instructors "feel uncomfortable dealing with controversy and almost instinctively want to avoid exposing students to the conflict involved in controversial issues in the classroom" (Philpott et al., 2011, pp. 32-33).

Purpose of the Study

A core problem this study will address is that many pre-service elementary social studies teachers have not been well trained to address controversial public and social issues in K-12 classrooms (Hawkman et al., 2015; Misco & Tseng, 2018; Nganga et al., 2020; Ollila & Macy, 2019). This problem is intensified by the extreme scarce scholarship on preparing prospective teachers in teaching controversies in and out of the United States. Since prospective teachers have seldomly been focused on in relation to classroom practices, the obstacles that they encounter in teaching controversies, how to effectively approach these subjects in the classroom, and how they are impacted by such teaching are never clearly understood. In addition to these research deficiencies, the relationship between discussing controversial issues and civic ideology in education (Knowles (2018) listed conservative, liberal, and critical civic ideologies in education) has been rarely examined. The overarching objective of this proposed research is to investigate pre-service elementary social studies teachers' perceptions of discussing controversial issues and its effects on their civic ideology and critical consciousness.

Research Question

How do pre-service elementary teachers experience and get influenced by discussing social and public issues?

Sub-questions

1. What issues are considered controversial by pre-service social studies teachers in their future classrooms?
2. What challenges do pre-service teachers perceive in controversial issues teaching?
3. What are pre-service teachers' perceptions of their preparedness for teaching controversies from one to five (1 = Not at all, 2 = Poorly prepared, 3 = Somewhat prepared, 4 = Prepared, 5 = Well prepared)?
4. How might deliberating controversial issues affect pre-service teachers' civic ideologies?

5. How might deliberating controversial issues affect their critical consciousness?
6. What approaches are viewed as the best ways to teach controversial issues?

Chapter Summary

With the United States becoming increasingly politically polarized, a sound democracy requires a strong democratic education. Classroom discussion and deliberation of public and social issues are crucial for the cultivation of knowledge, skills, and values for participation in democratic discourses. However, the social studies subject has been marginalized by core subjects in elementary grades. Many social studies pre-service teachers are not adequately prepared to handle controversial public and social issues. Meanwhile, many proactively avoid incorporating controversies into instruction. Students, therefore, are deprived of opportunities to exercise important skills essential for democratic engagement. Research indicates that causes are multiple such as the lack of knowledge and skills, potential risks, and pursuit of teacher neutrality. Teacher educators must expand efforts in the preparation of controversial issues teaching among prospective teachers. A review of the literature yielded extremely scarce scholarship in this area in the United States. No scholars have examined the relationship between discussing controversies and teachers' civic ideology in education, nor are the possible effects of the deliberation on one's critical consciousness. This study hopes to tackle these gaps. The research question is: How do pre-service elementary teachers experience and get influenced by discussing social and public issues?

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

First, I would justify why critical education for democracy was purposefully selected as the theoretical framework. It powerfully established a critical lens to help interrogate power relations and inequalities in education. Next, I would describe its three attributes: deliberation, civic ideology in education, and critical consciousness, each of which would help lay a conceptual foundation for tackling the six research questions.

Critical Education for Democracy

Critical democratic education is aimed at empowerment, realizing equality, and social justice (Camicia & Knowles, 2021). Critical educators strive to disrupt existing social structures and power relations that reproduce inequalities such as race, class, sexuality, and gender (Darder, 2016). Issues of power are pervasive and greatly affect today's democratic education (Blue & Dale, 2016; Knowles & Clark, 2018). Critical education for democracy seeks to value diverse perspectives, ideologies, and epistemologies (Camicia, 2016) that eventually make up and contribute to a 'thick' normative democracy in which all humans have equal and real opportunities to be agents of social transformation" (Sant, 2019, p. 20). The critical dimension of this theoretical framework requires a critique of ideology because "one must become critically conscious of how an ideology reflects and distorts moral, social, and political reality and what material and psychological factors influence and sustain the false consciousness which it represents" (Ewert, 1991, p. 354). To dismantle inequality and injustice, knowledge about how dominant ideologies perpetuate them is necessary; that is, individuals must be freed from these dominant ideologies (Hantzopoulos, 2015). In essence, students are expected to embrace multiple perspectives and gather evidence to dissect specific issues of injustice and reach reasonable solutions (Camicia & Knowles, 2021; Sant, 2019). Therefore, this theoretical framework provides a

powerful lens for examining how students can better understand and discuss social inequalities such as racism, sexism, classism within the context of education for democracy.

Key Attributes

According to the aim and scope of the current research proposal, the framework will include three attributes: deliberation, civic ideology, and critical consciousness.

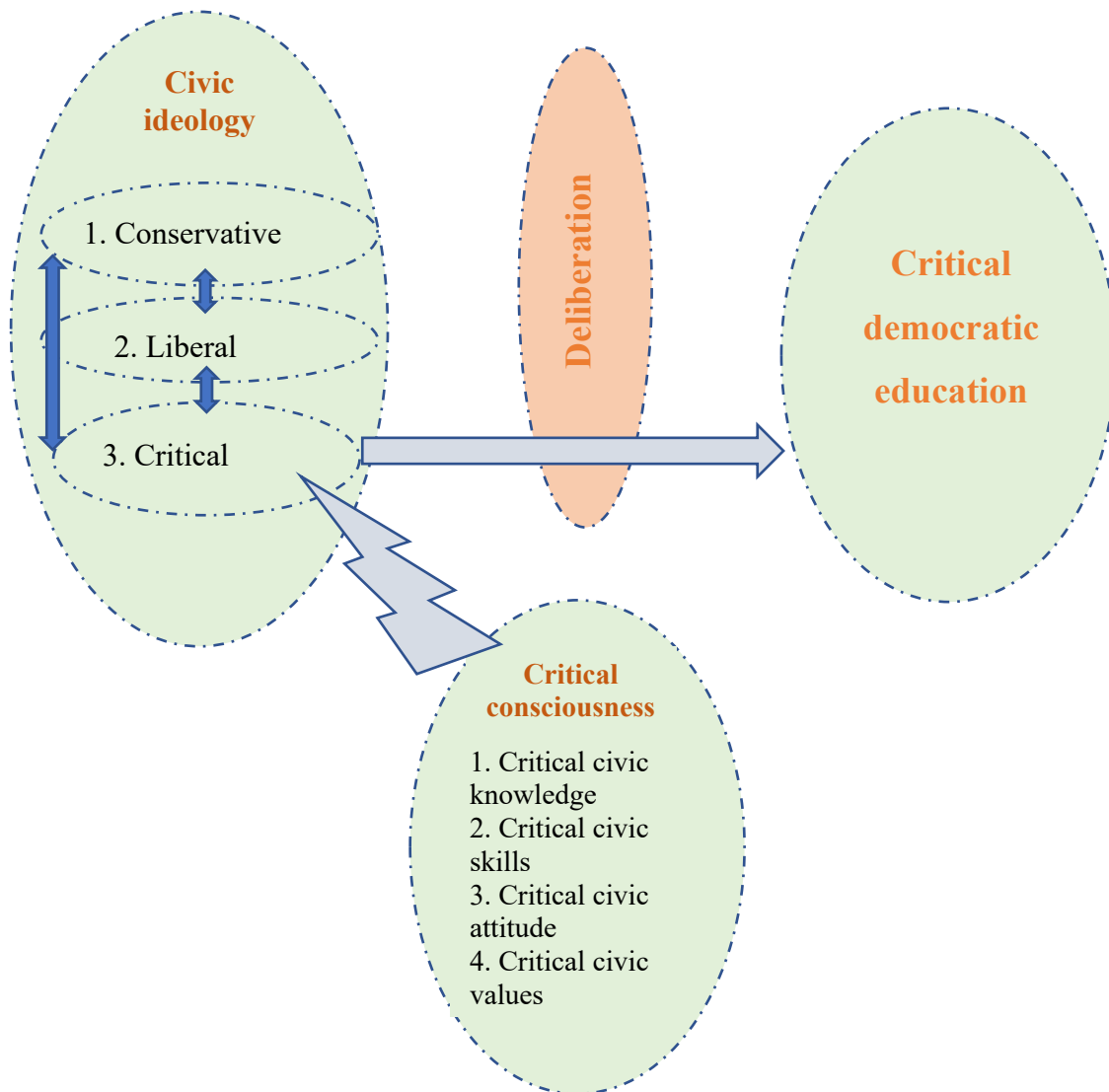


Diagram 1

Critical Education for Democracy and Its Attributes

Deliberation

The U.S. is and always will be in need of education for democracy. A strong democracy depends on an informed citizenry, which demands American citizens effectively contribute to democratic communities (Hess, 2009; Parker, 2006). Meanwhile, a key purpose of civic education is designed to promote civic knowledge amongst young citizens (Galston, 2007; Hatcher, 2011), civic skills (Gerosa, 2019; Komalasari, 2009), civic attitudes (Galston, 2007; Schulz et al., 2010), and civic values (Hoskins et al., 2011; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), and thus promote an informed and engaged citizenry and encourage education for democracy among young individuals. Education for democracy requires student discussion and deliberation of public and social issues that face communities. As Yacek (2018) put it, incorporating societal issues into actual school teaching would help mitigate the hurdles separating school from society, transforming school into “a genuine form of active community life, instead of a place apart in which to learn lessons” and society into “worthy, lovely and harmonious” fashion of collaborative living in which solutions to problems are needed (Dewey, 1959, pp. 39, 49). In other words, discussing public and social issues can be a productive connector between schooling and society. As a more specific type of discussion, deliberation encourages participants to give reasons and evidence, consider and evaluate multiple perspectives, and sometimes arrive at a consensus on a plan of action on a shared issue (Hess & McAvoy, 2015). Successful deliberation is characterized by inclusivity and reason; all deliberators are committed to cooperating with each other and emphasizing inclusion and justified rationality (Biesta, 2011; Sant, 2019).

However, dominant ideologies and existing power relations tend to maintain certain perspectives and limited ways of discussion and deliberation, and as a result, meaningful and critical deliberation can be restricted to this extent (Camicia & Knowles, 2021). Education and curriculum function as a tool for the individuals with the power to safeguard their privileged dominance by constraining the scope and efficiency of deliberation during teaching and learning. For example, social studies standards, school text, and materials demonstrate misrepresentation and exclusion (e.g., Brown & Brown, 2010; Eargle, 2016; Shear et al., 2015). Fortunately, classroom deliberation allows students to experience and take advantage of an array of

perspectives instead of just a pro and con binary on an issue, which can be fostered by the curriculum and instructional materials that focus upon increasing inclusion. Deliberation also provides students with insights into how power permeates different aspects of society (e.g., education and culture); moreover, it boosts students' knowledge and information about how to examine and mitigate components of power (Knowles & Clark, 2015). Therefore, teacher educators must ensure that pre-service teachers are "prepared to use deliberative discussions as a powerful and humanizing mechanism that can spread ideas and inform decisions" (p. 20). Deliberation can be a powerful instructional tool to promote democratic education, but it does not automatically guarantee the facilitation of critical democratic education.

Deliberating Controversial Issues

Deemed by Dewey (1933) as an essential pillar in human reflective thinking process, controversy contains doubt. It is the doubt that encourages minds to process and weigh information and actively pursuit answers, eventually leading to solutions and decisions grounded in reason. Pace (2019) argued, "teaching controversial issues is a cornerstone of democracy education" (p. 228). In other words, deliberating issues of controversy is critical to education for democracy (Camicia, 2007; Camicia & Knowles, 2021; Hess, 2009; Knowles & Clark, 2018; Misco, 2012). Deliberation of social and political controversies greatly helps students foster their civic knowledge and engagement, and as a result, engaged and informed contribution to democracy (Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Ochoa-Becker, 2007). Controversial issues are crucial to democratic citizenship education, as there is an intimate relationship between learning how to deliberate controversies (e.g., regarding public and social problems) and effectively taking part in a democratic society (Hess, 2008, 2009; Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Parker, 2012). Discussing controversial political and social issues helps develop students' civic knowledge and engagement as an informed citizenry (Hess, 2015; Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Parker, 2006). Levinson (2008) wrote, "controversial issues are reasonable disagreements" (p. 1217), which oftentimes contain two authentic opposing points of view where individuals are divided and may come to different opinions and civic ideologies. Consequently, the deliberation of controversial issues may often have individuals experience conceptual divisions and conflicting explanations and solutions (Marcus & Stoddard, 2009).

In the U.S. context, controversial issues and topics emerge most frequently (oftentimes naturally) in social studies discipline that is centered upon daily life. Thus, social studies teachers shoulder most responsibility for managing the issues of controversy. In 2016, the National Council of Social Studies (NCSS) updated its endorsed knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values that controversial issues discussion is expected to foster:

- a. The desire and ability to study relevant problems, and to make intelligent choices from alternatives.
- b. The desire and ability to use rational methods in considering significant issues.
- c. The willingness to recognize that differing viewpoints are valuable and normal.
- d. The recognition that reasonable compromise is often an important part of the democratic decision-making process.
- e. The skill of analyzing and evaluating sources of information recognizing propaganda, half-truths, and bias. (p. 186)

Besides, research has shown that controversial issues instruction in social studies is an effective way to not only improves specific dimensions of civic education but also promotes citizenship education (e.g., Alongi et al., 2016; Misco & Tseng, 2018; Ollila & Macy, 2019). For example, being a foremost discipline for citizenship education in the U.S.A, the subject of social studies can and should incorporate teaching and learning related to controversies regarding a broad collection of topics, including representation of historical events, representation of minoritized racial communities, policies concerning human rights, and environmental regulations. Such instructional inclusion of social and public issues can greatly contribute to individuals' participation in democratic communities by (1) increasing individual civic knowledge about different aspects of public lives; (2) fostering fundamental civic skills, especially critical skills, and collaboration skills; (3) elevating positive civic attitudes towards democracy and civic participation; and (4) promoting civic values to guide personal and societal behaviors during civic engagement (e.g., Ollila & Macy, 2019).

Thus, controversial issues instruction in social studies classrooms can function as a powerful means to allow young citizens to engage in civic activities by discussing, understanding, and addressing local and global problems (Alongi et al., 2016). Besides empirical evidence on the significance of deliberation about controversies to individual civic knowledge and engagement, there are also theoretical grounds in which controversial issues are supported based on the scholarship of John Dewey (1938). To be specific, engaging in controversy-related deliberation in and out of class creates opportunities for transformative learning and conceptual learning to occur, where students find meaning in school experiences, transform their learning, and advance their cognitive processing. To maximize the benefits of deliberating controversies, a strong “connection of the past, present, future,” and these issues need to be “saturated with normativity, morality, and elements of justice and injustice” (Misco & Tseng, 2018, p. 1).

Defining Controversy

As regards to teaching issues of controversy, one of the biggest challenges is determining what controversies should be brought into classrooms first. What makes a controversy a controversy is controversial itself (Engebretson, 2018; Evans et al., 1999; Nganga et al., 2020; Yacek, 2018). Controversial issues change over time (e.g., Hess, 2009; Jofre & Stein, 2019; Levinson, 2008). For instance, the relationship between state and private businesses, commercial monopolies, and fair wages were controversial in the early 2000s in the U.S.A. (Dewey, 1908). Divorce, sterilization of foolish, criminal, and insane individuals, tariffs, and international court were controversies of Thorndike’s (1937) period, whereas the absolute right of monarchs, and witchcraft were controversial issues in the past. Later, Oliver and Shaver (1974) concluded an array of controversies indicating the conflict between ethnicity and race, between ideology and religion, between individual privacy and public security, over socioeconomic status, social welfare, education, and health. Newer problems such as climate change and educational inequities came into being as controversies according to Hess (2009). There is no denying that social studies education is rich with controversial issues. In this subject area, a wide variety of definitions of what forms a controversial issue have prevailed amongst different researchers.

For instance, some may contend that issues of controversy are those where “significant numbers of people argue about them without reaching a conclusion” (Oulton et al., 2004, p. 411), often contingent on value judgments resided in individual citizens and their ethical and moral beliefs. In reality, different individuals, including social studies teachers, may define controversial issues in very distinct ways for various reasons (Ho et al., 2017). In addition, context matters to the ways that controversies are defined, deliberated, and handled, as personal knowledge and understanding of these issues must heavily draw on local accounts of culture, tradition, and situation (Levinson, 2008). For example, in Turkey, topics concerning women’s rights, religious freedom, identified hijabs of teachers, nationalism, and terrorism are often considered as controversies (Kus & Öztürk, 2019). For classroom teachers in South Africa, many categorize AIDS, corporal punishment, sexual assault, and religion as controversial issues while many Chinese high school learners consider pollution, economic disparity, food safety, and Taiwan to be controversies (Misco, 2011). Particular public policies, implemented to address social problems, such as policies regarding drugs, climate change, war, poverty, and illegal immigration, are popular examples of controversial problems (Chikoko et al., 2011).

Moreover, there are sometimes controversies about controversial issues (Levinson, 2008; Pace, 2019). Take climate change in the U.S. for an example; the scientific side (e.g., American Association for the Advancement of Science, Joint Science Academies, and American Geophysical Union) attempts to promote a consensus that this issue has already been settled. The main controversy about climate change is more political than scientific. The other side often consists of individuals with conservative political ideology, who reject the human activity being the cause of climate change (Pew Research Center, 2016). This phenomenon was referred to as ‘tipping’ by Hess (2009) because such issues can swing between controversial and non-controversial statuses, which renders discussing and teaching these issues rather challenging sometimes. However, controversies ‘in the tip’ can inevitably surface during teaching and learning procedures, so teachers need to bear this question in mind: “What controversial issues should be taught?” Naturally, the next question may be what criteria should be employed to respond to the former question?

Behavioral Criterion

Yacek (2018) conducted a systemic review and put forward three mainstream criteria for selecting controversies, 1) the behavioral, 2) political, and 3) epistemic criteria. Although each criterion has its disadvantages, they provide educators with guidance for identifying controversial issues under various circumstances. Simply letting the society decide what controversies should be brought into classrooms appears to be a popular phenomenon. In other words, if the public domain deems an issue controversial, classroom teachers should then treat this issue as a controversial one in instruction, which was how the behavioral criterion came into being (Rugg, 1936). Since the early 2000s, this criterion has attracted much academic support despite its critiques by several celebrated scholars in the field of controversial issues such as Michael Hand (2008), it has enjoyed a long history in educational philosophy. In 1936, Rugg published his *American Life and the School Curriculum*, in which he provided several affirmative arguments to support the behavioral criterion. “Built around the study of problems and of optional courses of social action” (p. 301), schools must devote their curricula to incorporating socially focused topics and problems. For a democracy to progress vigorously forward, it requires a renewal process, and its society must be critically scrutinized often. In this regard, controversial social and public problems create a perfect ground for all citizens to help examine a democratic society. Therefore, issues of controversy need to be centralized in every curriculum in every school. In like manner, this renewed procedure of democracy was characterized by George Counts (1969) as a new social order. Meanwhile, some researchers advocated for the need to impose this kind of new social order through mandatory democratic schooling, while Rugg rejected such aggressive imposing notion. Instead, he demanded to preserve young learners’ intelligent consent to themselves. Interestingly, he recommended “parliamentary discussion” (p. 299) as the uniquely appropriate technique when it comes to teaching controversial issues; that is, any way or form of indoctrinatory teaching approaches should be disregarded at all times. In a democratic context such as the U.S.A., broad-mindedness is to be nurtured amongst learners. A learning environment should welcome various viewpoints of issues of controversy, not being exclusive of

alternative perspectives, so that teachers do not force students to embrace any particular perspective. Today, many classroom teachers endorse this open-minded attitude of addressing controversial issues to students (Hess et al., 2002). Teachers are encouraged to fairly present all perspectives of an issue without discrimination; thus, students can obtain sufficient space to make up reliable judgement, regardless of the side that one is on. Even though Rugg's behavioral criterion has received much support in academia, it was questioned and critiqued by Michael Hand. To Hand, he denied the behavioral criterion as it uncritically follows the public's definition of controversial issues, some of which might be misleading or trivial to education. When wrong issues or topics are introduced to classrooms, students possibly look down upon the value of evidence, reason, and truth, by which a controversy should be determined. In this case, those educators who embrace the behavioral criterion deprive education of its primary function of "promoting rational thought and action" (Hand, 2008, p. 228). Then, the democracy in this country suffers.

Political Criterion

Secondly, less radical than the abovementioned criterion, has its rationale and academic camp regarding defining controversies. The values of liberal democracy cannot generate solutions to controversial issues. Total neutrality is expected of the teachers when a controversial issue is being deliberated, so students receive impartial information of all sides of the issue (Archard, 1998). Supporters of this criterion believe that many issues of controversy are related to morality, and a teacher's explicit favor of a particular opinion of those moral topics is likely to impose certain position onto the students, which is not moral in essence. Personal beliefs and values largely determine moral issues. To extend a personal view to multiple learners in a classroom is to indoctrinate, so teachers must never act in such manner. "Where public values are silent on a moral question, teachers have no business promoting an answer to it" (Hand, 2008), p. 222), which is a conclusion of the political criterion by Hand. However, he later came up with two principal reasons to reject this criterion. On the one hand, he stated that the argument of indoctrination falls apart when a teacher provides evidence-based, rational justification of his/her private value in terms of a moral question. Students learn from the teacher's

moral analysis modeling instead of being forced or coerced to copy the teacher's answer. This way of teaching indicates a democratic fashion, in which the teacher performs as a more mature citizen, so teachers do not need to chase after total neutrality. "An exercise in the giving of advice and the promulgating of information" (p. 224) can represent a teacher's endorsement of a reasonably justified moral point of view, with meaningful teaching occurring. On the other hand, the political criterion relies heavily on public and social values, and it sometimes neglects private values. In the meantime, the standards of liberal democracy can help individuals make a strong moral case only when they are backed up by epistemic values.

Epistemic Criterion

Critiquing both the behavioral and political criteria, Hand (2008) recommended applying the straightforward epistemic criterion to teaching controversial topics. A controversial issue needs to comprise several "rationally defensible positions" (p. 204), each of which is supported by powerful arguments and empirical evidence. The epistemic criterion emphasizes the necessity of empirical support on which every side of an issue is grounded; therefore, a controversial issue often involves competing positions. An issue becomes settled, not controversial anymore, if one of its positions possesses empirical support. Then, this empirically justified position tends to be the 'right' one, which can be taught directly to students. Directive sharing empirical information behind a 'correct' position around a settled issue marks one important feature of directive teaching, whereas neutrality is expected of a teacher during a non-directive teaching process. Hand also argued that a teacher should never break the epistemic criterion addressing issues of controversy; a teacher makes a big mistake by divorcing the epistemic criterion because he/she is encouraging learners to undermine the value of empirical data. A crucial function of education is to stimulate "rational thought and action" (p. 228) through evidence-based teaching activities. Today, Michael Hand's epistemic criterion of identifying controversial issues earns more academic endorsement than the political and behavioral criteria (Yacek, 2018). Naturally, teachers must consider an issue's epistemic status before determining whether a directive approach is better than a non-directive one regarding the teaching of the issue.

In 2014, Warnick and Smith published a critique of the epistemic criterion, disagreeing with Hand's instructional suggestions while confirming his notion of what to teach. They approved his argument that a controversy needs to own a base of empirical evidence; however, they asserted that Hand's criterion undermines the importance of reason in the eyes of the students. To meaningfully discuss controversial topics, reason must be nurtured during the discussion. In doing so, they put forward four necessary tasks: 1) "mastery of the necessary tools and epistemic virtues associated with the use of reason, 2) confidence in reason as a productive tool for deliberation, 3) confidence in themselves as rational agents, and (4) a sense of fallibilism" (Warnick & Smith, 2014, pp. 230–231). Next, to accomplish these tasks with learners in a classroom, they proposed that teachers need to disprove Hand's pedagogical responses to discussing controversies. For example, by trying to be neutral, teachers can enhance students' feeling of trust; that is, they believe that students have the competency to come to a relational answer or position. Hand's epistemic criterion does not necessarily promote reason, another central objective of education, in the course of deliberating controversial issues.

Today, despite the imperfect nature of all three criteria, they are supported by researchers and educators, contributing to the scholarship and education concerning issues of controversy.

Instructional Practices

No Matter which criterion a teacher endorses to identify controversies, instructional practices must be effective and carefully implemented. A democratic classroom best serves the teaching of controversial issues, where teachers embrace constructivist pedagogy, reflective inquiry, and student-centered instruction (King, 2009). Authoritarian or authoritative teaching styles are likely to impair the function of controversial issues instruction, restraining multiple reflective perspectives from being freely expressed. To approach controversies must eliminate the passive producer-consumer mode of teaching and learning. For example, Johnson and Johnson (1988) put forward an effective discussion approach, structured academic controversies (SAC), in which the multiple perspective-taking technique is centralized during a class discussion. It creates opportunities

for learners to constantly examine their own perspectives around an issue while scrutinizing alternative, oftentimes contending, perspectives in a respectful manner (Hess, 2009). To this day, educators have advanced SAC through various teaching activities involving controversies. Based on SAC, group discussions, small or large, are considered efficient for controversial issues instruction as well as conducive to democratic education (Hess, 2002; 2009; Oulton et al., 2004; Waterson, 2009). In addition, recent research points to three other popular strategies to connect controversial issues with appreciation of multiple perspective and rational decision-making. First, Marcus and Stoddard (2009) recommended including documentary films. Second, Mangrum (2010) applauded the use of Socratic seminars. Third, Parker (2003) advocated for deliberation. Through the application of these strategies, successful teaching outcome has been shown in research. For instance, teachers should ensure that alternative perspectives receive fair attention and consideration; exclusive mindset should be avoided at all costs (Hess, 2009, 2016; Oulton et al., 2004; Waterson, 2009). Strong emotions can arise due to the unsettledness of controversial issues, so that some teachers become overly emotionally attached to a controversy under discussion. One resulting danger would be for the teacher to impose, consciously or unconsciously, personal opinions onto their students (Byford et al., 2009). King (2009) suggested that teachers implement the "cognitive distancing" (p. 215) technique to prevent from being excessively immersed in the discussion. More importantly, respectful interpersonal relationships must be established, increasing both the teacher's and students' sense of security facing potential challenges of controversial issues (King, 2009).

Along with these pedagogical approaches, the best learning outcome may result from the discussion of controversial issues if this discussion is unfolded in a diverse classroom setting with contesting perspectives (Barton & McCully, 2007). When a student feels respected and treated fairly, he/she will make active participation in class activities. On the contrary, he/she will hold back involvement when feeling too big of a risk or punishment for sharing their thoughts or comments. Teachers, therefore, should not try to reach an equilibrium of perspectives, which is often ineffective and will hinder student engagement (Oulton et al.,

2004). From time to time, some teachers are apt to try their best to accomplish exclusive neutrality, so they tend to avoid integrating topics that are appropriate issues of controversy. This phenomenon allures the teachers into “a pure conduit to prescribed content and embedded values within curriculum” (Byford et al., 2009, p. 65), rendering the connection to border communities futile. With the assumption that all controversial issues encompass a ‘correct’ position, instructors who defend exclusive partiality are inclined to set up a classroom that is value-free, neutral in nature. However, according to King (2009), exclusive partiality really limits the controversial-ness of controversial topics; therefore, alternative positions, gray areas, and contestation are constrained while the assumed ‘correct’ perspective receives redundant attention. Meanwhile, the teacher must try hard to hold in their own opinions and avoid indoctrination. One of their prioritized tasks is to help learners evaluate and polish personal opinions. Contrary to the aforementioned orientation, explicit subjectivity (Waterson, 2009) requires a teacher to articulate their beliefs around an issue to the student—suppression of teacher thinking results in dishonest learning experiences (Misco, 2007).

Teachers’ Role

Even though benefits of controversial issues instruction have been confirmed by research, it often falls through the cracks in schools because teachers purposefully avoid including value-laden systems regarding politics, culture, race, etc. (Evans et al., 2000). The classroom teachers usually have absolute autonomy in deciding whether issues of controversy get introduced to their students based upon their perceived definition, knowledge, relevance, and risks of the issue (Hess, 2002; Reis & Galvao, 2008; Yacek, 2018). Furthermore, some teachers worry that controversial issues incorporation compromises their academic freedom as they need to handle those difficult issues scrupulously all the time without making mistakes of any sort. Concurrently, the teaching to the test convention, struggles of managing strong emotions, and low pedagogical self-efficacy too drive instructors away from controversial issues (Hess, 2005).

An overarching concern with addressing controversial topics in a classroom is the hated emotions possibly evoked, which challenge both the teacher and students. One must understand how to broach an issue

effectively and respectfully prior to his/her decision of teaching it (McCully, 2006). Therefore, teachers must have a rigorous rationale for them to welcome controversies as they are the most pivotal roles in setting up a democratic environment, writing lesson plans, allowing of conflicting perspectives, and managing student engagement (Ersoy; 2010). In a broader sense, support from educational policy makers, stakeholders, standards composers, and community members will enhance teachers' morale, especially given the risks around controversial social and public issues (Barton & McCully, 2007; Lockwood, 1996).

Civic Ideology in Education

Usually, “an ideology contains assumptions about how the social and political world is and how it ought to be” (Jost & Andrews, p. 541). Civic ideology in education denotes a teacher's perceptions and assumptions on civic engagement and the make-up of civil society (Castro, 2013). Curricula, assessment systems, and pedagogies demonstrate and reinforce dominant group ideologies, and the school has long become a solid sphere for ideological production and reproduction, which is conducive to “the reproduction of inequalities” while feigning universality and neutrality (Dalal, 2016, p. 238). Castro and Knowles (2018) illustrated how teachers' civic ideologies are closely associated with their instructional practices because they influence what and how they teach. For instance, pre-service teachers often hold competing civic ideologies, so they envision their instructional activities based on their civic ideological assumptions (Castro, 2013). For pre-service teachers, teacher education programs produce tremendous impact on shaping their civic ideologies (Knowles & Castro, 2018). Knowles (2018) divided civic ideology into three categories, conservative, liberal, and critical. Each type of civic ideology indicates specific educational ideological positions that emphasize certain civic behaviors and are correlated with particular pedagogical approaches.

Conservative Civic Ideology

Conservative civic ideology advocates a singular, monolithic view of U.S. culture and society, and it strives to promote the nation's traditions, socialization, and high regard for national representations (e.g., law, civic responsibilities, and patriotism) (Knight Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). Conservative citizenship education would seek to amplify the need for fixed civic knowledge according to the functions of the constitution and government, improved civic skills, increased civic attitudes, and unified civic values. Individuals of 'other' races, genders, religions, and abilities are to be Americanized and assimilated into the same American culture (Patrick, 2003). Teachers who endorse this type of ideology may emphasize specific items in teaching, including the significance of respecting the heritage and history of the U.S., spreading certain dominant perspectives held by those in power among students, and rejecting multiculturalism (Knowles, 2018).

Liberal Civic Ideology

Liberal civic ideology reveals societal and economic inequity that then causes political inequality towards racial minorities within the democratic society of the U.S. In research, a civic empowerment gap between white students and marginalized students exists, rendering the latter less civic empowerment and participation in civic discourses (Levinson, 2010). This view promotes pluralistic perspectives of citizenship and stresses individual rights to chase various ways of living. Education for liberal civic ideology focuses on improving society by increasing participation in civic institutions and democratic communities. Educators favoring liberal civic ideology avoid teaching fixed and singular values, beliefs, and perspectives. Instead, classrooms aim to diffuse necessary knowledge, skills, values for individuals to engage well in a culturally diverse civilization (Knowles, 2018). Some popular ideas include the importance of developing one's personal opinion before decision-making, teaching learners how to think, the importance of taking part in a miscellaneous society, and cooperation with others (Knowles, 2018).

Critical Civic Ideology

Critical civic ideology acknowledges the deficiency of democracy. At present, social injustice attributed to inequitable social and political realities prevails within the fabric of American democracy (Castro, 2013).

This view seeks to critique and disrupt ideologies and practices that maintain domination and subordination, overrepresentation, and underrepresentation. It emphasizes the systematic oppression of different communities within society contingent on race, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, ability, religion, etc., to interrogate the restrictions and boundaries of human freedom (Bickmore, 2008). Meanwhile, it calls for systemic change toward social justice. Teachers with a critical mindset strive to deconstruct traditional civic values and knowledge. Multiple perspectives are always endorsed during discussion, analysis, and assessment of historical and present society. Knowles (2018) pointed out some key ideas regarding the critical view, including primary causes of social inequality, the experiences and realities of marginalized individuals, and practices of class discrimination and racism in daily life.

Critical Consciousness

The term “critical” aligns with that of ‘critical democratic education’ and ‘critical civic ideology’ mentioned earlier, denoting its foundation in critical theory. The researchers in this study adopt Cornbleth’s (2017) idea— “Critical theory is a particular genre of theories that raise additional questions about assumptions, implications or likely consequences, and who benefits from a situation or course of action” (p. 192). Then they advocate for a critical standpoint of the student who will cultivate critical attitudes, develop activist citizenship, understand inequitable power structures, and address authentic issues in democratic communities (Evans, 2006). Thus, a critical view of civic ideology is more likely to enhance one’s critical consciousness than the other two stances.

Au (2012) argued, “consciousness, in some form, lies at the heart of all aspects of the curriculum” (p. 16). He went on to define critical consciousness as “critically questioning of inequitable social relations and working towards their abolition, while simultaneously developing new, more equitable relations” (p. 26) so that all individuals can have a better existence. Critical consciousness requires individuals to be critically reflective at the same time; that is, they must reflect on their thinking and the structure of society. In terms of classroom

discussion and deliberation, critical consciousness is both “retrospective and introspective” (p. 25). Being critically conscious enables one to understand diverse perspectives, rethink and challenge unequal social relations (e.g., unequal power relations and their practices), and work towards social change and equity (Allman, 2007). More specifically, it helps pre-service teachers thoughtfully engage with the curriculum, instructional materials, and their instructional practices (e.g., deliberation). More importantly, the sense of critical consciousness helps them understand that through the processes of misrecognition, misrepresentation, misconception, domination persists and reproduces itself, “thereby legitimizing and solidifying structures of inequality” (Dalal, 2016, p. 232). To be specific, critical consciousness requires a critical lens to interrogate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, which empowers an individual to develop into a critical thinking citizen, effectively participate with others in public discourses, and demonstrate interest and capacity in contributing to the problem-solving process of local, national, and international communities (Hoskins, 2011).

Critical Civic Knowledge

As indicated by research, critical civic knowledge can affect the development of individual participation in democratic communities and social change (Galston, 2007), so it provides a necessary understanding of civil problems, multiple perspectives, and possible directions to solutions. In a broad sense, civic knowledge is interpreted differently in specific disciplines, and each of these disciplines produces the form of knowledge constituting civic knowledge (Hatcher, 2011). In law and political disciplines, for example, it represents citizenship knowledge with an emphasis on politics-related aspects of knowledge, including facts, concepts (e.g., democracy, autocracy, human rights), and theories (e.g., ideologies) (Komalasari, 2009). Social work or services tend to focus on knowledge of social justice, whose key concepts may include diversity, public welfare, equality, and justice (Hatcher, 2011). A critical sense of civic knowledge requires individuals to recognize that knowledge is not neutral, but that it is socially constructed (Cui, 2019). Young (1971) came up with the concept of “stratification of knowledge” to account for the tendentious dimension of knowledge, arguing that the dominant group owns great power to steer knowledge construction where their knowledge gets

legitimized as standard. Therefore, their epistemological views become superior to other groups' knowledge, so there is a stratification of knowledge in society. This leads to Apple's (2018) contention that knowledge in the education realm has never been neutral and impartial because its selection, formation, and communication are highly dependent upon power relations within a society. As these power relations are unequal among different social groups, resulting control is embedded with what is deemed as knowledge.

In like manner, Connell (1993) and Freire (2004) pointed out that curriculum is political in nature, produced through a hegemonized process in which dominant social, cultural, and political powers determine what should be taught and learned in schools. Thus, such hegemony contained in school curriculum and instruction simultaneously suppresses all dominated forms of knowledge. Moreover, the lack of neutrality of school knowledge is carried out by not only teaching materials (e.g., textbooks) and course content, also instructional practices that endorse social relations with reference to socially constructed differences, including class, gender, race, and sexual orientation. As a result, the curriculum functions as an "introduction to a particular form of life that prepares students to slot into different positions of the power hierarchy" (Cui, 2019, p. 68).

In addition to domain-specific knowledge, the constantly changing and dynamic nature of knowledge marks another crucial feature of civic knowledge, and context matters too. It is important to be familiar with major social movements, historical struggles, and events shaping and maintaining U.S. democracy. Meanwhile, to examine and accomplish the full potential of democracy, critical civic knowledge advocates for fundamental knowledge of the essential values and principles about democracy progressively (Musil, 2009). In this sense, Longo and Shaffer (2009) contended that civic knowledge has another characteristic—realizing that "knowledge is actionable and that individuals coming together to co-create knowledge empowers them to make positive change in the world around them" (p. 169). In other words, individuals, communities, and other entities are in partnership with each other to play different roles in knowledge creation in hopes of making a change in local and national lives. More importantly, recent research contends that to revitalize and sustain

civic education and democratic citizenship, promoting critical aspects of civic knowledge among individuals would be one effective pathway to take and a wise spot to begin (Galston, 2007).

Critical Civic Skills

Critical civic skills have been regarded to be a key factor in developing individual capacity for individual participation in democratic communities and social change (Gerosa, 2019). Researchers started to identify crucial skills regarding civic participation decades ago. For example, according to the Civics Framework for 1988 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the National Standards for Civics and Government (NSCG), critical thinking skills must be included to improve individual skills in identifying, describing, explaining, analyzing, evaluating, deciding, and defending the opinion associated with public problems (Komalasari, 2009). Parks and colleagues (1996) carefully examined how people develop active citizenship. After studying over 150 participants, they identified several skills that are closely related to active citizenship such as interpersonal communication, perspective-taking, and critical thinking. Later, additional research was conducted to systematically review existing literature in education, political science, and psychology concerning civic engagement. A set of civic skills were confirmed, among them critical thinking, collective decision making, communication, and organization (Kirlin, 2003). Moreover, young citizens must develop the ability to “dialogue across difference,” crucially demanded by one’s civic commitments (Keen & Hall, 2008). Keen (2010) reported on assessing civic outcomes during the IUPUI Symposium that many of the partakers confirmed that civic discourse and dialogue are common skills needed for producing civic achievements.

Recently, although there is no universal consensus on what civic skills exactly must be for democratic citizens, researchers have continued exploring this area in terms of the importance of these skills and key requisite skills (Ata, 2019). Research findings today convey some consistent descriptions of civic skills with previous research. For instance, civic skills are necessary skills that apply one’s civic knowledge in practice, so his or her acquired knowledge gains meaning and can realistically be employed to address societal and national

problems (LeCompte et al., 2019). Similarly, individuals need to nurture their civic skills to operate public and societal engagement. To effectively engage in civics first requires an awareness of civic engagement; effective participation among individuals is significant to the cause of U.S. democracy. Through active participation, individual civic knowledge about fundamental ideas, concepts, history, and facts provides the basis for civic skills to be acquired, which in turn can facilitate further gains in civic knowledge (Gerosa, 2019; Hess 2008).

Promoting Critical Civic Skills in Social Studies

A sustainable democracy relies on citizens' civic skills, so an emphasis on civic skills development among the youth is crucial (Hoskins et al., 2011). Critically conscious teachers are expected to help promote the development of the whole child; teachers in social studies are assumed to be the ones predominantly accountable for stimulating practices and instruction of developing learners' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions. To be specific, social studies teachers need to understand that one ultimate goal of civic education, in which students' civic skills get stressed and improved, is to enable them to become responsible and competent citizens who are willing to listen to different perspectives, are concerned for the welfare of others and human rights (Hoskins et al., 2011). In achieving this goal, there are at least three categories of critical civic skills that must be emphasized in social studies instruction. First, critiquing skills are necessary, including questioning ideas and critiquing arguments. These skills require the ability to collect, evaluate, and extract evidence, detect root causes underneath issues, and translate public and political interaction (Ewert, 1991; Hantzopoulos, 2015). Second, communication skills are significant in forming civic identity and promoting social justice. For instance, students' development of civic skills would benefit greatly from the capability of discussing issues of controversy without dehumanizing others or their perspectives by respecting and understanding multiple perspectives prior to uttering one's own views. Third, collaboration is another set of fundamental skills to be focused on in social studies, and it represents the ability to collaborate and problem-addressing skills, including attending meetings and participating in community matters (Ata, 2019; Colby & Sullivan, 2009; LeCompte et al., 2019). Based on a brief review of recent literature, these three categories of

civic skills are not meant to present a complete catalog of every important civic skill; instead, they imply a broad notion of the nature of civic skills needed for effective democratic participation.

Critical Civic Attitudes

Increasing research attention has been paid to critical civic attitudes required to become responsible and competent citizens due to the rising awareness of the fact that young individuals vary tremendously in their inclination to civic participation (e.g., Lupia, 2002; Colby & Sullivan, 2009). Besides having limited opportunities to take part in civic activities (e.g., political undertakings) when compared to mature individuals, some young individuals' lack of critical civic attitudes also leads to lower civic participation (Galston, 2007). Meanwhile, young groups' contributions to civics seem to be underestimated and neglected simply because of their age; however, it is beneficial to promote their civic values early (Gerosa, 2019). In a general sense, critical civic attitudes stress self-confidence, responsibility, favor of change, trust in democracy, equality, social justice, and respect for difference, as well as participatory attitudes towards civics (e.g., intentions to participate in community affairs) (Campbell, 2019). In the domain of democracy, civic attitudes can be defined as internal beliefs, dispositions, and the degree of confidence or self-efficacy in participating in local, national, and international lives. These attitudes towards citizenship, democracy, personal efficacy, and expectations often determine citizens' degree of democratic engagement (Schulz et al., 2010).

Critical Civic Values

A last latent component of the construct of critical consciousness relates to possible explanations of how individuals justify their inclination or decisions to endorse certain beliefs around equity-related topics, certain ways of undertaking teaching and learning at schools, and certain levels and forms of engagement in the public sphere. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) contended that individuals' values regarding civics are represented through their personal and social behaviors, which are preceded by their personal beliefs. In other words, what citizens value internally affects how they personally and socially prefer one way of doing than

another. Civic values may contain subcategories of values such as citizenship values and social justice values, which may be interpreted and function differently in different democratic contexts (e.g., the U.S., Denmark, and Sweden) (Hoskins et al., 2011).

Similar to the unneutral concept of civic knowledge, civic values are socially constructed to infuse certain values, beliefs, and eventually behaviors in favor of a particular social group, institution, agenda, or ideology (Shephard & Egan, 2018). Take higher education as an example. It officially and widely addresses institutionalized values or beliefs, including democratic, Americanized, and colonized values, through teaching, research, and social work activities. In doing so, an aim is to influence students' developing values in their value system to align with those in the public realm, and students may reach an intended perspective or perception of certain aspects of society with respect to its politics, culture, and civics (Isac, 2014; Shephard & Egan, 2018). A critical point of view can help students understand that academic activities of teaching and learning are not neutral but value-diffusing phenomena, operating as reproductive instruments of social and political inequity by those in power (Apple, 2018). Competent citizens with critical consciousness can utilize these activities to foster change for inclusive and equitable ends (Campbell, 2019).

Chapter Summary

This chapter was centered around the theoretical framework, critical education for democracy, providing a critical lens for prospective social studies teachers to discuss and deliberate public and social issues. Then, it became feasible for them to examine power relations and inequalities within the context of democratic education. Next, I presented deliberation, civic ideology in education, and critical consciousness as three attributes of the framework. First, deliberation of controversial public and social issues greatly contributes to education for democracy. In the matter of teaching issues of controversy, one of the biggest challenges is deciding what controversies should be brought into classrooms. Since 1936, for identifying controversies, (three mainstream criteria the behavioral, political, and epistemic criteria) have been relied upon. Despite their usefulness, each has weaknesses and receives scholarly critiques. Given the difficulties and risks of teaching

controversial issues, teachers must apply effective instructional practices (e.g., structured academic controversies) to enhance the benefits of integrating controversies. Pre-service teachers need to have various aspects of assistance in their preparation such as a support network, to be competent in teaching controversies.

In addition, closely tied to instructional choices and activities, civic ideology in education has never been examined in relation to the deliberation of controversies in research. Generally, there are three categories of civic ideology in education, conservative, liberal, and critical, each of which tends to favor different understandings and assumptions of education and how to go about it. Furthermore, I explained critical consciousness and its importance to education for democracy. To be critically conscious, a social studies pre-service teacher needs to be able to interrogate civic knowledge, civic skills, civic attitudes, and civic values through a critical lens.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I first introduced my considerations regarding ontology, epistemology, and methodology that have led to my decision of endorsing a qualitative case study technique. I indicated some main differences between qualitative and quantitative case studies to support the chosen methodology. The context and sampling procedures would be explained in detail. Data collection was completed by semi-structured interviews, written reflections, field observation notes, and autoethnography. As for data analysis, two stages took place from initial coding of each participants' data to cross-examining all 14 participants' codes. Code reduction was conducted to produce themes. I then talked about procedures I employed to boost the trustworthiness and transferability of the results. I paid attention to potential ethical issues too.

Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

Creswell (1998) contended, "truth and reality are constructed by individuals within various social contexts; there is no universal, objective truth" (p. 41), which points to the researchers' ontological position with respect to the very focus of the current study. To be specific, the pre-service teachers who were recruited were likely to construct their personal perceptions of their teaching of controversial issues in various shapes or forms in the context of the study, and the data gathered from these participants were not expected to be examined through the lens of an objective, universal truth. Accordingly, their multiple realities produced subjective evidence that were gathered from all participants, which helped the researcher shorten the gap between himself and those being studied. A constructivist epistemology (Maxwell, 2012) of "knowledge of the world is inevitably our own construction" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 53) was employed, with the research questions containing its normative elements. Naturally, this study utilized a qualitative methodology because it is highly appropriate for tackling research problems regarding conditions, processes, structures, and norms

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and these features were centralized within the purpose of current research focusing on teacher perceptions of deliberating controversial issues. In a word, this particular study asserted that no reality can exist alone, but that plural renderings and interpretations of this world subsist (Merriam, 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Researcher Positionality

As the researcher, I acknowledge that my sociocultural positionality is inclined to influence the research study in various ways. The researcher is an Asian male, non-American citizen, born and raised in a non-democratic society. My educational experience in my home country emphasizes the benefits and advantages of socialism over capitalism. Misperceptions, misunderstandings, or negative stereotypes possibly had been taught to me, some of which may remain to this day. I have come to learn about the key topics involved (e.g., critical democracy, civic ideology, and controversy deliberation) in recent years. My prior knowledge, ways of thinking are likely to affect what and how they read, interpret, and conclude. As an educator myself, I am well aware of the complexity and/or the fluidness of my own civic ideology in education. For instance, over certain issues or topics, I may firmly endorse one stance of civic ideology in education at a given point in time. However, my view of civic ideology of the same issues may change at a different time or in a distinct context. Sometimes, I may have a mixture of civic ideologies over some issues. Overall, I favor a critical viewpoint of civic ideology in education with regards to power, equity, and social justice, to facilitate critical education for democracy.

Study Design

Numerous researchers have contributed to defining qualitative research in different ways, one of which by Lichtman (2010) goes as follows:

It is a way of knowing in which a researcher gathers, organizes, and interprets information obtained from humans using his or her eyes and ears as filters. It often involves in-depth interviews and/or

observations of humans in nature and social settings. It can be contrasted with quantitative research, which relies heavily on hypothesis testing, cause and effect, and statistical analyses. (p. 5)

Differences Between Qualitative and Quantitative Case Studies

After combing through relative literature, I compared and contrasted qualitative and quantitative methodologies to the extent that the selection of a qualitative method would be most aligned with my research questions. A review of relevant scholarship yielded a brief summary of prominent distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research (e.g., Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 1998; Neuman, 2000). Table 1 presents the details of those distinctions.

Table 1

Three Main Distinctions Between Quantitative and Qualitative Research (Adapted from Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 1998; Neuman, 2000).

Dimension	Qualitative	Quantitative
Reality	Subjective and multiple	Objective and singular
Connection between researcher and participant	Close	Distant
Connection between theory and research	Emergent	Confirmation of hypotheses

This table shows that qualitative research affords a close relationship between its subjects and its researchers who are usually seen as insiders. Yin (2003) argued that qualitative research affords its researchers a close connection with their study subjects as they are able to become insiders in the same setting; therefore, qualitative researchers can sense the world in more detailed manner. On the contrary, quantitative researchers are often considered outsiders; their relationship to the subject is quite brief or nonexistent (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 1998; Neuman, 2000). In terms of the nature of reality, quantitative researchers are inclined to believe that the world houses one solitary social reality, often expressing a

static perspective, not affiliated to the researcher himself/herself. On the other hand, social reality tends to be dynamic, socially constructed by the subject, according to qualitative researchers. The qualitative camp attempts to nurture and protect the plural social realities (Creswell, 2003; Cavana et al., 2001). The two methodologies also view theory in different manners. Quantitative approaches deem a theory as the departing spot for explorations, while their qualitative counterparts strive to develop or improve theories (Bryman, 2016). In terms of organization, quantitative research often includes a higher level of structure than qualitative research. For instance, the determination of study subjects can occur during the conduction of a qualitative research, whereas with a quantitative approach, sample selection and data-gathering tools are decided before the process of data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). When it comes to research outcomes, an idiographic approach to discovering patterns dominates a qualitative project, while a nomothetic approach with a large quantity of data collection is often favored in a quantitative study.

On account of the aforementioned distinctions between qualitative and quantitative approaches, the former would better align with and serve the current study. A qualitative methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was adopted as it is intended to investigate perceptions and beliefs that “cannot be directly observed or measured but must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do” (Pajares, 1992, p. 314). My research questions endorsed a constructivist ontology and possessed normative components, resonating with the strengths of qualitative methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

A Qualitative Case Study Approach

In addition, I sought to achieve detailed and rich evidence about the phenomenon of controversial issues, discussion, and deliberation among pre-service elementary teachers. “This specificity of focus makes [the case study] an especially good design for practical problems—for questions, situations, or puzzling occurrences arising from everyday practice” (Merriam, 1988, p. 29). In other words, the study utilized a qualitative case study method—“an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 21). Based on what was intended to find out in this study, the case study

approach possessed a prominent strength for questions starting with “‘how’ and ‘why’” (p. 32) concerning controversy discussion and deliberation. More importantly, case studies allow researchers to probe one or multiple “contemporary bonded systems” (p. 147) for a period of time, collecting various sources of data (Creswell, 2018). The elementary methods course at a public four-year university located in midwestern United States throughout the fall semester performed as the particular case, with each potential participant being a unit of analysis. The participants served as units of analysis that would help produce context-specific evidence (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Yin (2003) defined case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 32). Hartley (2004) later described a case study as “a detailed investigation, often with data collected over a period of time, of one or more organizations, or groups within organizations, with a view to providing an analysis of the context and processes involved in the phenomena under study” (p. 47). Furthermore, he argued that a case study offers a strategic plan to carry out a research study, and thus it is not just a method. Similarly, Eisenhardt (1989) also advocated for the strategic nature of the case study approach as it helps the researcher capture the complex realities involved in each context. Oftentimes, scholars interchangeably use case study strategy and case study method.

To Stake (1995), the case study approach has three main purposes. Firstly, it is often utilized to provide researchers with further knowledge and understanding of a particular case, which is an intrinsic case study. Next, going beyond just comprehending a particular case study, it can achieve additional objectives (e.g., learning about another relevant case) after examining the targeted case, which is an instrumental case study. Thirdly, multiple cases need to be investigated thoroughly at the same time through a case study method, which is referred to as a collective case study. Case study research does not have to be limited to one single case. Comparably, Yin (2003) put forwarded three categories of case studies: descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory. Illustrative and experimental types of case studies

were added by Miles and Huberman in 1994. A qualitative approach, an exploratory intrinsic case study, was deemed most appropriate for the current study. In qualitative case study research, a wide array of data-gathering methods can be employed, including interviews, observations, and documents. Data triangulation is frequently operated to solidify data validity, “using multiple sources of evidence” (Yin, 2003, p. 94), which was adopted in the following section.

Setting and Sampling

This case study was conducted at a large public four-year college sited in midwestern United States for one academic semester. At the time of the study, the state of the pandemic did not pose an unreasonable risk to in-person meetings on campus when the study was actually being conducted. Therefore, the study did not need to be carried out in a completely online format of appropriate “networked field sites” (p. 2), including Zoom meetings and online discussion forums (Gerber et al., 2017). There were three sections of an elementary social studies methods course in the fall semester, and one section consisted of 25 pre-service elementary social studies teachers on average. The syllabus of this methods course incorporates global and local issues (Social Studies-BA, BS, 2021), and all assignments already focus on social studies education topics. Therefore, this course was likely to involve controversial issues instruction throughout a semester. In this case, a purposive sampling strategy (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) was utilized to select participants for the study. The sampling criteria were: 1) be a student enrolled in ELED 4050 in fall 2021, 2) be an elementary pre-service teacher, and 3) be at least 18 years of age.

Upon approval from the Utah State University Institutional Review Board (protocol # 12063), I started with one of the three sections to recruit participants. First, I visited the class in person and handed out copies of the consent form and recruitment flyer for each present student at the beginning of the first class. Then I gave a recruitment presentation with PowerPoint slides. The presentation included a summary description of the study (e.g., objective, procedures, data collection, benefits, incentives for participation, and my contact information). Next, I answered questions that students posed regarding participation in the study. Finally, the course instructor helped create a link on Canvas, which contained my contact information and a

Qualtrics link to the consent form. When necessary, interested people emailed me with any questions they had; otherwise, they had access to directly sign up for the study using the Qualtrics link. In this case, the first email communication with students might come up after my first visit to the classroom. Second, 15 students who were willing to sign the informed consent document via Qualtrics.com would become participants in the study. One week later, the first session of the course yielded eight participants, less than 15, so I collaborated with the second session to recruit the complementary participants. I repeated the recruitment process as in the first visit to the previous classroom and shared the same handouts (consent forms and recruitment flyers) with everyone on site. Another seven individuals enrolled in the study by signing the consent form online. A total of 14 participants finally agreed to join the study. Once the participants completed their participation in the study at the end of fall 2021, the School of Teacher Education and Leadership sent incentives (\$40 Amazon e-gift card per person) to them via a new email. In terms of the number of participants in this study, 14 was a rational and sufficient size. Yin (2014) voted against including more than four or five participants in a single qualitative case study. An average sample size of one to four was reported for an array of recent qualitative case studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2018). Fourteen informants should not only provide a thick description of the target phenomenon, but also enhance utility and transferability of the findings. Table 2 presents the demographic information of the participant. Pseudonyms were assigned with the consent of the participant during the first interview.

Table 2

Summary of Study Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender or Sexual Orientation	Race	Year in the Education Program
Bailey	42	Female	White	Senior
Juliet	22	Female	Asian	Senior

Helen	23	Female	White	Senior
Heidi	22	Female	White	Senior
Bethany	22	Female	White	Senior
Carson	21	Gay Male	White	Senior
Claire	21	Female	White	Senior
Lyla	22	Female	White	Senior
Madison	23	Female	White	Senior
Caroline	24	Female	White	Senior
Peyton	24	Female	White	Senior
Reese	23	Female	White	Senior
Zaiden	22	Male	White	Senior

Note. The 14th participant signed the formal informed consent upon recruitment, but she did not respond to my interview requests. No interview data were collected from her. She only emailed me one self-reflection that did not stimulate much valuable data. Therefore, I did not list her in this table and the ones in the following sections.

Data Collection

Research data were accumulated via different formats, including semi-structured interviews with participants, weekly written reflections, field notes by the researcher, and autoethnography (Maxwell, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018), with the first format being the main data source. Table 3 below lists all details (e.g., materials, timeline) of the data gathering methods.

Table 3

Data Collection

Data source	Materials/Devices	Time	Frequency	Note
Semi-structured one-on-one interviews	Audio recorded; Interview questions are in the Appendixes	30-60 minutes per interview	Twice in the semester: Week 8 (Oct. 18 – Oct. 22) and Week 15 (Dec. 6 – Dec. 10)	Via Zoom
Written reflections	Student work		Three times: week 3 (Sep. 13 th -Sep. 17 th), week 6 (Oct. 4 th -Oct. 8 th), and 8 (Oct. 19 th -Oct. 22 nd)	Email
Field observation	Course syllabus; Teacher lesson plans; Field notes on topics, activities, and conversations regarding social/controversial issues	150 minutes per observation	Four times during the semester: W4, Sep. 22, W8, Oct. 20, and W15, Dec. 7	
Autoethnography	Researcher's reflection that records personal experiences, thoughts, and discoveries		Ongoing journal reflections starting in the summer and throughout the fall semester, which helped with the planning and recording of relevant experiences.	

Interviews

Firstly, according to Patton (2002), in qualitative research, interviews are powerful means to elicit an understanding of the happenings “in and on someone else’s mind” (p. 341). Slavin (2007) suggested that comprehensive and open-ended interviews be used to examine each participant’ distinct perspectives of the

same topics. According to Darlington and Scott (2002), in-depth interviews can afford me to “understand the meaning people make of their lives from their own experience because they seriously adore the belief that “people are experts on their own experience and are best able to report how they experienced a particular event or phenomenon” (p. 48).

During the interviews, I first informed the participants of the whole designed process and gathered some demographic information (e.g., age, gender, and race). Next, I asked questions that focused on personal perceptions of controversy, discussion, deliberation, and civic ideology, education for democracy, and social justice. Two rounds of semi-structured interviews questions are in the Appendixes. I made the questions open-ended, so that all participants could comfortably express their opinions and views (Creswell, 2014), which created space for meaningful revealing of beliefs, perceptions, experiences, and knowledge. The researcher asked follow-up questions when necessary to obtain more meaningful information. I conducted interviews with the students twice in the same semester (i.e., one occurs in the middle during week eight (Oct. 18th-Oct. 22nd), and the other occurs at the end of the semester during week 15 (Dec. 6th-Dec. 10th)). Ranging from 30 min to 60 min, each interview occurred one-on-one and was audio-recorded using an audio recorder after interviewees gave their permission. I transcribed all 36 interviews for analysis. Prior to transcription, I assigned the selected pseudonyms to the file name of each interview recording for confidentiality. The first interview data provided evidence for adjustments and improvements toward the second interview. Regardless of the school’s pandemic protocol, interviews with the students were carried out via Zoom that supports video conferencing (Gerber et al., 2017). Even though the interviews took place in a video format, all recordings for data usage were audio-only, and no video recording was collected. The video option was solely meant to establish a rapport with the pre-service teachers, which contributed to draw forth their opinions and experiences in their teacher education program. For the purpose of increasing the validity of the study, I conducted member checks to ensure the accuracy and compatibility with students’ personal experiences (Miles et al., 2019) after each round of interviews.

Written Reflections

Secondly, reflections (Creswell & Poth, 2018) on targeted topics regarding discussing and teaching controversial issues were a portion of the class assignment, which provided insight into participants' feelings, perceptions, and understandings. I collected the reflections three times in the fall semester, week three (Sep. 13th-Sep. 17th), week six (Oct. 4th-Oct. 8th), and eight (Oct. 19th-Oct. 22nd). In week three, students completed a reflection on several chapters of *A Different Mirror for Young People: A History of Multicultural America* book by Ronald Takaki (2012). The first session of the methods course focused on chapters one through five, and the other session targeted one through eight chapters. Both classes required the student to address three questions: 1) "What is the central narrative of this book?" 2) "How is this narrative similar or different from what you learned in school?" And 3) "What aspects of this book could you implement in your teaching?" In week six, based on the assigned readings of the week, two questions were posed to the students, 1) "What is your conception of a good citizen?" And 2) "How are citizenship and discussion connected?" In week eight, participants responded to the same three questions based on chapters six to 15 of the *A Different Mirror for Young People: A History of Multicultural America* book. The second session added, "Focus on a specific point/idea/quote/part of the book that you find particularly interesting/useful/powerful" after the three questions in the writing prompt (Social Studies-BA, BS, 2021). I emailed each individual participant three times to request their reflections. All participants collaborated with me well on sending their assignments. I immediately erased their identifiable information contained in the assignments, including their names and emails and assigned agreed-upon pseudonyms accordingly to each reflection.

Observation

Thirdly, the technique of taking field observation notes often contributes to the success of a qualitative case study. As Mulhall (2003) put it, the realistic, detailed nature of field notes improves the description of lived events within the study setting. In-person observations (Miles et al., 2019) took place three times throughout the semester in week four, Sep. 22nd, week eight, Oct. 20th, and week 15, Dec. 7th; field notes were taken to record important information. In particular, each session of the methods course met formally once a week for 150 minutes. From start to finish, I noted discussions of controversial issues, including when, who,

how, and why the issues were brought up, discussed, taught, and concluded. Observations also helped me build rapport with participants in their natural classroom setting. More importantly, information from the three observations was greatly useful for me to make sense of the context for the study and assist with coming up with meaningful follow-up questions for interviews with them. Considering protecting the participants' privacy and identifiable information, I did not utilize any direct quotations during the observed class periods.

Meanwhile, no exact match between a remark and its owner during class discussions was recorded.

Autoethnography

Lastly, I wrote an autoethnography (Ellis, 2004; Marshall & Rossman, 2016) to record personal experiences, thoughts, and discoveries from summer 2021 to the end of the fall semester of 2021.

“Autoethnography is a reflexive approach to understanding the human condition through critical and engaged analysis of one’s own experiences” (Marshall and Rossman, 2016, p. 78). Creswell and Poth (2018) defined it “as the idea of multiple layers of consciousness, the vulnerable self, the coherent self, critiquing the self in social contexts, the subversion of dominant discourses, and the evocative potential” (p. 114). In the current study, it was both a product and a method for data collection, providing a powerful means for me to record deeply personal narratives, stories, and views while observing the research field and analyzing personal artifacts. Journal reflections in the summer helped with planning for the following data collection process in the fall, and those written in the fall helped make adjustments during data collection. The following questions were of use: Are there any uh-huh moments? What do I agree or disagree with? Why? What is done well? What will I have learned from this experience? Then these personal responses were put into close relations with the participant and wider background of the study (e.g., teacher education, democracy, and American culture).

Data Analysis

Recommend by Creswell (2013), qualitative data analysis should be conducted through six strategic steps by a researcher:

1. All sources of data gathered need to be organized in a systemic manner, including interview transcriptions, observations notes, and audio recordings in this study. The researcher must always keep privacy and confidentiality in mind. Electronic data restoring technologies were utilized in step one.
2. The purpose of the second step is to acquire an overall sense of all the information by generally reading all the data, ideally jogging down preliminary perceptions of its meaning.
3. Then, the researcher starts coding the data by systemically categorizing all the information and applying appropriate labels to it. This step decomposes the data in a meaningful fashion so that the researcher proceeds with a deeper understanding of different facets of the data.
4. Based on the codes generated in the precious step, the researcher comps up with prominent themes that connect with the research questions and establish a smooth storyline relating to all aspects of the study.
5. Furthermore, the storyline is fully expanded into a qualitative narrative with detailed descriptions of each theme and analysis outcomes.
6. Last but not the least, the researcher interprets the resulting findings from above steps and reflects deeply on the knowledge learned and benefits gained from conducting this study. Personally, I attempted to learn how pre-service social studies teachers experienced the deliberation of controversial issues concerning its teaching and learning. Interpretations, next, may be transferred to similar teacher education programs.

The researcher must always spare no effort to ensure that their research holds vigorous validity and reliability. In a qualitative study, validity indicates how accurately the results mirror the data and how precisely the researcher's intention is presented by the data (Drost, 2011). Simply put, validity reflects the level of integrity in the data. In this study, written reflections and observations revealed illustrations of teaching and learning of controversial issues in the teacher education program. The open-ended interview questions answered by all the participants helped construct answers to the six previously defined six research questions. Reliability refers to the extent to which a study can be replicated (Drost, 2011). Reliability refers to the extent

to which the study findings remain consistent over time. One objective of this research was to create transferable components of improvement in teacher education programs, from which other academic entities may benefit. In addition, the bracketing technique was also recommended by Creswell (2013), meaning that the researcher is fully aware of his/her biases related to the study. Research results tend to be more trustworthy when the researcher avoids imposing personal beliefs onto the process of accumulating the results and depending exclusively on the data. A typical bracketing practice I adopted was to ask the participants double-check the interview transcriptions and observation notes.

To be specific, the data analysis process unfolded in two stages. Firstly, a general sense of all the primary data was reached after the researchers read them in full. NVivo coding software was utilized for transcribing interviews and organizing notes and themes. Each participant's interview transcriptions and self-reflections were combed through within-unit analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to identify their individual themes. The process of analyzing the interview data was an ongoing process. I first listened to all audio recordings carefully before transcribing. I then utilized the NVivo software to transcribe the interviews. Themes emerged after I thoroughly read all the data (Creswell, 2007), during which I constantly made notes of recurring keywords and trends. This process was repeated to analyze the two rounds of 36 interviews. Next, I applied labels to frequently emerging categories, and thus I obtained codes. Immediately, some of the initial data analysis reminded me of my anticipation in early research stages. For example, current research found that pre-service teachers were often not at all or poorly prepared to teach controversial public and social issues in social studies in the United States. Some primary codes appeared to confirm this finding from previous studies. This was the initial coding stage. The initial codes were organized into initial categories of related themes for data reduction (Miles et al., 2019).

Secondly, cross-unit analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018) of the case of the course helped generate common themes across all participants using a constant comparative approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this stage, codes were constantly developed, compared, and refined until saturation was reached—no new themes or patterns emerge (Meadows & Morse, 2001). The field notes and researcher autoethnography provided

secondary evidence to help finalize themes. Later, the final themes answered the six research questions to generate the findings of the study.

Table 4

Code Mapping: Two States of Coding

First State: Initial coding of each individual's interviews and self-reflections					
a. Controversy	a. Challenges/difficulties/obstacles/risks	a. Preparedness/readiness/willingness	a. Effects/impact/influence	a. Reflection	a. Practices
b. Different opinions/values/beliefs	b. Confrontation	b. Feel ready	b. Conservative	b. Consciousness	b. Strategies
c. Disagreements	c. Misinformation	c. Knowledge	c. Liberal	c. Multiple perspectives	c. Approaches
d. Define/definition	d. Political disclosure	d. Skills	d. Critical	d. Critical thinking	d. Safe space
e. Citizenship	e. Standards	e. Content	e. Mixed	e. Evidence	e. Take a stand
f. Perspectives	f. Policies	f. Pedagogy	f. Change	f. Information	f. Discussion
g. Conflict	g. Materials	g. Practice	g. Perspectives	g. Reason	g. Debate
h. Knowledge	h. Fear	h. Fear	h. Empathy	h. Decision making	h. SAC
i. Skills	i. Confrontation	i. Retribution	i. Awareness	i. Misrepresentation	i. Reading circle
j. Thanksgiving	j. Retribution	j. Confusion		j. Exclusion	j. Panel
k. Columbus Day	k. Criticism	k. Difficulty		k. Marginalization	
l. Native Americans		l. Hesitance		l. Master narrative	
m. Racism				m. Social studies	
n. LGBTQ					
o. 2020 election					
p. BLM					
q. Abortion					
r. Racism					
Second state: Cross-participant analysis and code reduction					
a. Definition	a. Challenges	a. Unpreparedness	a. Conservative	a. Multiple perspectives	a. Approaches
b. Pervasiveness	b. Fear	b. Content	b. Liberal		b. Take-a-stand
		c. Pedagogy	c. Critical		

c. Rational e d. Examples	c. Misinformation d. Deficiency e. Content f. Pedagogy g. Standards h. Policies i. Materials Criticism	d. Practice e. Fear	d. Effects e. Change	b. Critical thinking c. Self-reflection d. Misrepresentation e. Disruption	c. Safe space d. Discussion e. SAC f. Debate
RQ#1: What issues are considered controversial by pre-service teachers in their future social studies classrooms?	RQ#2: What challenges do pre-service teachers perceive in controversy teaching?	RQ#3: What are pre-service teachers' perceptions of their preparedness of teaching controversies?	RQ#4: How might deliberating controversial issues affect pre-service teachers' civic ideologies in education?	RQ#5: How might deliberating controversial issues affect their critical consciousness?	RQ#6: What approaches are viewed as the best ways to teach controversial issues?

Validity and Trustworthiness

I employed multiple strategies to increase the trustworthiness of the study. For instance, triangulation of the data (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995) occurred at several levels. First, I operated “methodological triangulation” to “illuminate or nullify some extraneous influences” (p. 114) through in-person observations and interviews. Second, the study of two sessions of the social studies methods course, 14 participants, and four categories of data also provided “data source triangulation” (p. 112). I sent out specific emails to participants for the purpose of member checking (Stake, 1995). Participant feedback was gathered on interview transcriptions and field notes. In addition, some participants provided verification upon receiving a draft of data analysis. As for the final codes and findings, member checks were conducted again with all participants to promote the trustworthiness, authenticity of the study (Miles et al., 2019). I invited a doctoral peer and one university faculty to proofread my work to improve its quality in terms of grammar, coherence, and

professionalism. A doctoral peer who is USU CITI certified performed as a co-coder in the data analysis process. She helped audit the de-identified data analysis.

Another important technique I took advantage of was to acknowledge my personal experiences, beliefs, and biases. As mentioned previously, I have become personally convinced of the value of controversial issues discussion and deliberation in education for democracy through my own experiences. However, having received limited formal education in this area, much curiosity remains in me to better fathom how pre-service teachers feel about teaching controversial issues to elementary learners and are prepared for such teaching. Admittedly, the deficiency of training in this area by my own teacher education has lured me to believe that discussion of social issues may become a solution for others. Nevertheless, coupled with the inherently restricted application of qualitative case studies, this research study features a limited scope, leading to bounded transferability of the findings.

Ethical Issues

First, the process of obtaining the agreement to participate in the study must be open and transparent. Recruitment presentations were conducted while both instructors stepped out of their classrooms. The instructors did not provide any assistance with recruiting to avoid possible coercion. Data analysis was conducted after the conclusion of the course. More importantly, pre-service teachers' participation in the current study did not affect their grade in any possible way. Students were given a choice of whether or not to participate. In terms of voluntary consent, a recruiting email was sent out elucidating a detailed depiction of the study (e.g., confidentiality, procedures, purpose, data collection, risks, and benefits). Second, confidentiality and anonymity were top priorities. The researcher did not know how many students agreed to participate or who participated in the study at all. Each participant picked a pseudonym, and their personally identifiable data (e.g., name, student number, and IP address) were never collected or shared with anyone else. For data collection, the written reflections were required assignments in the course syllabus. Every student needed to complete them to pass the course regardless of this research study. I was never involved in the grading of any

of these assignments. Again, students' grades did not get affected by their participation in the study. Third, participants' privacy was respected at all costs and at any time. If a participant did not want to answer questions or report personal information when they perceived an invasion of privacy, I honored their views and decisions. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time. One participant, who had signed the written consent, voluntarily chose to withdraw during the study. No interview data was collected from them afterwards. Fourth, the aim, significance, and potential findings of the study were clearly conveyed to the participant, and the research findings were expected to be beneficial to the participant in their future teaching.

Chapter Summary

Considering the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions in this study, I employed a qualitative case study design. I conducted purposeful sampling to select a particular public university as the context, social studies methods as the case, and its 14 pre-service teachers as participants. I utilized multiple sources to collect data, semi-structured interviews, written reflections, observation notes, and autoethnography. I identified initial codes from each individual participant's interview transcriptions and self-reflection. Next, common themes emerged across all participants when I applied a constant comparative approach, in which codes were compared and refined frequently to reach saturation. Observation notes and researcher autoethnography helped finalize themes, which answered the six research questions and generated a set of findings of the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In this chapter, I carefully combed all the final themes and they led to sets of findings that directly answered the six secondary research questions. First, all participants provided rationales for teaching controversial issues and examples of controversy, but most of them had difficulty defining controversy. Second, they presented four primary challenges regarding controversial issues teaching in social studies such as fear of retribution from families, administrators, or colleagues. Third, the unpreparedness appeared to be widespread, attributable to four reasons (e.g., lack of practice). Fourth, the deliberation of controversial issues had effects on their civic ideology in education. For seven individuals, their civic ideology in education changed from the conservative end to the critical end. Furthermore, all participants' critical consciousness increased after deliberation. For example, they reported the development of competence in interrupting the master narrative. Sixth, they considered take a stand, creating a safe space, and SAC to be the top three effective instructional practices. Lastly, a section of autoethnography was inserted.

Perceptions of Controversial Issues in Social Studies

Acknowledging the importance of controversy teaching in the future classroom, all 13 participants reported their understanding, concerns, and expectations for teaching controversial issues. However, inconsistency and confusion of defining controversy appeared prominent in the participant body, though compelling examples were provided in their reflections and interviews.

Confusion over Defining Controversial Issues

There was confusion over how to define controversial issues among the participant. Four individuals provided their definition that when students have conflicting interests or values; when they firmly disagree about assertions, statements, or actions; and when they have supporting evidence, issues or topics typically become controversial. For instance, to Juliet, "the controversial issues are issues that are debatable and contain

two or more sides of stance or points of view, and you can find reasonable evidence to support each side.”

Carson categorized “those issues that afford at least two sides of conflicting opinions and values. Each side requires valid data and valid information to prove their validity.”

No productive attempts at defining controversial issues were made by the other nine participants during data collection. Several participants held misconceptions about controversial issues. For example, three people categorized the Holocaust as controversial. Claire argued, “The Holocaust topic is full of controversies in states like Texas. Some schools and teachers denied its authenticity in history.” There should be nothing controversial about human rights. The Holocaust is a historic event that deprived many human beings of their lives and rights, and it must be condemned by all at all times. A small number of people’s denial of this event cannot make a solid case as a controversial issue; there is absolutely nothing contentious about lawful human rights. Claiming the Holocaust as controversial points out the confusion over defining controversial issues among pre-service teachers. As Heidi stated, “Issues of controversies are must-haves in teaching. Clarifying what they are is a first move, but I don’t have a clue.” Similarly, Reese asserted, “I was never taught how to define controversial issues at this college, let alone teach them, even though I recognize their importance.”

Rationale for Teaching Controversial Issues. All participants expressed their high willingness of teaching controversial issues to young learners in their future career. I asked the question specifically to everyone, “Would you teach controversial issues in your future teaching yourself?” Surprisingly enough, every person replied with a firm agreement on the necessity of teaching those issues. Six participants answered utilizing the word ‘definitely’ to convey their passion for including controversy instruction in the future. For example, Caroline responded, “I will definitely incorporate issues of controversies in my instruction. The great learning opportunities these issues might bring are unmissable.” Madison added, “Definitely! I am going to teach these issues in my own class. It will help my students progress in positive ways.”

One consensus reached in the data across all participants was that they each had one or multiple sound rationales for their decision of incorporating controversies into formal instruction.

Table 5*Rationales for Teaching Controversial Issues*

Participant	Pervasiveness of Controversies	Conflict Resolution	Critical Thinking Skills	Democratic Citizenship	Understanding Multiple Perspectives
Bailey	✓	✓			✓
Bethany	✓		✓	✓	
Caroline	✓		✓		✓
Carson	✓			✓	✓
Claire	✓	✓	✓		
Heidi	✓	✓			
Helen	✓	✓		✓	✓
Juliet	✓	✓	✓		
Lyla	✓				
Madison	✓			✓	
Peyton	✓	✓	✓		
Reese	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Zaiden	✓	✓		✓	

Pervasiveness of Controversies. First, all 13 participants (100%) strongly recognized the pervasiveness of controversial issues in education and life. Bailey claimed, “Controversial issues reside in every corner of teaching and learning. As a teacher, you can’t skip talking about them with your students.” Interestingly, Lyla contended, “In this age of freedom, people appear to enjoy going against one another with distinct opinions and points of view.” Heidi wrote in her reflection, “Controversy and conflict are everywhere in the lives of young children between peers, students and teachers, family members, community, and media.” Reese reflected, “No

matter their age and gender, students' lives are filled with all types of controversies. How to handle them is part of what we should teach." Meanwhile, Zaiden asserted:

For one, I think that there are more issues of controversy than I used to imagine. Controversies are pervasive in our lives. I used to have a quite limited understanding of the pervasiveness of those issues. They are unavoidable when we teach because every person, like every teacher and every student, has come from a different walk of life and embraces their unique view on the world. (Reflection, 2021)

Conflict Resolution. Eight participants (62%) selected conflict resolution as a rationale for controversy teaching. In her reflection, Bailey stated that, due to the inescapability of controversial issues, students needed to learn skills and knowledge to resolve conflicts, to which opposing opinions and values naturally led. Heidi wrote:

Controversies must be deliberated in civil discourses where you can discuss those things disagree with each other without hating each other. It is so important to teach controversial issues because we are always going to live around people that disagree with us, sometimes even hate us. It is also important that we do not hate back. Dealing with disagreements more often will help us develop conflict-solving skills. (Reflection, 2021)

Zaiden with a similar mind added that tackling controversies would help students resolve arguments or disagreements with their friends, family, and later on with others in life. To perform well in any society, Claire argued that conflict resolution would be an essential skill to have, and that controversy teaching could provide opportunities for individuals to practice this skill.

Critical Thinking Skills. Six participants (46%) emphasized critical thinking skills as a rationale for controversy teaching. Caroline asserted, "Exposure to controversial issues helps with students' critical thinking ability in education because these issues bring out what has been forgotten or left out in education and in history." Juliet contended that students would have more sources for information after discussing these issues. Then a deeper understanding of the issues would make them be able to not only challenge other individuals' thoughts that were questionable in a respectful way but also support their own opinions. In this way they would

be capable of thinking critically, establishing self-advocacy and advocacy for others as well. Peyton continued, “Today, students can easily access a tremendous amount of information, so they may pick up values and ideas in an instant without knowing why.” Controversy instruction would teach them to be selective of information, values, and thoughts to form their own reasons, so they could think critically next.

Democratic Citizenship. An understanding of democratic citizenship received Six participants’ (46%) votes too. Bethany stated in her reflection, “informed democratic citizens need to be able to deal with controversial issues and learn from others.” She believed that teaching controversies in social studies would increase students’ democratic engagement in important social affairs such as voting. Similarly, Helen added that teaching controversies would expand the funds of knowledge of the student. They would sometimes develop their interest in public and civic matters. Reese reported:

This rationale is specifically important because our country depends on the students in our classrooms. They must grow into democratic citizens, and facing controversial, difficult issues is part of it. If we keep avoiding the controversy that is all around us, we continue to avoid the difficult history that has shaped widespread injustice, so we will not be able to move forward as a nation. (Reflection, 2021)

Understanding of Multiple Perspectives. Five participants (38%) stressed the significance of understanding multiple perspectives. For one, Helen shared in her reflection, “Everyone is entitled to their opinions and values. It is not right to bluntly override others’ with ours.” She advocated for being aware of and respecting diverse perspectives. Carson claimed, “If taught right, controversies can facilitate open discussion and advance student recognition of various perspectives.” It would be antidemocracy if we only promoted any one point of view. With a comparable mindset, Caroline shared that liberating the learner from endorsing just one perspective was seriously crucial for “staying true to history with respect to race, gender, and culture.”

Examples for Controversial Issues

As Table 2 indicates, in total 16 categories of controversial issues (frequency=99) were mentioned. Top five common examples for controversial issues include representation of historical events, dates, figures

(frequency=18, with Thanksgiving mentioned 12 times and Columbus Day/Christopher Columbus six times), representation regarding race, gender, sexuality (frequency=18, with native Americans mentioned 10 times, LGBTQ community six times, and Asian Americans twice), politics (frequency=14, with 2020 election mentioned seven times), inclusion of racism (frequency=8), inclusion of critical race theory (frequency=5), BLM (frequency=5), school uniforms (frequency=5), and abortion (frequency=5).

Table 6

Examples for Controversial Issues by Frequency and Sample Quotations

Theme	Code		Frequency	Quote
<i>Examples for controversial issues</i>	Representation of historical events, dates, figures	Thanksgiving	12	<p>“Thanksgiving is controversial ... those Indian hats may be an appropriation of Indian culture and spreading stereotypes about Indian people.”</p> <p>“One student raised his hand and stated that what the teacher was teaching is wrong, different than what his mom told him at home. His mom is a schoolteacher too.”</p> <p>“The traditional portrayal of the holiday was largely whitewashed and biased.”</p> <p>“What is the truth of Thanksgiving?”</p> <p>“The pilgrims are good friends with native Americans at the first Thanksgiving party.”</p>
		Columbus Day/Christopher Columbus	6	<p>“We celebrate Columbus Day in this country, and lots of places are trying to rebrand it as Indigenous Peoples Day. People are fighting over it.”</p> <p>“I think how you teach the Columbus Day now is definitely controversial.”</p> <p>“How can I teach my students about Columbus Day and Indigenous Day at the same time?”</p> <p>“Do Columbus Day and Indigenous Day have to negate each other?”</p>
	Representation regarding race,	Native Americans	10	<p>“College names or school names that are named after Indian Native American tribes are controversial.”</p> <p>“Some schools ban racial, social justice, and native American related topics being taught</p>

gender, sexuality			<p>to kids, like you can't talk about racism, injustice, or indigenous people at all.”</p> <p>“In social studies, you can't teach about Native Americans anymore.”</p> <p>You can't even mention their communities at all”</p> <p>“November is the month to teach about Native Americans across the U.S., but it always has been done wrong.”</p> <p>“Native Americans are treated not fairly. Textbooks or lessons show that white people are always doing the right thing, but that's not always the case.”</p> <p>“Making indigenous headbands and wearing them for no reason are controversial.”</p> <p>“Teachers must teach the true history about tribes of Native American people and their cultures.”</p>
	Asian Americans	2	<p>“I would teach more on Asian American history. They have been always left out in history.”</p> <p>“Whether or not we should teach more about Asian countries and cultures.”</p> <p>“Asians are not just Chinese, Japanese, and Korean people. More accurate representation of the neglected communities is needed in social studies standards.”</p>
	LGBTQ community	7	<p>“Whether or not the LGBTQ community should be allowed to get married or be represented in education like at schools is controversial.”</p> <p>“Whitewashed teachers are saying that in school LGBTQ topics should not be taught.”</p> <p>“Teachers have conflicting views on teaching about the LGBTQA community. The representation of them in class is tricky”</p> <p>“The school decided to include everybody and avoid gender inequality, you are not going to separate the boys and the girls with each other. Many parents disagree with this decision.” ... “Gender-free bathrooms are controversial.”</p> <p>“Whether or not the LDS religion should accept LGBT believers?”</p> <p>“How can I teach my young learners to treat their queer peers right?”</p>

Politics	2020 election	7	<p>“Mail-in voting and 2020 election are controversial.”</p> <p>“We've seen how this hot topic of the election being stolen last November still is reverberating among the students and their conversations at home.”</p> <p>“Weather Donald Trump or Joe Biden is a better leader?”</p> <p>“The students were debating, Should I vote in 10 years? Should I trust presidential elections?”</p> <p>“Some people are losing confidence in our election system, which is extremely bad for our democracy.”</p>
	Mail-in voting	3	“Students have different opinions about mail-in voting.”
	George Floyd case	2	<p>“The school showed a video of the George Floyd case. There are parents on both sides opposing and defending this move.”</p> <p>“Whether or not George Floyd should be treated as a hero.”</p>
	Kyle Rittenhouse case	2	<p>“Many people are debating the controversy over Kyle Rittenhouse’ shooting in Wisconsin.”</p> <p>“Students are taking sides on the ruling of Kyle Rittenhouse case. ”</p>
Inclusion of racism		8	<p>“I guess at Halloween, they had some students dress up, as is Ku Klux Klan, and they had some students dress up with blackface. The school was trying to teach about racism. Some parents got very upset.”</p> <p>“Some schools ban racial, social justice, and native American related topics being taught to kids, like you can’t talk about racism, injustice, or indigenous people at all.”</p> <p>“There's a lot of controversy surrounding race because such topic reminds people of the dark history of the United States.”</p> <p>“Should we teach about racism?”</p> <p>“Is racism real?”</p> <p>“Should the dark side of society, racism, be excluded in the standards?”</p>
Inclusion of critical race theory		5	<p>“... we argued fiercely ... about the national dialogue on the so-called inundation of critical race theory in classrooms.”</p> <p>“The critical race theory is a huge hot topic of controversy now. Educators have mixed feelings about it.”</p>

			<p>“Many whites, including teachers and parents, can’t stand this theory. What should the school do with it?”</p> <p>“Is this theory pointing fingers at white Americans?”</p>
	BLM	5	<p>“A controversial topic in social studies could be like the Black Lives Matter movement. “People are either for it or against it or feeling neutral about it.”</p> <p>“Someone mysteriously painted ‘White Lives Matter’ on the front driveway at the school to dispute BLM.”</p> <p>“Does BLM incite violence?”</p>
	School uniforms	5	<p>“A lot of schools establish uniform rules for their students, and that leads to problems sometimes.”</p> <p>“Controversies always accompany with school uniforms.”</p>
	Abortion	5	<p>“Controversy like whether abortion should be allowed in our country and how.”</p> <p>“”</p>
	Standardized testing	4	<p>“The standardized tests are what people look up to at schools, because students’ scores matter like the most in the distribution of funding to districts and schools. Then what about the overall student learning.”</p> <p>“The standardized testing is causing problems in our education.”</p> <p>“I think our testing system ignores many individual students’ needs for learning.”</p>
	Policies on climate change	4	<p>“People have different arguments about the policies dealing with climate change.”</p> <p>“Are we the cause of climate change? Or the nature is running its course?”</p>
	Prayers in public schools	4	<p>“Students can get confused when their teachers pray in class.”</p> <p>“It can be controversial if you, as a teacher, lead the class to pray.”</p> <p>“Parents have strong opinions about prayers in public schools.”</p>
	Funding policies	3	<p>“High-poverty schools like hers never get enough funding to afford necessary resources and equipment for the student; wealthy schools always receive adequate financial support from the state.”</p>

			“If students at school A have access to iPads, why can’t or shouldn’t my students? It is not fair.”
	Sex education	2	“Whether or not schools should teach sex education to youngsters is controversial.” “Are elementary grades too early for sex education?”
	Pledge of Allegiance	2	“Families and students from different countries and religions have problems with it.” “What about non-citizen students?”
	Inclusion of 911	1	“There's a lot of controversy surrounding whether or not to teach 911 in schools because it might lead to Islamophobia.”
	Chocolate milk or white milk	1	“Which is better: chocolate milk or white milk?”

Representation of Historical Events, Dates, and Figures

Thanksgiving raked the first as a stand-alone example for controversy in elementary teaching and learning. A main contextual reason is that this holiday occurred during participants’ practicum at the assigned local schools. It’s November, a time of year that many parents and teachers look forward to teaching children about what happened at the first Thanksgiving. Books, presentations, and activities are held depicting how pilgrims and native Americans warmly shared a meal together. Several pre-service teachers pointed out that Thanksgiving related activities usually feature wearing Indian headdresses and paper feathers and singing “My Country,” “Mr. Turkey,” and “Tis of Thee.” Teachers sometimes might guide their students to draw themselves as antient indigenous figures, in which animal skin clothes and feather-decorated headbands are typical elements. Helen argued, “These activities might seem enjoyable and funny unless you are aware of how damaging this imagery is to perceptions of contemporary indigenous folks.” “These activities are not just ill teaching; they are socially irresponsible,” said Lyla. This tradition of imagery in many American schools accelerates the indoctrination process of young Americans into a deceitful plot that relegates the indigenous to the past and equates actual humans with simple costumes for a few days every year. Some pre-service teachers were rethinking Thanksgiving. Zaiden described his enlightening experience during practicum. He observed a

new perspective on Thanksgiving being taught to a class: the traditional portrayal of Thanksgiving was largely whitewashed and biased. Zaiden agreed that, to this day, there are teachers spreading inaccurate and rather misleading information about history. A popular version of the first Thanksgiving, taught at U.S. schools, was that it was a friendly party where European pilgrims and Native Americans celebrated harvest together with joy. Zaiden supported the colleague's perception of the truth behind Thanksgiving—Native Americans at the time were oppressed in many ways by the European newcomers, land, resources, and even lives taken away. Among many other mistaught pieces in education, this holiday had been manipulated to cover up the painful fact that native Americans have been done wrong for generations. Controversies arise when it comes to different ways of teaching the holiday to students. For instance, some parents were super unhappy with this observed rethinking of the holiday. This thought was called “a wild idea.” They insisted that this supposedly happy holiday should never be presented as a dark history to their children. Zaiden witnessed expected arguments and disagreements over Thanksgiving between a teacher and parents. He decided:

I will vote yes for the teacher on the “truth” of Thanksgiving. I also think that our society, curriculum, and textbooks owe it to the Indigenous folks for how this holiday has been told and taught. Like many other issues, we educators have the responsibility to spread the right ideas to youngsters and society. (Interview, 2021)

Juliet shared her experience of the controversy of Thanksgiving. As a pre-service teacher, she stood up against the dominant, untrue way of teaching about the origin of the holiday. Around Thanksgiving time, two of her colleagues were planning on teaching about Native Americans and their culture. They wanted to have students make Indian headbands. To Juliet, crafting and wearing these headbands were controversial because of cultural appropriation to indigenous people. She had the opportunity to educate her colleagues about this controversial issue regarding indigenous headbands, and she took it. She conversed with the two teachers about their competing understandings of the headband activity. At first, her colleagues were going to keep this traditional activity that was already in the curriculum. Later, surprisingly enough, they decided to change their

curriculum and cease this activity. Juliet felt proud for a second for constructing a positive influence with her action. She further noted:

Many teachers and students have misunderstandings of indigenous communities and may misuse indigenous culture. That can lead to controversies and do harm, for which education is in part responsible because of the way we teach and things we teach and leave out. (Interview, 2021)

Claire encountered the “whitewashed” version of Thanksgiving as well during her practicum. She was troubled by how the first holiday was introduced and celebrated in class. However, she did “not like causing offence to anyone,” so “her handling was not as satisfactory” as that of Juliet. She articulated:

Thanksgiving in my practicum, the school wanted to make pilgrim and Indian hats for the students to wear. I expressed ideas that those Indian hats may be an appropriation of Indian culture and spreading stereotypes about Indian people. Then my ideas were not heard. I mean, it's not okay. It was kind of awkward as a practicum student to try and tell the teachers about what they maybe should or shouldn't do. But for me, I think that's pretty offensive to make Indian hats because that's their religious garb. At schools, teachers need to teach students to respect people and their cultures. However, the schoolteachers thought that it would be fun to make the hats as it has been a tradition at the school. November is the month to teach about Native Americans across the U.S., but it always has been done wrong. Native Americans only receive school attention during this season under the guise of teaching about history or social studies. Native Americans have existed on this land long before any Europeans came here. What our education ever teaches about them is that they helped pilgrims at the first Thanksgiving. No, that is not true. That wasn't handled very well on my part, but it was a learning experience, for sure. Now, I know how to handle it in the future. (Interview, 2021)

Caroline observed another troubling incident regarding Thanksgiving in her practicum. The holiday was taught in a traditional, celebratory manner that pilgrims and Native Americans enjoyed a friendly gathering. One student raised his hand and opposed this version of Thanksgiving. He/she argued that what this class just

taught was not accurate, different than what his mom told him at home. His/her mom is a schoolteacher as well. The student was asked to further explain his/her understanding. Then he/her retorted that white people did not invent the holiday. Instead, it belonged to the native Americans. It had been their tradition for a long time. While he was talking, Caroline heard another student whisper “shut up.” The Thanksgiving instruction ended. Caroline did not take any action to intervene, but she thought, “this is teaching moment, so why would anyone save it for later?” She would have taught it differently.

Based on the above three detailed experiences with Thanksgiving controversies, some of the schoolteachers involved attempted to avoid the disingenuous feel-good story and challenge the popular and imprecise description of Thanksgiving, advocating for a more balanced perspective of the holiday. Some were open-minded to pre-service teachers’ suggestions, quitting dressing individuals in feathery headbands or hats. Some of the participants seemed overwhelmed by learning to teach the prescribed curriculum in a compliant manner. In addition, Madison contended, “Some of my classmates think that the vast majority of public schools are not going to be populated by indigenous students. Why trouble a good story?” However, a consciousness-raising educator should confront the controversy of the Thanksgiving story to provide an opportunity to ask themselves, “If not me, who?” and “If not now, when?” (Carson’s interview) as it relates to challenging the status quo. Columbus Day is another example for providing such insights and knowledge that are missing from all too many accounts.

Representation Regarding Race, Gender, Sexuality

Participants mentioned controversies about the representation of Native Americans for 10 times, LGBTQ community for seven, and Asian Americans for twice.

Representation of Native Americans. Claiming that many elementary teachers are endorsing the untrue history of Native Americans, 10 pre-service teachers hoped to, for example, “teach the true history about tribes of Native American people and their cultures” (Madison, 2021). As Helen pointed out, “It would be important to teach them about issues like the Civil War and Native Americans where there were differing sides within the United States and people take sides.” Letting students understand all sides of the issues would be

helpful for their overall development. She continued, a lot of times in social studies, there were a lot of misconceptions and misjudgments about like Native Americans. They have been treated poorly, not fairly in the textbooks or lessons. It is meaningful to think about who writes the books and plans the lessons. She added, “We are teaching that white people are always doing the right thing, but that is not always the case.” Teaching about controversies with respect to Native Americans might make elementary learners feel uncomfortable, but it was necessary to do so. A healthy citizenship requires one to learn from the past, challenge what is not fair, and treat others right.

With a similar mentality, Clair shared her point of view:

November is the month to teach about Native Americans across the U.S., but it always has been done wrong. As a tradition in this country, Native Americans would only receive school attention during this season under the guise of teaching about history or social studies. Native Americans have existed on this land long before any Europeans came here. What our education ever teaches about them is that they helped pilgrims at the first Thanksgiving. No, that is not true. When I hear the mentor teach this way, I did not intervene. I wanted to correct her though. Sometimes, controversial issues are tricky. Why would an educator consider teaching the right history about Native Americans to be wrong? I would not say that there are controversies about representing Native Americans. Instead, I would call it misinformation or mis-teaching of those teachers who have been teaching it wrong. It was not handled very well on my part, but it was a learning experience. I know how to handle it in the future. (Interview, 2021)

On the contrary, some districts and schools came up with policies to ban teaching about Native Americans. Lyla asserted that in social studies, you cannot teach about Native Americans anymore. Her principal sought to avoid potential problems or altercations resulted from controversies of the representation of Native Americans at their school. With frustration, Heidi expressed disapproval of such policies. She was suggested to not mention Native Americans at all in her classroom to eliminate inconveniences. However, she still brought up her understanding of the effects of colonialism on Native Americans and their lives in her

lessons. She believed that her students would benefit from her teaching because she was teaching them how to be a justice-oriented citizen.

Representation of LGBTQ Community. Juliet summarized, “Teachers have conflicting views on teaching about the LGBTQA community. The representation of them in class is tricky.” During practicum, Carson experienced, “Whitewashed teachers are saying that in school LGBTQ topics should not be taught.” He self-identifies as a gay individual, so he was greatly offended and confused. To some teachers and Americans, LGBTQ community appears to be “a dark side of the United States,” and there are too many controversies involved. He asked, “How do we incorporate multiple perspectives as the standards require if we intentionally leave out the voices of LGBTQ individuals?” Bethany contended that the local dominant religion tends to officially constrain the instruction on LGBTQ at schools. The former occupies the high ground in the pyramid of power relations in the state, and a large number of educators happen to be followers of that religion. Caroline witnessed a social studies teacher lead a debate on “whether or not same sex people should be allowed to have babies.” She criticized this debate because it actually attacked human rights of the LGBTQ community even though she did not believe that the teacher meant to.

Meanwhile, some participants observed effort in addressing controversies about LGBTQ community. For instance, Claire and her instructional coach discussed how they should teach their young learners to use pronouns properly. Sometimes, pronouns were viewed as meaningless or insignificant by teachers and students; however, they deserve rectification to prevent causing offence to LGBTQ and binary-gender or -sexuality individuals. Claiming that everyone is equal, some teachers would simultaneously depreciate actions that can promote equality, including using appropriate pronouns. Claire was pleased that her instructional coach was open-minded to LGBTQ individuals’ rights and conscious of accurate pronoun teaching. On the other hand, Lyla and her mentor teacher established a class rule: No one is allowed to separate boys and girls. She explained the reasons behind this rule, one of which was to respect other people's beliefs with gender and sexual orientation. In a first-grade classroom, she argued, students even at that young age may have different views about gender and sexual orientation, more complex perceptions than previous generations. The

traditional binary, man and woman or male and female, does not appear to be enough for self-expression anymore. She concluded, “To include everybody and avoid gender or sexuality inequalities, you are not going to separate the boys and the girls with each other.” Other teachers and families, at the same time, found this action questionable.

Inclusion of Racism

Eight participants indicated that whether or not a teacher should include racism topics is controversial. As Bailey put it, “As some schools ban native Americans in the curriculum, racism and social justice related topics are forbidden to be taught to students. You cannot talk about racism, injustice at all.” At Halloween, some students dressed up as Ku Klux Klan with blackface. Some local residents, families, and students became awfully disappointed, so the principal decided to talk to students about racism at a school assembly. The school showed a music video about white privilege, part of which depicted mistreatment of people of color over several decades in the past. The video included a scene showing the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota in May 2020. Derek Chauvin, a former Minneapolis police officer, was convicted of manslaughter and murder in Floyd's death. He was later sentenced to 22.5 years in prison. The goodwill of disrupting racism turned into a big mess where the school was further criticized. The inclusion of racism in education could lead to controversies if not approached cautiously enough. Potential negative consequences following controversial issues teaching drove Peyton to wonder, “Should I teach about racism in my own classroom?” Zaiden confirmed, “There may be various controversies surrounding race and racism because such topics remind people of dark history of the United States.” He could not help but questioned, “Should the dark side of society, racism, be officially included in the Common Core Standards?”

Inclusion of Critical Race Theory

Whether or not critical race theory should be taught at schools was associated with controversies, according to five participants. Reese commented, “The critical race theory is a huge hot topic of controversy now. Educators have mixed feelings about it.” She observed competing feelings and views of the theory at her school. “Many white folks, including teachers and parents, cannot stand this theory,” conveyed Madison.

Individuals, opposing the involvement of critical race theory in elementary instruction, accused it of “pointing fingers at white Americans,” thus excluding it in teaching and learning. At lunchtime, Carson casually discussed with a practicum colleague about his frustration with the national dialogue on the so-called ‘inundation’ of critical race theory in classrooms. His experience was as follows:

I did not even mention the words—critical race theory. I told my peer that there would be no drama of any sort if teachers just remain objective when they teach history, race, and the like. Then, one of the teachers in the room listened in and asked me to clarify what I meant. I went into my frustration and explained my frustration in terms of like how parents were quick to respond. I saw some parents getting riled up about how my own mentor teacher approached Columbus Day. Her own husband is an indigenous fellow. He is not white. I assume that her husband’s view informed her decision to teach about this event differently than other mainstream teachers. When Columbus Day approached, she talked with her class in the indigenous people’s perspective of Columbus Day and why certain leaders in the state and in the country were calling it Indigenous Peoples Day. And some parents got really angry at her. I expressed to the teachers in the lunchroom that day my frustration about that circumstance. To me, if you look at history objectively, there is no need to paint Christopher Columbus in a heroic light in education. Because the fact is that, as a result of colonialism, millions of Native Americans died when diseases were exchanged, and when violence was introduced by European weapons on the north American continent. Therefore, if you are just objective about history, there is no controversy because you are just teaching objective facts. My remarks turned into this whole conversation among the other teachers in the faculty room about all of their misinformed perceptions of history. It seemed among them that Columbus was called of God to come over to this land and to help the Natives. Everything that he did was infallible. It just really opened my eyes to how pervasive miseducation is in our communities at some schools and in this country. It opened my eyes to how much controversy those controversial issues can carry. All I am saying is that we really need good

educators who are loyal to truth and accuracy of history so that younger generations do not get miseducated. This is how we will have a better education and future. (Interview, 2021)

Challenges of Teaching Controversial Issues

Along with the abovementioned examples of controversies, pre-service teachers perceive challenges regarding teaching controversial issues in social studies such as fear of conflicts with or retribution from parents, administrators, or colleagues, deficiency of content and instructional preparation, confrontation of misinformation among other teachers, flawed standards, policies, or instructional materials, and criticism of political self-disclosure.

Table 7

Challenges of Teaching Controversial Issues

Participant	Challenges				
	Fear of conflicts or retribution	Confrontation of misinformation of colleagues	Deficiency of content and pedagogical knowledge	Flawed standards, policies, or materials	Criticism of political self-disclosure
Bailey	✓			✓	✓
Bethany	✓			✓	✓
Caroline	✓				
Carson	✓	✓		✓	
Claire		✓	✓	✓	
Heidi	✓	✓	✓		
Helen	✓				✓
Juliet	✓	✓		✓	

Lyla	✓	✓			
Madison	✓		✓		
Peyton			✓		
Reese	✓	✓			
Zaiden	✓		✓		✓

Fear of Conflicts with or Retribution from Parents, Administrators, or Colleagues

With respect to controversy teaching, 11 participants (85%) perceived to hold the fear of potentially having conflicts with parents, colleagues, or administrators and probable retribution afterwards. Bailey commented, “Probably the biggest fear would be how parents are going to respond right now with everything that's going on in education, like critical race theory.” She shed tears sharing her experience:

I think there's really that fear base that teachers have that they don't want to lose their job if a parent comes in upset because something was taught that they felt was too controversial and shouldn't have been taught. I think it's fear. A few weeks ago, over in [a neighboring district], Sorry, I might get emotional and cry, there was a very young African American student who was disabled, who had some disabilities, and who ended up committing suicide because she was dealing with racism on a daily basis at the school. Only one teacher that seemed to care. When she confronted some of the oppressor students, whose parents got upset and blew up. This teacher had to give in unless she wished to be unemployed. Other teachers and the principal did nothing to, you know, prevent that from happening. The victim student ended up committing suicide. It breaks my heart that any child should have to deal with such tragedy. Some parents may get upset when they don't like the issues being taught and when they don't want their kids to hear about controversies. Due to fear of conflicting with parents, some teachers may choose not to take up responsibilities when controversial matters occur. Some of them

may just avoid trouble and choose not to deal with parents. More broadly, the way this country is structured and operated sometimes can lead to problems of injustice. Racism can be a big problem of your or my school. (Interview, 2021)

Bethany ranked the same challenge first as a pre-service teacher. She recommended being cautious with words and activities during controversy instruction because parents are quick to get dismayed. When parents do so, the teacher could expect retribution. Reese described, “Once some parents did not like the content of video showed in class, and they got upset with me.” She did not expect the controversy in the video to receive so much attention from the parents. Then she found herself in a situation where she felt like a “villain.” Therefore, she concluded, “Parents can bring obstacles sometimes when you want to teach about controversial issues.” Caroline mentioned resistance from parents to teaching issues of controversy and expressed, “A lot of times parents get involved with wanting to protect their students and not wanting them to know about hard topics.” She also pointed out a challenge that pre-service teachers might face repercussions from mentor teachers who did agree with how they taught controversial issues. With the unequal power relation between them and mentor teachers, it would be difficult to challenge the latter’s authority in their classrooms. Heidi also experienced disapproval from a mentor teacher when she approached controversial topics during practicum. She did not have much defiant power to stand her ground with these issues; if she did, the mentor teacher could submit a negative report on her performance later. Carson confirmed having the fear of conflicting with parents, schoolteachers, and administrators who are strongly biased against his understanding and way of teaching of certain issues of controversy. Claire conveyed similar thoughts, “It is not easy dealing with parents. They do not appreciate a teacher’s disobedience or disagreement.” For example, some parents may be more conservative politically, so they would only support conservative views to be taught. She added, “We all have our understandings of things, and we do not like being questioned and challenged, but the only way to resolve conflicts and spread right ideas is to talk about hard issues meaningfully.” When it comes debatable politic issues such as voting, some parents may have strong opinions. Helen reported that what a pre-service teacher

has taught in class may be brought back home, which may upset some parents. “If the parents happen to be close-minded and stuck in their opinions and beliefs. It might be hard for them to be receptive to differences. Then trouble may follow, like an unnecessary PTA meeting or a written report.” In a confirmative tone, Zaiden contended:

Parents are definitely a source of challenges when they have different or opposing points of view over some issues. Some of them may have a share of power at the admin level. You can’t always follow what standards suggest being taught to learners in the real world, and some parents may add certain needs and boundaries too. I know that one parent with connections to the central office told one of my colleagues not to include racial issues in instruction at all. I mean how can you expect a teacher to avoid such important issues that bear meaning to students’ overall growth and social justice. (Reflection, 2021)

Confrontation of Misinformation Among Colleagues

To six participants (46%), there was perceived misinformation among other teachers and school leaders, and they felt obligated and challenged to confront it. Carson articulated:

Challenges will occur when it comes to faculty who have their own misguided beliefs about conspiracies in propagandize versions of history. Their misinformation will be acting as an obstacle for me, in my ambition, to teach history in the way it occurred. Or perhaps it will be a challenge of informing the administration who also has their own personal beliefs on how we should approach historical impartiality to our students. At my practicum, the administration had instructed the faculty to avoid discussing indigenous peoples at all as Thanksgiving approached. For example, the leadership recommended teaching Thanksgiving as a time when English pilgrims and the Indians were getting along one time, which can therefore color the entire experience of all indigenous people in all American history. It just really struck me how ridiculous our history education can be sometimes. The institutions that I'm going to be working within for the rest of my life are made up of people who will bring their own ideas and ideologies, and some of them will bring in misguided beliefs to the institutions. Some of

those people may be above me like in administration or a district or state office. I may have to stand up against the challenges that those misinformed colleagues may bring in. (Interview, 2021)

He added, “Teaching to me is wanting to teach history as it was,” not “propagandized versions of history.” Along related lines, Claire uttered that the distorted way of teaching by some teachers bothered her. They spread “just outright false information, but they are convinced that it is accurate” such as Thanksgiving being a peaceful gathering with pilgrims and indigenous people. As an educator, she felt responsible to safeguard objective history when “the misinformation of some teachers makes them believe what is not right to be true and then teach that to their students.” Heidi conveyed her thoughts on the matter of misguided beliefs. Her worked with a teacher who disapprove controversy teaching and who believed controversial issues do more harm than good to young learners. Heidi became disappointed that what she considered appropriate was opposed by her colleague. Lyla went through a related occurrence. In social studies, controversial issues were not brought up frequently in the classroom, but the importance of allowing multiple perspectives she believed, needed to be advocated. She argued that sometimes teachers have troubling beliefs about controversy teaching, “they do not allow students to hear multiple perspectives because they think controversial issues are simply disagreements and too difficult to talk about.” To her, these teachers were “slack at their jobs,” trying to avoid hard conversations and challenges. Juliet faced challenges teaching about cultural appropriation and appreciation. Before Thanksgiving, her students were instructed to make Indian colleagues headbands, which has been tradition for celebrating the holiday for a long time. Juliet educated her students on how making feather headbands and hats was appropriating another culture. Then she tried to suggest her colleagues to discontinue such way of celebration. Somehow the school ended up changing the curriculum. however, it was challenging for Juliet. Her opinions conflicted with some of her colleagues’. For the worst case of scenario, she was ready to have difficult, confrontational conversations when necessary.

Besides Juliet, Carson was also ready to fend against the challenge as well. Anticipating more challenges in future teaching, he remarked:

I would say at the same time, I have further ambition to fight, but fight has such an inflamed connotation to it, for the sake of students because I know that our understandings of history are how we come into our own respective identities. In the meantime, it is already my own duty as a prospective teacher, public school teacher, to teach. The Common Core has laid out to my students for each grade level in social studies, though it is rather vague in some areas. In terms of controversial issues, thankfully, I am required to teach things about our state, our communities, our nation, and our world from multiple perspectives. When anybody's personal beliefs, either they are the parents', administrators', or fellow teachers', come into contradiction to what the core standards tell me, I should still legally teach my students issues of controversy. I have come to the realization that luckily I have the argument to fall back on when I am confronted with resistance that does not want me to teach what history really is and what a just education means. "Hey, I'm legally obligated to teach this. So, your personal qualms about me as a teacher or your personally held conspiracies of how history happened in a way that is not true would not stop me. (Interview, 2021)

Deficiency of Content and Pedagogical Preparation

In addition, five participants (38%) expressed their concern due to the lack of content and/or pedagogical preparation in controversy teaching. Madison had a "personal fear that [she] might mess up when teaching about these issues" because she felt that she might not be qualified and competent enough to bring up controversies in her classroom. She had not been "incredibly educated on these issues" and learned effective teaching methods yet. Claire provided her thought, "I feel like most pre-service teachers like me do not have a good background in discussing controversial issues in social studies lessons." Most of her peers came from white middle class households that tended to have homogenous perceptions and assumptions about issues regarding race, color, gender, religion, etc. "if you are in those populations, you are not seeing what the rest of the world is in, like the areas with higher populations of other ethnicities and maybe the discrimination that they face." They enjoyed thinking that they were colorblind. Studying at the college has developed her funds of knowledge, but she still worried that her deficiency of preparation might hamper her the success of controversy

teaching. Likewise, Heidi feared that she might not “have the knowledge and skills yet” because of her novice training experience. She would be comfortable teaching students that have been “set up in the right environment” where differences and diverse perspectives were accepted. On the contrary, more content and instructional preparation would be required if she was going to work with not-set-up learners. Zaiden chimed in, “I need to practice teaching controversial issues in real classroom contexts, so I can gain first-hand knowledge on more issues that way. Thinking is very different than actually teaching.”

Flawed Standards, Policies, or Instructional Materials

Five participants (38%) perceived a challenge posed by the flawed Common Core Standards, educational policies, or instructional materials. For Bailey, the social studies standards were rather vague, without explicit guidance on controversy teaching in elementary school. She sometimes was confused “because we don't know where that line is, who decides what is controversial and what is not, and who decides what can be taught and what can't.” The Core Standards failed to provide her with clear instruction in this and other areas; she “always hated guessing games.” Equally, Carson was troubled by the improvising obligation attributed to the flaws of the standards in his state. When opposing voices raised to him regarding controversy teaching, he would utilize the very flaws to push back. The standards did not say that controversial issues cannot be taught or to what extent they can be taught, so he would incorporate them in his teaching. Furthermore, Claire alleged, “Our education system and the instructional materials we use have flaws, and they only distribute those-with-authority's ideas. Year after year, we only produce teachers and students who see history and the world through the lens of those powerful people.” The standards disappointed her when she could not rely on them for well-defined directions in terms of certain topics, including race and gender. She once had a disagreement with a colleague about whether racism should be taught. She was on the affirmative side of the issue. They turned to the Standards, only to find nothing helpful. Referring to the headbands experience, Juliet regarded the state standards as part of the cause of the challenges she witnessed as they were overly broad and hollow about some topics, including indigenous and Asian representation. As a result, the interpretation and application of these standards became excessively elusive and subjective for schoolteachers.

Some participants suspected their school policies being defective, disrupting. Bethany shared her frustration with the inconsistency of her school policies and stated, “I feel like it is a challenge to know what you can say and what you can teach in school and what is better left for them to learn later.” Native Americans was an appropriate subject to teach at one point, and then a fresh policy came out and banned it without presenting a valid rationale to faculty.

Criticism of Political Self-disclosure

Lastly, four participants (31%) acknowledged their nervousness of self-revealing political views and succeeding criticism. Bailey admitted, “This country is too politically polarized now. Teaching cannot detach itself from the politics going on in society. However, a teacher can get persecuted for political disclosure.” Bethany confirmed that some controversial issues might require exchanges about political viewpoints, but “you do not want to come off as too political, otherwise people say that you are forcing your political stance onto your students.” Criticism could come from different sources such as community members, colleagues, and families. Helen declared that teachers, sharing their political views, might, with confidence, expect negative reactions from those who invested in different or opposing beliefs. Bearing similar considerations, Zaiden commented that, in the states or districts with endorsement of particular religions, teachers might receive sanctions. “You can hardly expose what you think sometimes. You can be held responsible for being too political.”

Increase of Preparedness in Teaching Controversial Issues

During both rounds of interviews, the question “Who would rate your level of preparedness in controversial issues teaching from 1 to 5 (1 = Not at all, 2 = Poorly prepared, 3 = Somewhat prepared, 4 = Prepared, 5 = Well prepared)?” See Chart 1 below for results.

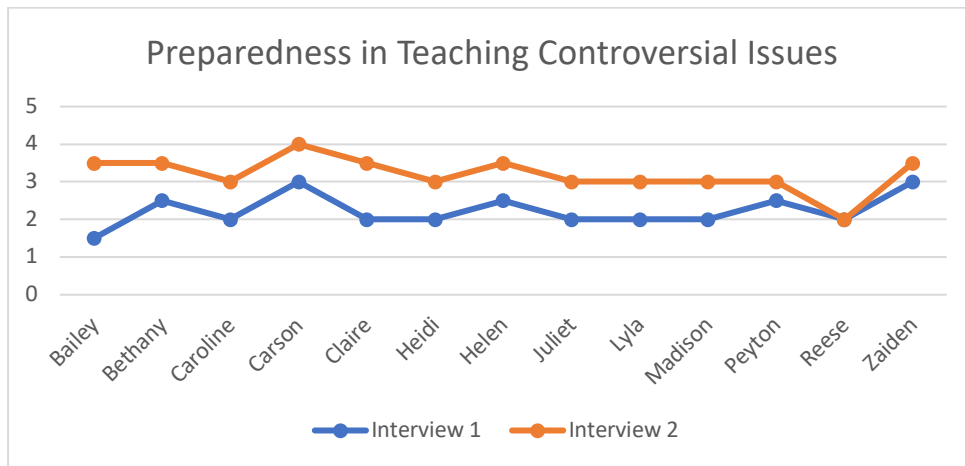


Chart 1

Participants' Preparedness in Teaching Controversial Issues (1 = Not at all, 2 = Poorly prepared, 3 = Somewhat prepared, 4 = Prepared, 5 = Well prepared)

At the first round of interview, nearly every interviewee positioned themselves at a very low level of preparedness in controversial issues teaching as a pre-service teacher, with 1) 54% of them self-scoring at a level two, poorly prepared, 2) 23% at a two and half, between poorly prepared and somewhat prepared, 3) 15% at a three, somewhat prepared, and 4) 8% at a one and half, between not prepared at all and poorly prepared. An average of 2.23 level of preparedness was reached.

At interview two, all but one participant reported an increase of the sense of preparedness in controversial issues teaching. Now, 8% of participants scored at a level two, 46% at a level three, 38% at a level 3.5, and 8% at a level four. The 13 individuals scored an average of 3.19 level of preparedness.

Bailey was the only whose readiness witnessed no change between two interviews. However, she had different reasons for stating the same score twice. Starting with the lowest readiness to teach issues of controversies, Bailey graded herself between 'not prepared at all' and 'poorly prepared'. "I think my unpreparedness to teaching them really stems from this fear of what happens if I teach these issues in my classroom," said Bailey. At the same time, she recognized the importance of reinforcing "an accurate history"

and the connection of controversial issues deliberation and what is happening in society, including racism, homelessness, and political division. The fear of potential repercussions from students' home members amplifies her unpreparedness. She continued, "if my students go home and talk about what is taught with their parents, who happen to get upset, am I going to get in trouble because I've crossed some sort of line?" The standards and curriculum fail to specify where that line is, so Bailey is uncertain of "what I can teach and what I can't teach" regarding controversy. As for the second level two, she would need to learn more effective instructional practices for controversy teaching. She also conveyed, "because I haven't had a whole lot of experience doing it, and so like with anything new, I think you aren't really comfortable at first." Yet, she was motivated to incorporate issues of controversies into her own classroom with hopes that "the more you do it, the more comfortable you become."

As the table below illustrates, four reasons, including 1) fear for repercussions, 2) lack of content knowledge, 3) lack of pedagogical knowledge, and 4) lack of practice, can explain the widespread unpreparedness across the board.

Table 8

Reasons for Unpreparedness

Participant (Pseudonym)	Round of Interview	Reasons			
		Lack of content knowledge	Lack of pedagogical knowledge	Lack of practice	Fear for repercussions
Bailey	1			*	*
	2		*	*	
Bethany	1			*	
	2			*	
Caroline	1	*		*	*
	2	*		*	
Carson	1				*
	2		*	*	*
Claire	1		*		
	2			*	
Heidi	1	*		*	
	2	*		*	

Helen	1	*		*	
	2	*			*
Juliet	1	*		*	*
	2	*		*	
Lyla	1	*	*		*
	2			*	*
Madison	1	*			
	2		*		*
Peyton	1		*		
	2		*	*	
Reese	1	*	*		*
	2	*	*		
Zaiden	1	*			
	2		*	*	

Lack of Practice

Deficiency of actual practice in classroom settings was the most frequent cause of low preparedness. For Bethany, “I have not had many opportunities to actually teach these issues, so I need to practice next year when I start teaching as a schoolteacher.” Similarly, “I have not had a whole lot of experience navigating professional situations, which are always tricky. What I have experienced with controversial issues is in academia or even just practicum internships,” stated Carson. Claire expressed her relative thoughts, “I don't have a lot of experiences to help me actually practice teaching these issues, so I don't know how to do it well now. What I need is actually doing it in the school setting, like putting theory into use.” Likewise, Heidi contended that she has accumulated some basic content knowledge, “just not the application knowledge yet.” More practical opportunities would be necessary for her to improve. “I feel like I know quite a bit about many hot topics. One frustration I have is that I have not applied this knowledge to real-life teaching yet,” said Juliet. Her classmate, Lyla, commented on the same concern, “I guess I just lack practice in teaching these issues in classrooms.” “I still don't think I have all the practice that I need that a well-seasoned teacher would have facing difficult issues,” alleged Peyton.

Lack of Content Knowledge

Sufficient content knowledge of various issues of controversy was one of the most significant factors for a successful preparation according to most participants. For one, to make advantage of controversial issues for the sake of learning, Caroline insisted that she would need to obtain more information and conduct more inquiry on a diverse range of controversial issues that might come up during her teaching later. Claire shared her concern,

In the last four years' teacher education here, we have covered a lot of issues and topics of controversy. Time always rolls on; what is controversial sometimes changes with it. I don't think that I will ever be prepared well enough for so many controversies out there, like the depiction of past the Trail of Tears in our history book and LGBT acceptance/rejection in the curriculum at present. It will always be a leaning journey for me. A teacher can't afford stopping this journey. For many issues, there are more than two perspectives that need to be heard. When I feel like I know something about something, well, I find out that there could be more to learn about. I need solid content knowledge of controversies so that I can understand multiple perspectives contained within controversies. Hopefully, I will be able to teach my classes in a welcoming and democratic way. I will not know everything, which makes life fun, and which makes education important, doesn't it? (Interview, 2021)

Zaiden communicated along similar lines, "Nowadays, controversy can go many directions. With so large quantity of this kind of issues, many of which can be appropriate for education purposes. I need to educate myself a lot more."

Lack of Pedagogical Knowledge

Pedagogical knowledge appeared to be another factor at the crux of the readiness of controversy teaching. With some basic knowledge of certain issues of controversy, Heidi would be capable of pointing out the pros and cons of these issues. "It is one thing to learn about an issue, but it is another thing to actually teach it." She has not grasped the 'how' of teaching controversial issues in a classroom, so her self-esteem in teaching them successfully got impaired. In part due to lack of practice, Helen was aware of her deficit in handling 'going out of hand' moments when teaching about controversies. As a non-confrontational person,

she would find herself helpless when “intense arguing takes places among the students.” Controversies indicate competing opinions and values, which naturally can lead to arguments and emotional moments. Madison added, “I don't feel completely prepared because I feel like I don't know exactly how to present the information and different sides to the students in a way that is inclusive and not offensive.” Peyton confirmed that deliberating issues of controversy could become more demanding in a classroom context than in an academic context. She alleged, “Children have less understanding of these complicated issues than adults, so you must be strategic and careful with your words. How to teach children is a challenge for me.” Pre-service teachers are focused more often on content than pedagogy in the target subject. For instance, Zaiden felt confident with sharing general content-wise details, including why some controversies are controversial, but he was “kind of a rookie when it comes to teaching them to younger students in class.” He continued, “It'd be excellent if more pedagogical knowledge in terms of good ways of helping my students understand and benefit from discussing these issues.” Resonating with some of his classmates, he is “prepared in the content sense, but not in the pedagogical sense.”

Fear for Repercussions

Lastly, several interviewees stressed their fear for potential repercussions from parents, colleagues, or administrators. Caroline was ready to teach some controversial issues once she graduates, but she was worried that her personal biases might intervene with her instruction, which might “lead to complaints from colleagues.” She expected to have mentor teachers at the beginning of her career, and “some of them tend to be very judgmental.” During practicum, Carson encountered eye-opening and helpful situations, he concluded that he held the concern for ramifications regarding controversy teaching. Next, he clarified:

Navigating professional situations are always tricky. It has been a learning curve in terms of the give and take of what's abrasive and how upfront I can be about controversial topics to my fellow professionals. I think that it will continue to be a learning curve, especially given my experience discussing the civil war, Martin Luther King, Christopher Columbus, discrimination against LGBTQ people, and my fight with a faculty at my practicum placement over critical race theory. Some teachers

we have today hold absurd and untrue political and religious ideologies, so you can anticipate attacks from them when you make statements like ‘Christopher Columbus is not supposed to be a historical hero. Queer people are completely normal humans and should be treated with the same respect.’ I would say in terms of how I approach things to my fellow professionals such as teachers and administrators, I am not prepared well. It is hard to not judge others. Well, it is impossible not to be judged by others. (Interview, 2021)

Another participant, Lyla, did not wish to offend students’ parents by what was taught in her class. She has observed some “disagreeing parents who would confront you without hearing you out.” Reese expressed, “Family involvement is a tricky aspect of schooling. What I teach at school can confuse or offend parents sometimes, especially with issues of controversies. I really don’t want their interrogations.”

However, the best prepared pre-service teachers perceived themselves to be at a four; no one claimed reaching a well-prepared mastery. One semester after the second interview, all participants will graduate with a bachelor’s degree in elementary education. A 3.19 readiness (somewhat prepared) of controversial issues teaching seems rather troubling. Meanwhile, room for growth exists. What opportunities for improvement remain on pre-service teachers’ end, on teacher educators’ end, and on policymakers’ end?

Pre-service Teachers’ Civic Ideology in Education

All participants held a clear understanding of their civic ideology in education, which scatters between conservative, liberal, and critical learnings (Knowles, 2018), with one exception that identified with no civic ideology in education in the first interview. See Table 6 for details.

Table 9

Participants’ Civic Ideologies in Education

Participant (Pseudonym)	Round of Interview	Civic Ideology in Education		
		Conservative	Liberal	Critical
Bailey	1		*	*(slightly)

	2		*(slightly)	*
Bethany	1	*		
	2	*		
Caroline	1	*	*	*(slightly)
	2	*	*	*(slightly)
Carson	1			*
	2			*
Claire	1	*(slightly)	*(mostly)	
	2	*(slightly)	*(mostly)	*(slightly)
Heidi	1		*	*
	2		*	*
Helen	1	*		
	2	*(mostly)		*(slightly)
Juliet	1	*	*	*
	2	*	*	*
Lyla	1	*	*	*
	2	*	*	*
Madison	1		*	
	2		*	*
Peyton	1	*(slightly)	*(slightly)	*(mostly)
	2			*
Reese	1			
	2			*
Zaiden	1	*		
	2			*

Note: Larger size of “*” indicates stronger belief in the correspondent category, and smaller size indicates weaker belief.

Connection of Controversy Deliberation with Civic Ideology in Education

When asked the question twice, “Might there be any connection between deliberating controversial issues and your civic ideology in education,” every participant articulated a positive answer, “yes.” Perspective awareness and empathy are two prominent connectors.

Perspective Awareness. Through deliberating controversial issues, Bailey realized the pervasiveness and limitations of the white perspective in education. Before, “I was, in a sense, blind to it all, because I just I wasn't taught anything at school outside the white perspective, like the US is perfect, and white people are the best.” History that she learned has long been portrayed in a singular, European fashion, so issues that are controversial in social studies have brought her “non-white perspectives.” She is now capable of discerning and

understanding other points of view, though some of which may contradict her own. Likewise, Claire stated, “I feel like my views have definitely expanded to be more understanding and accepting of other ideologies that are different than my own” Though she was conservative and liberal in general, by deliberating controversial topics, she did not necessarily end up agreeing with conflicting concepts and opinions, but she respected and valued them. In like manner, Helen confirmed that her civic ideology in education was expanded after controversy deliberation. She explained, “The more controversies I discuss with people, the more different perspectives I hear about, the more I'm willing to see past my conservative nature.” Social studies teaching is vital to a democratic society because “we are creating tiny citizens who are going to make hefty decisions.” Controversy deliberation, she believed, would raise these young citizens’ perspective awareness and tolerance. She added, “responsible citizens are good at taking into account different perspectives and opinions before finalizing decisions.” Relatedly, Carson shared his experience:

I am more aware of the necessity of focusing on multiple perspectives of controversy under deliberation. Take the Trail of Tears, deliberating on this hot historic issue welcomes different perspectives, including Andrew Jackson's perspective, Native Americans’ perspective, a safety guard's perspective, and witnesses’ perspective. Like my classmates, I learned a lot from these perspectives. Then my critical civic ideology in education gets reinforced because I obtain a more objective understanding of Native Americans’ oppression, hardship, racism, and bigotry in the event of the Trail of Tears. Whitewashed, exclusive view alone can’t raise the awareness of multiple perspectives.
(Interview, 2021)

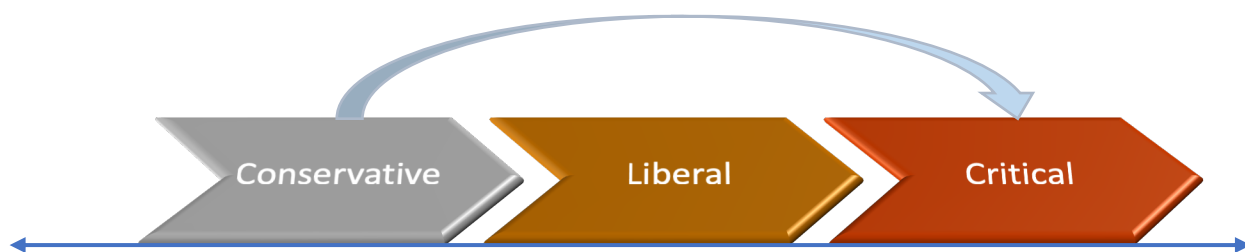
Empathy. Bethany described the connection of controversy deliberation with her civic ideology in education through empathy. Although she was consistent with her conservative beliefs in education, she stated that her ability to empathize with others increased after meaningfully deliberated some issues of controversy. For instance, due to religious beliefs, she used to despise gay individuals’ way of living. Once, she sincerely conversed with a queer classmate over their lived experiences in academia, she started understanding LGBTQ’s

mistreatment by policy and others. She felt ashamed for who she was and said, “When I was younger, maybe I could have done something differently. Maybe I could have acted in a different way to where I could have done something more beneficial to help push society to a better place.” Such empathetic mindset would motivate her in the future. For one, Claire developed empathy for different ideological beliefs supported by valid evidence. She believed that others have the same right, as her, to claim their own standpoints and make their own choices. Another participant, Lyla, expressed, “deliberating these issues helps not only my teaching become more ideologically responsive to diverse learners but also myself become more empathetic to differences and even disagreements.”

Impact of Controversy Deliberation on Civic Ideology in Education

In each round of interview, three interviewees identified with a mix of two civic ideologies in education, four with a mix of three. In the second interview, the number of individuals who reported no civic ideology in education decreased from one to zero; the number of individuals who stated a single civic ideology in education increased from four to six. All participants confirmed the existent influence controversy deliberation has on their civic ideology in education. For seven out of 13 (54%) individuals, the impact was so great that their civic ideology in education changed; this change came in different shapes and sizes.

Direction of Change. One mutual feature was the direction of the change, flowing from the conservative end to the critical end. See Graphic 1.



Graphic 1

Direction of Change in Civic Ideology in Education

To be specific, Bailey's civic ideology in education altered being from mostly liberal and slightly critical to typically critical and slightly liberal. Claire used to be slightly conservative and mostly liberal, nowadays she additionally developed some minor critical learnings in education. Starting as a die-hard conservative, Helen converted a slim portion of her conservativeness to criticality in education. Madison flourished in both liberal and critical categories from an exclusive liberal adherent. Peyton evolved from a mixture of conservative, liberal, and critical inclinations to a supporter of critical civic ideology in education. Reese identified with the critical in the second interview, while she previously sided with none. Finally, Zaiden's civic ideology in education acquired a giant leap of replacing conservative tendencies with critical propensities.

Journey of Change. Several participants, experiencing adjustment in their civic ideology in education in interview two, pointed out that the perceived change has been a process. Lyla put it, "I think controversial issues can make people change between ideologies when their old beliefs get expanded or even overthrown. I think this change often goes from conservative to liberal or critical, like from singular to diverse." Growing in a conservative religion in mid-west U.S., Bailey widened her eyes and mind after exposed to controversies, disagreements, and differences from others. It is certainly the higher education that drove her to "start questioning a lot of those [conservative] things and her ideology" because she has learned "things that just did not jive with [her] well or did not really sit well with [her] beliefs." Thus, the more information she received, the more differences she understood, the more liberal and critical she tended to be. Caroline reported one turning point in the journey of her civic ideology in education:

This one day before, I witnessed an indigenous student who often got mistreated by other students and attempted suicide. The worst part is that the education system is never set up to be in favor of indigenous like her. In very latest years, I started talking to more indigenous people and listening to big scholars' speeches about promoting indigenous rights. I'd say that some of my conservative beliefs altered to be liberal or critical. (Interview, 2021)

Like Caroline's story, Carson self-witnessed a process of change in his educational civic ideology. He stressed importance of having a critical lens in education, so "we can realize that the structures that we all live within still apply many an obstacle to millions of people, especially those of color, non-binary gender, and disability." He was raised super conservative in a political and religious manner. As a member in the LGBTQ community, he ran into many controversies later in life. Ever since he developed a critical lens of viewing the world, he refused "to blindly obey a certain set of beliefs and a singular perspective of the world." He shifted to a more critical view "where instead of blindly trusting a conservative ideology of tradition, penitence, and ancestral," he applied more criticality to further events in the year 2020, primarily the Black Lives Matter movement, the 2020 election, the issue of abortion, and the March for Life. Protesting himself enabled him to "see with my own eyes the disparities of power between the state and the everyday people that were actually protesting in the streets; being a queer helped him realize that "there are disparities of power between queer people and so-called normal people as in men and women, and comparably between racial minorities and white people." He perceived "a much more complicated reality that the world is in, and it serves nobody but those that are most well-off and powerful to just give blind credence to the public and ideas about how exceptional our country is." He continued:

Instead, if you apply a critical lens to education, your community, to your state, to your nation, and to the world, instead of holding up ideas of your own community or your own nation being exceptional and equal, you're focused on those who are in most need of support, of reforms, of aid, of further education. You will also have the impetus to contribute to providing those people with support, aid, and change. The U.S. is not fair to its people in many ways, and some of its policies are not equitable either. It was certainly conversations and events of controversy, argument, and reflection involving people around me, my family, my friends that led me to my place today. (Carson, Interview, 2021).

Moving to endorse less conservative and more liberal and critical ideology in education, Claire expanded her ideological repertory by navigating "inflammatory subjects that contain controversies, like

abortion.” With respect to certain issues such as abortion, her ideas still leaned towards the conservative end, but for race and gender related issues, she became more receptive to diverse ways of thinking. She also commented that her civic ideology changing is an ongoing process. “I don’t see myself mainly in the critical world yet, but it could be possible down the pike.” Comparably, Helen used to deny the existence of racism, but her discussions with her recently made Latina friend about white prejudice and racial inequalities led to a change in her lens of viewing this world. Growing up with conservative family dynamics, she had been accustomed to one way of examining what happens in the world. Later, controversy deliberation and discussion helped her see other side(s) and open her mind to different stories and reasons. She confirmed a big impact of such deliberation on people’s beliefs and opinions.

“The United States is so unjust in many aspects of our life right now; change is urgently needed for the sake of social justice,” argued Juliet. She continued, “it’s good to be fluid, as an educator, because you can be more inclusive and be able to educate and challenge each perspective.” Though she felt conflicted between all three civic ideologies in education depending on what controversies being deliberated, “with regards to social justice topics, she tended to side more with the critical camp. In terms of change for Madison, she once was an adamant liberal, including with abortion related conversations. Now, if issues of racial and gender inequalities are brought up for discussion, she could be more critical with civic ideology in education. She put it, “I feel like I’m not as critical as I probably could be. I’d like to be more critical later on in my life.” She clarified:

Using the 2020 Election as an example, Reese explained her journey of change:

I used to believe what Trump said about the fraud that was plotted and took place. I watched a lot of Fox News. Then I realized they were trying to make people believe that the election was stolen, but they kept failing presenting evidence because there was none. I think now we really need to be critical with news, media, and things. I like the critical classification that talks about racism and the causes of inequality in society. I think that those are really big topics to talk about right now. And those would be really good ones to talk about in the classroom. I think I lean more towards the critical one now. We do need to get to the bottom of the social problems like racism and violation of human rights. I also like to

talk about citizenship in social studies class because that is what social studies teachers do—to produce responsible citizens for our democracy. (Interview, 2021)

Effects of the Deliberation of Controversial Issues on Critical Consciousness

Deliberating controversies can help promote critical consciousness because it 1) advocates for multiple perspectives, 2) develops critical thinking skills, 3) encourages self-reflection, 4) promotes understanding of misrepresentation, marginalization, and exclusion in education, and 5) increases the ability to question and challenge the master narrative, unequal power relations and social relations.

Advocacy for Multiple Perspectives

First, with respect to critical consciousness, all 13 participants underlined the advocacy benefit of controversy deliberation for multiple perspectives. Though with little substantial information, Bethany, Caroline, Helen, Lyla, Peyton, Reese, and Zaiden unanimously confirmed that controversy deliberation helped foster their awareness and receptiveness to multiple perspectives. They did not necessarily come to any consensus with those holding competing values and mindsets at the end of deliberation. However, the deliberating process provided them with additional information, evidence, and reasons regarding the same issue, broadening their own perspective and understanding of the same. In this case, improvement was already made on their part. In addition, they believed that they became better at listening to different voices without being too quickly judgmental or shutting others down. Therefore, they were more willing to allow for expressions of disagreement.

The other participants offered more detailed descriptions with reference to multiple perspectives. Bailey, for one, explained that controversy discussion could draw forth alternative perspectives. Young learners needed to be made aware of differences in thinking and reasoning amongst humans. “By looking at other people's experiences and starting to understand the experiences that other people have had, it kind of starts building this fabric of where we've come as a person and a society.” In tears, she delivered her experience in this regard:

I was maybe 15 blocks away from the Indian school from the time I was a kid. I remember we would always ride bikes around the school. Later it had been closed. I just knew that it was called the Indian school, but I had no idea why. I remember a neighbor's grandma would frighten her when she misbehaved and say, "I am going to put you in that Indian school, so you will learn to behave." I remember asking my mom about the eye symbol on the mountain, and she said, "oh, that's because there used to be an Indian school here." Then I knew that people used letters of symbols to indicate the Indian school, but I didn't understand the scope of it because it was never taught at school. We never learned it. Now I have read and discussed assimilation and Indian boarding schools. It really shocked me to realize how close this controversial phenomenon was to when I was living there. I grew up in the 80s. For years, this assimilation process was going on, and I just really did not know or understand it. Later, I got to high school, there was a program through the local Church where they would bring Native American students into families of [religion] homes. My brother happened to be friends with one of these students, David (pseudonym). He was from a reservation in a southern state and brought here. At first, he was living with another white family. He would tell my brother how mean they were to him. He said they would tell him how nice and smart white people are, but how brutal Native people are. That makes me mad when I think of it today. My brother asked him, "Well, why don't you just come live with us?" For his junior and senior years, he came to live with us. One time, David had gotten really upset with a teacher's remark, "America is our home. We saved this land from being wasted." My brother asked, "John (pseudonym), why are you getting so mad?" John made the comment, "[Profanity] you! You took my land!" My brother immediately responded, "No, John, I did not. I did not take anything from you. Not me!" At another time, for David's high school graduation, his mom had called my mom and said, "We would like to bring a lamb, slaughter this lamb, and do a big meal to celebrate this event with your family." My mom just completely shut it down. We were like, this is not what we do in our house. This is like how you are "white." I remember David and his mom feeling upset about it. (Interview, 2021)

Reflecting on the two experiences that include cultural and historical controversies, Bailey realized how open discussion could have provided alternative perspectives. Given a second chance, Bailey would sincerely talk with David, “What were your experiences on the reservation?” “Why are you going through this program?” “What made your family decide to bring you here?” “What is your vision for equity and justice?” Without seeing multiple viewpoints on an issue, one’s understanding of the issue would tend to get stuck in just one perspective. Misperceptions and conflicts might closely follow. Pondering controversies about “assimilation, colonialism, white way of civilizing” promoted Bailey’s tolerance and respect for diverse perspectives. In terms of social studies standards, she suggested, “There is a lot we need to add on Native Americans. There is a lot we can do to help improve our education for younger Americans.”

Carson commented that deliberating on controversial issues in the classroom could help individuals’ understanding of multiple perspectives that were involved in history and social justice efforts. One interesting aspect of deliberation he mentioned was that there was the absolutely great value of including multiple perspectives, but that these perspectives carried different weight towards influence. For example, he explained:

Understanding the material, objective conditions of controversial issues in the past is necessary. Then, we will see how they have become controversial today. Too much politics involved in education right now makes teaching education for democracy or civics hard. Let’s see if we deliberate the representation of LGBTQ communities in education, the majority of educators and students will not identify with LGBTQ ideas because they abide by the binary gender assumption. Thus, their perspectives are likely to weigh more than my own because I may be one of the very few LGBTQ people with a different perspective. I know more schools may be accepting our presence and presentation nationwide, but there are still many people out there that have never been exposed to or understood how queer people live or think. Like the controversies about the civil rights movement, I would definitely want to shift the focus of the conversation to those who would experience the most change by the civil rights movement, meaning that I would highlight the perspectives of the underdogs of African American voices. I would not focus heavily on the perspective of powerful politicians at the

time, like Strom Thurmond who would have colored the civil rights movement, even though he would be a contemporary source. (Interview, 2021)

Carson stressed the importance of equalizing the influence of diverse perspectives during controversy deliberation. He insisted that it would be more beneficial to his future students if each perspective could be given equitable attention, which might promote the portrayal of an objective reality of the controversy. When discussing social justice issues, he suggested that sides offering the perspectives of those who were in the most need receive sufficient notice, but less for those who stood to benefit from the oppression of others.

In addition, Claire wrote in her reflection, “Teachers are expected to be so knowledgeable, but we will never know about everything. Hearing about different or opposing perceptions makes me realize how limited my knowledge is.” Next, she expressed:

While there are a lot of people around me in life, the white middle class had been my only valid lens examining the world. I used to think about everything through this very limited lens. Talking about controversial issues helps me expand that lens, so I understand that my perspective is not the only valid one. There are multiple perspectives other than mine. The reality that I do not know or agree with something does not make it invalid or wrong. I have a group of friends, and we all have very different views. We have discussed political issues including the 2020 Election and the reliability of voting machines. We all have reasons for our sides on these issues. Sometimes, I do not agree with what they are saying, and vice versa. At least, we see and listen to contending perspectives, and we can respect each other. Same with social justice issues, I have come to understand that the more open-minded I am, the more reasonable I am with my own perspective. Deliberating those controversies, especially with people of distinctive perspectives, can help me have an actual discussion instead of attacking people. I think that is how my understanding of social justice has expanded as a result. (Interview, 2021)

Similarly, Heidi had benefited from controversial deliberation from an early age. Her grandma used to call her “Ms. Contrary” because she was always ready to argue and refused all opposing perspectives. Her

grandmother taught her, “Your opinion is but one opinion. Listen to others even if you do not agree with them.” Recently, she had a long discussion with some friends about BLM after one class. She recalled:

Being able to see from a different perspective can be eye-opening and helpful. I only have my personal perspective—this is my world, and this is what I see—because of my experiences. I have not experienced everything. Many white people, like me to be honest, would quickly associate this movement with violence, chaos, and destruction seen in those big cities such as New York and Minneapolis. Why can’t they peacefully protest or march on the streets? Why can’t they sit down and talk to people? The violence and danger this movement has created make it super hard for others to agree with the participants. Besides, some people would argue that all lives matter, including black lives and Indian lives, right? Then, an African American friend in the discussion gave her opinions. She said that racial inequalities are real, and that millions of minority individuals are the most influenced. Racism is widespread and runs deep in this country. Peaceful protests are just not enough to fight it or to demand change. She is not supporting the violence that occurred, instead, she condemns it. She continued, the BLM is defective in many ways, but it is also useful. For example, it advocates for black women and black LGBTQ people, many of whom have been mistreated one way or another. Personally, hearing other people's experiences boosts my awareness of multiple perspectives involved in the same issue, otherwise, my own white perspective would be what I know. Now, if I hear an issue, I would think about how I see it, and how it would affect other groups of people with different experiences. I feel like it just helps me to be able to do that, whether I believe other sides or not. Being able to see from their perspectives makes you gain a lot of empathy. You do not have to agree with them, but you can still respect them. (Interview, 2021)

As a racial minority, Juliet assumed that deliberating controversial issues improves her ability to understand multiple perspectives. She has had experiences with racial injustice and discrimination in school settings. Without much racial power, her perspective would often get neglected when it came to racial issues of controversy. However, in a healthy deliberating space, an equitable share of different perspectives could help

all (people with and without dominating power) become open-minded. The inclination to be more open to hear and understand different perspectives could be increased among every individual. More importantly, to Juliet, those oppressed cultures and ethnicities could be given a voice. Regarding race-related controversies, Madison claimed to be more friendly with different perspectives. She knew a school where instruction on race and social justice was banned by the leadership. She conversed with several minority teachers and students about the inclusion of racial issues at school, so she was “educated” on other perspectives that she has never heard of before. Now, she was eager to understand multiple perspectives of individuals coming from all walks of life and all types of backgrounds. Though she did not agree on the perspective of controversial issues, such open-mindedness would be essential for solution-seeking.

Nurture of Critical Thinking Skills

Second, controversy deliberation could help develop critical thinking skills, according to the participants, in four different ways, by 1) thinking outside the box, 2) weighing information and evidence, 3) scrutinizing personal and others’ reasons, and 4) facilitating decision-making.

Table 10

Controversy Deliberation Improves Critical Thinking Skills

Participant	Ways of improving critical thinking skills			
	Thinking outside the box	Weighing evidence	Scrutinizing reasons	Decision-making
Bailey	✓	✓	✓	
Bethany	✓			
Caroline			✓	
Carson	✓		✓	
Claire	✓	✓		
Heidi	✓		✓	

Helen	✓	✓		
Juliet	✓	✓	✓	
Lyla	✓		✓	
Madison		✓		✓
Peyton	✓	✓		
Reese	✓			✓
Zaiden		✓		✓

Thinking Outside the Box. Thinking out of the comfort zone was reported, by 10 participants (77%), as the top one reason for how controversy deliberation could help develop one's critical thinking skills. Bethany, Claire, Caron, Bailey, Juliet, and Peyton unanimously conveyed the importance of thinking out of one's comfort zone when it came to competing values, beliefs, and opinions contained in many controversial issues. They pointed out that our personal experiences, knowledge, and beliefs tended to keep our thinking in a closed circle. Facing differences in opinions and disagreements, individuals would automatically feel challenged and insecure. Next, they would refuse new ways of thinking and ideas, thus losing the opportunity for cognitive progress. Bailey, in her reflection, referred to the Q-Anon community who got stuck in those conspiracy theories, rejecting science and logic, due to fear of being challenged and disapproved. Heidi argued that a lack of critical thinking outside one's mind would lead to close-mindedness. Take abortion, she strongly stood on the opposing side of the issue, rendering the affirmative side completely improbable. One time, discussing with someone who supported abortion drove her to reflect on her internal beliefs. She realized how close-minded and judgmental she was in the absence of external beliefs. Helen wrote:

Deliberating these issues makes us think bigger because we are not just going with what we have always thought, known, or believed. We are introduced to differences, a different side of yourself and

the world. What we know is so limited. With the Covid vaccination today, most people are likely taking just one side of the issue: get it, not get it, or in between. Each side would hold beliefs that they perceive to be valid. Well, can I be misinformed? Can I be wrong this time? Seeing and understanding what is not in ourselves helps you just to think deeper about each side, about what you believe in.

Again, it makes you question yourself sometimes, dig deeper into issues. (Reflection, 2021)

Equally, Reese shared her perspective with respect to thinking divergently,

For example, for climate change, I think that it is real without a doubt. We human beings have done so much damage to the Earth and to the climate. That is why we have so many more natural disasters happening everywhere in the world today. Global warming and rising sea level are results of human activity. On the contrary, then, I heard the other side opposing this stance on climate change, saying “the planet is 4.5 billion years old, and it is running its course on its own terms. Therefore, phenomena such as the rising sea level and melting icebergs at the south pole are nothing of worry. Let nature be.”

For a moment, I started to agree with this camp. Later, I spoke to two science professors about climate change. They reassured me that the controversy of climate change is not scientific anymore, but a political one. Finally, I understand that people are entitled to different opinions and beliefs, which may be contradictory to my own. However, self-quarantining in personal beliefs can be detrimental, while consciously jumping out of your comfort zone may lead to critical thinking. (Reflection, 2021)

Weighing Evidence. Seven participants (54%) rated weighing evidence and information as the second way of fostering one’s critical thinking skills through controversy deliberation. In education, question-posing should go both ways between teachers and learners. In Bailey’s words, “students sometimes ask teachers challenging questions, so I better be ready to respond with critically thought answers.” To avoid biased misleading responses, weighing one’s supporting evidence would be a necessary action to take. Furthermore, Claire, Helen, Peyton, and Zaiden stressed the importance of cross-checking all evidence on particular issues under deliberation, which, for them, elevated the productivity of deliberation. In detail, Madison disclosed her experience in this regard:

Along with my family, I was exasperated by the allegation that the 2020 Election was fraudulent. Massively unbelievable, maddening, and condemnable, a deceitful presidential election took place in the supposedly most democratic nation on earth. How could I trust our democracy again? What should I tell my kids in the future? I really believed in what Trump said on TV and social media over and over. Not until I talked to my trusted college professors and followed several major legal rulings against the alleged fraud did I realize that there is no evidence of any sort to support the claimed fraud. Then I kind of woke up and thought, “I had been misled and stuck with a singular source of information.” Fox news was my main data provider on the matter. Therefore, my conclusion was aggressively skewed to the false end. Had I cross-examined my sources of information and evidence, I would not have fallen into the wrong ditch. (Interview, 2021)

Scrutinizing Reasons. Rated as a benefit of controversy deliberation concerning critical thinking skills by six participants (46%), scrutinizing reasons for personal opinions and beliefs about controversial issues ranked third. Speaking of the Q-Anon community, Bailey warned herself that, as a teacher, she should always be able to scrutinize her own reasoning for her perspective of a particular controversial issue. Caroline and Lyla agreed that such scrutinizing activity would help avoid being biased and misinformed by invalid reasoning. Heidi articulated that examining the reasons behind both sides of the issue of abortion amplified her critical thinking skills because she was able to evaluate her own reasoning process. For Juliet, deliberating controversial racial issues helped her better assess her own and others’ reasoning. She came to recognize how the others on the opposing side developed their reasons. For example, she obtained knowledge of the reason why some educators would want to forbid racial justice topics in instruction, which would contribute to solution-seeking for her later.

Decision-making. Three participants (23%) reported that their critical thinking skills improved after deliberating controversies by making more sound decisions. Controversial issues would naturally involve two or more alternatives, and “proficiency in choosing the most reasonable for your own sake is significant” (Reese, Reflection, 2021). Reese also uncovered some flaws in her previous decisions after thinking more

critically about issues of controversies. Madison and Zaiden added that by processing all the evidence available, examining perspectives presented, and inspecting reasoning, they were competent to make the best decision for themselves.

Promotion of Self-reflection

Third, all participants confirmed that controversy deliberation promoted their self-reflection, so they became more aware of their personal biases. Next, self-improvement could possibly be made. As Peyton wrote in her reflection, “When I am thinking about a controversial issue, I can sort of trace my positionality such as who I am and how I know about this issue.” Besides, some of her biases were brought to light, “whether because of my religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, culture, language, or where I grew up.” Next, this awareness could help her create positive changes. Reese confirmed that “No teacher knows about everything. No teacher is right about everything.” If she discussed controversial issues out loud with those who thought differently than herself, it could help her realize that she was biased, and that you might need to reflect on why and how she came to those biases. Accordingly, Lyla presented a succinct summary regarding self-reflection:

It really helps me focus on like my true beliefs. It is hard for me to truly reflect on myself unless my beliefs are questioned or challenged. Others’ points of view will definitely make me think deeply about my own. Everybody has biases in life, and we do not really know they exist if everything goes our way. Controversial issues open us up to seeing differences that may prove our biases. (Interview, 2021)

Carson confirmed, “It is only through confronting things that make me uncomfortable, I can gain a real perception of who I am. The USA can basically be best defined by the topics or issues that she avoids or deems controversial.” In his opinion, deliberating controversial issues was a worthy task, and a responsibility of his as someone who had many privileges that he was aware of, that minority individuals did not automatically have. Discussing controversial issues would expose what individuals deemed controversial and what they did not while helping reveal biases and privileges. Zaiden commented, “Normally, we would not know that we have so many biases in us until what we believe is right gets challenged. We are all biased in our own way.” Previous life experiences have shaped who he is today; naturally, he might have a different understanding of the world

than others. For example, he disclosed that he used to hold prejudices against a different religion from his, but when he made friends with one of the followers and discussed some controversies about that religion, he realized his own biases. Likewise, Claire engaged in self-reflection and uncovered biases. She described:

It totally made me a better person. I was not being as critical as my classmates, especially on issues of race towards the beginning of the educational program. I live in an apartment complex, and there are a lot of immigrants that live here as well. I think immigration [policies] have always been an issue of controversy in this country. I was generally uncomfortable with some of the men because of their appearance. Then I think that we started talking about biases in one of my classes. I thought, “Oh my goodness, I do not even know who they are, and I totally just made the unconscious decision that they were terrible.” Then I got to know them and started hearing about their experiences, perspectives on the issue. I was able to paint a bigger picture of the issue and understand alternative sides. The immigrants living here were super nice people and helped scrape off my car when it was snowing. Even though I feel like I am a good person, I definitely have biases and preferences. Thus, seeing from the side of those immigrants, which is the other unknown side for me, has helped me reflect on myself and grow. It helps me to recognize those biases against certain people or groups of people and then work on them. Unless you face those issues, you do not deeply think about your biases and yourself. Many people do not recognize that they have those unconscious biases. In the end, as an educator, I find aspects that I did not really like about myself and be a more critical reflector. (Interview, 2021)

In addition, controversial issues might trigger strong feelings, emotions, or reactions during their deliberations; however, introspective opportunities could simultaneously occur. In this regard, Bailey uncovered her resilient feelings when deliberating over abortion policies and BLM with others. Emphatically thinking, she was able to understand that those with competing opinions might just be “right” as she was. She continued, “One’s biases, to a certain extent, define what is right.” Reflective activities expanded her eyes and tolerance towards differences too. Also employing abortion as an example, Heidi reflected on its teaching aspect:

We all believe in things. We often have a stand on an issue, but why? I feel like it is not clear until you say it out loud, deliberate it, and reflect on yourself. Then you do need to have reasons why you believe something, especially if you're teaching it. I had sometimes in my practicum where I would be saying something, "Well, abortion is not right." You must really think about why. How do I know this? How do I teach my students this? I feel like teaching controversial issues is a really good opportunity to be able to address your own biases and self-reflect because you have to go beyond the factual level of the issues. It makes you think about the why, and the how of a controversial issue. Teaching these will have you encounter different perspectives, some of which may come from parents who may get upset with your perspective. In this case, it is important to be able to deliberate about controversial issues with students, parents, or colleagues. Then you receive more information, hear about all sides of an issue, and engage with self-reflection. Next, maybe tackle your biases, change your mind, or your stand on an issue. Then you may change the way you teach it to be inclusive or less biased. (Interview, 2021)

Lastly, Madison benefited from controversy deliberation by effectively reflecting on herself. Her reflective questions were as follows:

Why do I think politically liberally or conservatively on this issue? Why do I think this way? Why do the others think in different ways? What evidence do I have to support my reasoning? Could I be wrong? Why do so many teachers teach this to students in a certain way? How would I teach it to my future students? Am I coercing my students to accept my opinion, belief, or value when they have their own? (Interview, 2021)

Understanding Misrepresentation, Marginalization, and Exclusion

Fourth, deliberating controversy allegedly contributed to promoting understanding of misrepresentation, marginalization, and exclusion in social studies education in three areas, 1) single narrative of white perspective, 2) marginalization based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, etc., and 3) social studies as a subject. See Table 11.

Table 11

Popular Categories of Misrepresentation, Marginalization, and Exclusion

Participant	Categories of Misrepresentation, Marginalization, and Exclusion		
	Single narrative	Marginalization based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, etc.	The social studies subject
Bailey	✓		✓
Bethany	✓		✓
Caroline		✓	
Carson	✓	✓	✓
Claire	✓	✓	
Heidi		✓	
Helen	✓	✓	✓
Juliet	✓	✓	✓
Lyla	✓	✓	
Madison	✓		
Peyton	✓		✓
Reese	✓		
Zaiden	✓	✓	

Single Narrative of the White Perspective. Demonstrating misrepresentation, marginalization, and exclusion in social studies, a single narrative of the white perspective was ranked the top one by 11 participants (85%). After deliberating controversies in education, Heidi contended, “Education does not tell the whole story. It tells one narrative, so it is not fully representative.” She posed a question, “How are students supposed to make things relevant and apply to them if they do not see themselves represented?” To her, discussing controversial issues was helpful because it invited more parties, ideas, and representative materials into the singular narrative of teaching and learning. Relatively, Lyla alleged, “Only one side of the story gets to be taught. People with power dislike diversity in social studies. More is not better in their case.” With disappointment, Bailey remarked:

There is some exclusion in what we teach. They only show one part of the history, not all of it. This very whitewashed idea of history already shaped my young boy’s understanding of history. There still

are some things being left out, and students are building ideas that might not necessarily be in line with reality. My son and I were talking the other day about the Civil Rights Movement, including Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks. He was comparing it with the BLM today. He was reciting the “I Have A Dream” speech. He commented on how peaceful protest was back then. The Black Lives Matter protests today are so violent, and participants are so angry. If they would just stop being so angry and violent, then maybe other people would listen to them. I was shocked by how whitewashed his mind is at such a young age. It just made me sad. I told him how misinformed he was by his teachers and textbooks. Social movements are not always peaceful. (Interview, 2021)

Behind the with perspective, white middle-class individuals were always the most represented. Claire argued, “their vision of history is the only right history that is officially taught at schools.” Sometimes, there was this delusion that equality was achieved today. As Zaiden articulated, “Only good history is focused on. We cannot keep avoiding the sad history forever. We ought to look at history head-on and see what can be included in today’s education, books, standards, and so on.”

Marginalization based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, etc. Eight participants (62%) emphasized that deliberating controversies made them aware of how minorities of race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, etc. have been mistreated in social studies. History was not presented in a manner true or accurate about the minority communities. To Caroline, one example would be that the indigenous people were often portrayed as violent and bad in history. She believed, “there is misrepresentation and exclusion in social studies education, but not just in social studies though.” Bethany added that many teachers chose to ignore the mistreatment of Native Americans during the Trail of Tears because it was upsetting. More importantly, according to Carson, “racially, culturally, and gender minorities are ignored in composing the standards, books, and training in social studies.” As a racially minoritized person, Juliet shared, “I found it very hard to relate to all those white historic figures. People of my race do not get mentioned in the standards or books.” However, allowing for controversy deliberation opens space for minority communities to share their stories and voices to promote change. Simply put by Madison, “Controversial issues are hard to teach, but they help create space for

everybody, especially the minorities to tell what they wish to tell. Only focusing on those happy stories and good sides of history is bad for this country.”

Social Studies as A Subject. Six participants (46%) pointed out the marginalization the social studies subject was experiencing at schools. Reese, Juliet, and Bethany confirmed that they remembered social studies being seldomly taught. Their main subjects, such as English and Math, dominated the daily schedule. Helen recalled, “Social studies was almost non-existent. What I do remember is how heroic the pilgrims were and how the Indians presented themselves a certain way with the feathers and paint.”

Increasing the Ability to Question and Challenge the Master Narrative

Controversy deliberation, reported by 10 participants (77%), contributed to increasing one’s ability to question and challenge the master narrative, unequal power relations and social relations. It could introduce pre-service teachers to the perspectives from experiences of those who were not in charge of the master narrative, including minority immigrants’ experiences. Lyla contended that hearing their stories, opinions helped her question the master narrative of the official history or the official curriculum. She would ask:

Who designed the master narrative? Who benefited the most from the master narrative? Whose values are most emphasized in the master narrative? Whose voice is not in this master narrative, in the curriculum, and in the standards that we have been teaching? What can I do as a teacher to help, to challenge what is exclusive, and to increase inclusion? (Interview, 2021)

Similarly, Madison proposed that controversial issues discussion helped her question the norms in education with the question—who is deciding what is good and what is normal for us in teaching? Issues of controversy with respect to race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, etc. taught her that this society was not perfect in many ways. She recognized that many people were suffering from unequal power relations and social relations precisely because of their race, gender, religion, and so on. She composed:

One of my good friends is [a religion]. He moved to a southern state for a master’s degree last year.

You know he is introverted. He got bullied by some of those so-called “real Christians” who said his

religion is messed up and not Christian at all. He said at least he knows just about everything could be controversial. I feel like things are dynamic with how you call an issue controversial, and where you are within the power relations. Your advantage in one situation could become a disadvantage in another.

(Reflection, 2021)

For one, Peyton obtained more knowledge of how to question the master narrative in social studies. She believed that the controversy of controversial issues only arose when the master narrative was attacked in any way, when unequal power relations were called into question, or when discrimination of race, gender, sexuality, ability, economic status, religion, etc. was brought up. She continued, "It is only when those issues are deliberated on that our ability to question or challenge the master narrative is called upon to take effect or to practice." Besides, questioning the master narrative of history and unequal power relations of race, gender, etc. is inherently essential for critical thinking, which happens to be a part of the Common Core. By extension of her legal responsibility to teach the Common Core, and given that critical thinking is part of it, she insisted that deliberating on controversial issues is an inherent part of her duties as a future teacher.

This country has been run in a very European-centered and white fashion. Minority racial communities owned fewer amounts of power, and some might have no say in the master narrative at all. Growing up in this context, Juliet verbalized her experience:

Discussing controversial issues taught me a lot about challenging the master narrative in education. To discuss issues regarding race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, and the like with a student who most closely relates to that issue can be either a very great learning experience for your classroom or a very terrible learning experience for that one student. I have been in a situation where I was very uncomfortable, and it happened almost 12 years ago. I felt mistreated because of my race and skin color when the teacher was talking about immigration. She said that many immigrant families come to this country easily and do not care about English. I could not be silent because she was so not right, so I voiced my thoughts that were against hers. I still remember that experience so well. This blatant

confrontation gave me great pressure because I was so at the bottom of the power relations, compared to the teacher. I do think including controversial issues can help me question or challenge the way that the white mainstream portrays minority groups. I hope those marginalized and misrepresented can have more opportunities to be heard and seen. (Interview, 2021)

Controversy deliberation would reveal multiple perspectives among individuals with different ranks within power relations and social relations. To Caroline, it could display various ways that people were being treated in history and in society, which could expose inequalities. Only with this knowledge would people be able to challenge what is not just or equitable.

Effective instructional practices

Based on experiences with controversy deliberation in the education program, the participants put forth a set of effective instructional practices. See the table below.

Table 12

Recommended Instructional Practices.

Participant	Perceived effective practices	
Bailey	Perspective taking	Critical media literacy
Bethany	Take a stand	Debate
Caroline	Establishing a safe space	Co-setting up rules
Carson	Storytelling	Applying a critical lens
Claire	Establishing a safe space	Guest panel
Heidi	Take a stand	Controversy reading circle
Helen	Establishing a safe space	Small group discussion
Juliet	Establishing a safe space	Structured academic controversy
Lyla	Take a stand	Small group discussion
Madison	Small group discussion	
Peyton	Take a stand	Structured academic controversy
Reese	Establishing a safe space	
Zaiden	Establishing a safe space	

Establishing a safe space appeared to be the most recommended instructional method to teach controversial issues, as six individuals (46%) indicated. The benefits of deliberating controversial issues would

be maximized if it occurred in a safe and friendly where all students felt heard, seen, respected, and cared for. In this case, differences were welcomed and accepted. It would be important that each student does not feel like an outcast for having differing beliefs. To Claire, “a safe space to deliberate controversial issues was a top priority so that no one would get ridiculed for being ignorant.” She had two opposite class experiences with discussing the inclusion of racism in teaching. In one class, the learning environment was welcoming and affirmative, so she raised questions about the legitimacy of white privilege. The professor and her classmates sincerely educated her on the topic without ridiculing her. On the contrary, in another class where it was tense and competitive, she asked similar questions of white privilege. She was scorned as a racist. She ran into an awful encounter. Therefore, making sure that an appropriate learning space where students felt comfortable sharing their views, reasoning, and thoughts would be of much value. Four participants (31%) recommended utilizing take a stand activity to teach controversies. Their descriptions of the strategy were inconsistent in some ways. Bethany provided one example with a detailed description: First, the classroom will be divided into three sections, affirmative, undecided, and opposing. Next, students will pick a side on an issue and stand accordingly in the room. After inquiry-based evidence collection, all affirmative and opposing students take turns to share their reasons. In the meantime, every student is allowed to switch to a different side. In the end, the undecided will present their reasons as well.

In addition, Helen, Lyla, and Madison (23%) recommended structured small group discussion. They insisted that organizing the whole class into pairs or trios would reduce some of the challenges of deliberating controversial issues such as potential conflicts and altercations. In this case, competing values and beliefs behind opposing reasonings would pose less burden and threat, compared to larger or whole group discussion. Therefore, students tended to feel more secure and comfortable with deliberating with a small number of peers. Besides, opportunities for everyone’s opinion and voice to be heard would be increased. Teachers would not install as much as discussion facilitation either.

Furthermore, Juliet and Payton (15%) mentioned structured academic controversy (SAC). During the study in the education program, they picked up this teaching strategy for controversial issues deliberation.

Generally, it would be utilized to explore two sides of an issue (e.g., pro and con, for and against). For example, one issue could be, “Should voting be mandatory for all qualified citizens in the USA?” Juliet’s professor divided the class into several groups of four, two students of each group were assigned to be the pro side, and the other two represented the con position. Each side would conduct their research, collect data, produce evidence, and articulate arguments for their position, whereas the opponent side would listen jog down notes, and raise questions. Next, the pro pairs would switch to defend the con position, and vice versa. At this point, each pair should reach a comprehensive understanding of the deliberated issue. In the end, a whole class discussion, where multiple perspectives, opinions, arguments, and questions about the issue would be examined, would take place. Unlike take-a-stand or debate, students are assigned to represent one side of an issue regardless of personal feelings or beliefs. A key feature of SAC is that it is structured not to win an argument, but to find the best solutions to solve problems embedded in a controversial issue. Participants would become more open-minded to differences and less aggressive for self-defense.

Lastly, seven practices only received a recommendation for once, including perspective-taking, critical media literacy, debate, co-setting up rules, applying a critical lens, controversy reading circle, and guest panel. Heidi provided a detailed description of the controversy reading circle. The instructor offered three articles each for the for and the against sides of a controversial issue. Half of the class would pick one side, and the other half would pick the other side. Each side would be divided into a few smaller groups and concentrate on an equal share of the readings. Next, each group would read loud the key sections that support their position, and the whole class would discuss and critique it. This process would repeat until all readings are completed and voices are heard. In this way, a controversial issue became a puzzle, of which each individual or group would examine a piece. Constant discussing and critiquing would facilitate the deliberation of the issue.

Autoethnography

Advised by my dissertation committee, I started writing an autoethnography (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016) to record personal experiences, thoughts, and discoveries in the summer of 2021. To this day, I have benefited much from doing it as it is such a meaningful instrument of critical self-reflexivity

as a researcher and critical analysis of the whole journey of conducting the current study. At the time of finalizing the research focus on the deliberation of controversial public and social issues, I have been negating a mental struggle. Is this still topic important? How much research merit will it produce when it is completed? Will I be able to publish two or three articles out of this project afterwards? Weekly meetings with my supervisor helped provide encouragement and motivation for a 100% commitment to see the study through, irrespective of the amount of time it may take me.

Two Crucial Personal Experiences

In addition, two incidents drove me to lock in on the topic. First, the Covid-19 pandemic was still raging in the country, many influential figures (mostly in a political manner) such as former President Donald J. Trump have been publicly blaming China for the spread of the pandemic by calling it the “Chinese virus” (e.g., CNBC, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2020). Although China mishandled information about it at the very beginning in Wuhan, the blaming China game created serious obstacles to international cooperation and distraction from the essential domestic effort to control the disease (e.g., Horsley, 2020). Furthermore, this blame game has been detrimental to the Asian American communities, causing a swift surge of racial hate, division, and violence to them (FBI, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2020, 2022). For instance, the police department reported a 567% increase in anti-Asian hate crime in San Francisco in 2021 (The Washington Post, 2021). A friend of mine, a petite female student, attends a college in a northwestern town with a population of 30,000. Headphones in her ears and sunshine on her shoulders, she was strolling on campus. A white male individual, with a cigarette burning in his mouth, shouted at her “hey, Chinese virus, [f-profanity] off” and rode away on his electric skateboard. My friend assumed him to be a college student too as he had a typical student backpack on. The girl felt greatly confused and humiliated. Later, she could not help but cry a few times. She blamed the political blame game and some individuals’ mishandling of controversies regarding the pandemic.

Second, in early fall 2021, I was invited to observe a doctoral peer’s teaching of a 9th math class at a local high school and record the whole period for her research use. During the instruction, one in-class practice problem required using a mathematical formula to calculate the economic loss of the Black Death in 1388. In a

big group discussion, one student commented, “My dad told me that we should get financially compensated from China for the damage,” and he asked the teacher about her views. Two other students joined in the curiosity. My peer responded, “Well, the origin of the virus is a controversial topic in many countries. The scientists have not obtained enough evidence to verify it yet. We can discuss it later.” I thought that this was a teaching moment involving a controversy. As a Chinese citizen, I tend to have a different perspective than the student’s dad and many Americans with a similar mentality. At least, if I was the teacher, I would have pointed out the significance of listening to multiple perspectives before jumping to a conclusion. I might have asked the students to conduct an after-class research project on recent information about the origin of Covid-19 from their home country, the United Nations, and other parts of the globe, followed by a deliberation of the controversy in class. After class, my peer told me that she did want to make any inappropriate comments on something that she does not have sufficient knowledge of. More importantly, she did want to “get stuck” in a complex political issue, and she “just want[s] to teach the subject well first.” I do understand her thinking process. Political matters often involve strong feelings and opinions of students, educators, and parents. Teachers may face negative consequences for disclosing personal political leanings to students (Hess, 2009; Journell, 2012, 2016), thus many strive to achieve and remain exclusive partiality whenever possible (Kelly, 1986). From this incident, I learned that democratic education is critical to students’ overall development, regardless of age, gender, race, etc. A learner who understands the purposes and principles of critical education for education should hold a high perspective awareness, appreciate diverse sources of information, interrogate norms, be critical of personal and others’ reasoning, and embrace social justice.

The above two experiences solidified my commitment to scholarly make efforts to study the topic of controversial issues discussion and deliberation, with the hope of reaching valuable findings to foster critical education for democracy.

Reflection on the Recruitment Process

Before the first day of the fall semester in 2021, I completed a PowerPoint presentation, a recruitment flyer, and a Qualtrics link to the informed consent form. Feeling confident, I paid my first visit to a social

studies methods class in the first week. I brought ice cream for the class to build access and relationship (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I did not feel any uncomfortable at all, as I know the professor well, and I had been teaching college for two years already. Besides, a \$40 compensation would help encourage participation. After the instructor handed me the control of the classroom, he stepped out into the hall. I passed out all handouts for recruitment to every present pre-service and gave my presentation for 15 minutes. In the end, I invited any questions regarding participation in my study. Only one student asked me a question in class: “Where do you keep the data again?” I answered the question and wrapped up my recruitment. A few days later, only six students signed up for the study. I was disappointed at the result; my first attempt failed to recruit 15 individuals as expected. I started to get concerned. What if I did not get enough participants from the second session of the course? What kind of trouble would I get into? How would that impact my dissertation agenda? Would I be able to graduate on time? After meeting with my supervisor, I understood that I would not need to modify my IRB application if I can get more than 85% of my proposed sample size of 15. Therefore, a total of 13 would suffice. I, worried, repeated the recruitment process in the second session of the methods course. After the presentation, another six students signed up. Later, I sent out an email highlighting the voluntariness of participation, the secure storage of data, and the significance of the research. In the end, I recruited eight from the second class. I believe that showing sincere gratitude, the importance of the research, and care about confidentiality greatly promotes the success of recruitment.

Interview Reflection

One lesson I learned about interviewing is that sufficient notice must be given to the participants when multiple appointments need to be scheduled. The participants all had school and non-academic roles to play, so they would appreciate early notice for a 30-60 minute interview. As indicated in the IRB application, the first round of interviews would be carried out during week eight. I emailed all 14 participants in week seven and received 10 responses. The rest three interviews took place in week 9. For the second round, I allowed for two weeks of notice, and it turned out to be smoother in terms of scheduling. In addition, it is beneficial to rehearse the interview questions with someone who was familiar with the study population. The peer coder assisted with

the rehearsal. I made useful adjustments to some of the questions afterward to target the research questions and meet the proposed time expectations. For example, the question “How might your civic ideology change before and after the deliberation of controversial issues?” appeared to be aggressive for some interviewees during interview one, so I modified it for the second interview agenda. This change elicited more relevant responses. Sometimes, interview questions led to exposure of strong feelings. I was surprised by the occurrences of teary storytelling, which also indicated trust and rapport between me and my participants (Harley et al., 2009). Employing ice-breaking questions as an introduction helped build rapport, so did empathizing with the participants when they became emotional. I obtained compelling data from these sensitive moments too.

Surprising Findings

First, the teacher education, which the participants attended, appeared to have produced much social-justice-oriented impact on its learners. Among the reported examples for controversial issues, the representation of historical events, dates, and figures occupied the first place. For instance, most participants were ready to overturn the “traditional, whitewashed version of Thanksgiving” at school. They advocated for disseminating the truth behind Thanksgiving, including the fact that Native Americans are the creators of the holiday. They criticized the celebrating activities that appropriate indigenous culture such as wearing indigenous headbands. Critical democratic education requires its citizens to endorse equity and social justice, (Camicia & Knowles, 2021), of which the rectification of Native American culture serves as an indicator. Many participants mentioned the necessity of fostering equitable representation based on race, gender, and sexuality. The LGBTQ community received seven prospective teachers’ attention. I am glad to see that many teacher education students realize gender/sexual orientation inequalities and engage with disrupting the inequalities through their teaching undertakings. Meanwhile, I collected eight comments on increasing the inclusion of racism-related issues in elementary education. Pre-service teachers also called for actions to mitigate racism. I suggest that teacher educators create opportunities for critical reflections on issues of social justice, race, and the like (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Self-reflection, SAC, and debate can be effective instructional practices for students to critique how current political and social contexts perpetuate inequalities

(Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; Haynes, 1999). When deliberating racial, gender, and sexuality issues, one must conduct a critical analysis of “personal assumptions required to overcome uncritically examined distortions. Failure to recognize and give validity to personal values tends to suppress internalized personal assumptions, thus increasing the likelihood of their resurfacing as unquestioned biases” (Haynes, 1999, p. 41).

Second, six participants (46%) mentioned a dilemma: some of their colleagues, formal educators, possess misinformation, and their perceived responsibility to confront it may lead to challenges. I have not found any scholarship on this dilemma. They felt concerned that there are misguided teachers spreading inaccurate, subjective, and biased information to young citizens. As Carson put it, “I have a further ambition to fight ... for the sake of students because I know that our understandings of history and the world are how we come into our own respective identities.” Their concern about misinformation indicates the positive learning outcomes of the teacher education program and is a valuable step toward addressing the problem. To promote accurate and equitable teaching, this finding demands future research efforts.

Third, four pre-services conveyed the indisposition of disclosing political views while teaching controversial public and social issues. Due to potential risks, they insisted on remaining neutral in facing political issues in class. They need to understand that teacher neutrality is a myth, and that it is not the binary opposite of exclusive partiality (Journell, 2016; Kelly, 1986). If a teacher’s anxiety about breaching neutrality prevents him or her from including social and public issues, it is his or her students’ learning of important democratic skills that gets punished (McAvoy & Hess, 2013). Meanwhile, whether one should disclose political leanings is a personal choice to make.

Fourth, I encountered no research effort to explain the relationship between deliberating controversies and one’s civic ideology in education. This study, to a certain extent, filled this gap. All participants confirmed the effects of deliberation on their civic ideology in education. Seven reported experiencing the change of their civic ideology in education. It is surprising to find out that their changes only flew from the conservative side to the critical side, not the other way around. Thus, the findings mutually reinforce each other. For instance, the deliberation of controversial issues boosted pre-service teachers’ appreciation of multiple perspectives,

critically thinking skills, and ability to disrupt unequal power relations, which drove seven of them to become increasingly ideologically critical in education. Their critical consciousness simultaneously strengthened, as a result, so did their competence in contributing to critical education for democracy.

Chapter Summary

The finalized themes led to six sets of findings that helped me respond to the six operational research questions. First, I elicited a wide range of examples of controversial issues; however, most participants could not illustrate what criterion they relied on to define controversies, although they all offered solid rationales for teaching those issues. Second, pre-service teachers perceived various risks and challenges regarding controversial issues teaching in social studies, including fear of retribution from families, administrators, or colleagues, deficiency of content and instructional preparation, confrontation of misinformation among other teachers, flawed standards, policies, or instructional materials, and criticism of political self-disclosure. Third, two rounds of interviews revealed rather low preparedness among all participants. Four reasons 1) fear of repercussions, 2) lack of content knowledge, 3) lack of pedagogical knowledge, and 4) lack of practice could explain the widespread unpreparedness. Fourth, all reported that the deliberation of controversial issues affected their civic ideology in education. For seven individuals, their civic ideology in education changed in the end. One common feature of their change was its direction, always moving from the conservative end to the critical end.

Furthermore, I found that deliberating controversies enhanced one's critical consciousness by 1) advocating for multiple perspectives, 2) developing critical thinking skills, 3) encouraging self-reflection, 4) promoting understanding of misrepresentation, marginalization, and exclusion in education, and 5) increasing the ability to question and challenge the master narrative. The participants recommended instruction practices perceived to be effective. The leading three were take a stand, creating a safe space, and SAC. In the end, I added my autoethnography.

Chapter V

Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications

In this final chapter, I briefly conducted an overview of the study, including its purpose, participants, and findings. Next, I reiterated the research questions and illustrate how the findings in the preceding chapter answer each research question. Conclusions could be drawn afterward. I pointed out the limitations involved in this study. Meaningful implications for controversial issues instruction, teacher education programs, and policies were specified as well.

Overview of the Study

Controversial issues deliberation is crucial to individuals' participation in and contribution to democratic communities (e.g., Camicia, 2007; Hess, 2009, Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Parker, 2006). However, empirical research studies have contended that the deficiency of knowledge and skills in teaching controversial issues in K-12 settings pervades among pre-service teachers in social studies (Hawkman et al. 2015; Misco & Tseng, 2018; Nganga et al., 2020; Ollila & Macy, 2019). Tackling this urgent problem, therefore, became the focus of the current study. The principal research questions asked, How do pre-service elementary teachers experience and get influenced by discussing social and public issues? Grounded in critical theory (Au, 2012; Cornbleth, 2017), critical democratic education (Camicia & Knowles, 2021; Darder, 2016; Sant, 2019) served as the theoretical framework for the study, through which pre-service elementary social studies teachers' perceptions of discussing controversial issues and its effects on their civic ideology and critical consciousness were explored.

Targeting a large public four-year college located in midwestern United States, I endorsed a qualitative case study methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2012; Merriam, 2001; Yin, 2003) to collect data over one semester. I utilized the purposive sampling strategy (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) to successfully recruit 13 participants from two sessions of the social studies methods course. Two rounds of semi-structured interviews, three weekly written reflections, field notes, and autoethnography (Creswell &

Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2012) were performed as data gathering techniques. NVivo software assisted with data analysis. Data analysis (Crewell, 2007, 2013, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018) occurred in two stages. First, codes were elicited from each individual participant. Second, cross-examinig all 13 participants' codes helped generate themes towards findings and answering the six specific research questions. Multiple sources of data collection, member-checking, and CITI certified peer coding was carried out to promote the validity and trustworthiness of the results.

Subordinate Research Questions

Six explicit questions, respectively constructing the primary research question, received clarifications through the process of finding-generating. The details are as follows.

Research Question One: Perceptions of Controversial Issues in Social Studies

This question probed, What issues are considered controversial by pre-service teachers in their future social studies classrooms? All participants confirmed their motivation to incorporate controversial issues in their future teaching and expressed the benefits of doing so. However, pre-service teachers sometimes appeared to be inconsistent and confused about defining controversial issues (Ho et al., 2017)., though every participant explicated their rationale for teaching controversies. Examples of controversial issues were offered later. The answer to the first question was three-fold.

First, only four participants presented a clear definition: issues become controversial when students hold contending opinions, interests, values, and beliefs, when they oppose others' statements, arguments, or actions, and when they have supporting data and evidence (Levinson, 2008). Misconceptions in mind, several pre-service teachers classified human rights topics into controversial issues. For instance, they listed the denial of the Holocaust as an example of controversy, echoing the argument that pre-service teachers lack the competence in defining controversies in the first place (Engebretson, 2018; Evans et al., 1999; Nganga et al., 2020). Hand (2008) criticized this behavioral criterion (Rugg, 1936) for simply replicating how the public

views controversial issues. Instead, he contended that teachers should focus on those legitimate controversies that stimulate reasonable thinking and action (Hess et al., 2022).

Second, a strong rationale for integrating controversies in the curriculum is necessary and useful to teachers (Delandshire & Petrosky, 2004; McBee, 1996). Surprisingly enough, all 13 participants explicated one or plural rationals. The leading five were, 1) the pervasiveness of controversies (Hess, 2009; Nganga et al., 2020; Oulton et al., 2004; Philpott et al., 2011), 2) conflict resolution (Johnson, & Johnson, 2000; Lo, 2019; McBee, 1996; Philpott et al., 2011), 3) critical thinking skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1988; Journell, 2016; Pace, 2019; McBee, 1996), 4) democratic citizenship (Alongi et al., 2016; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Misco, & Tseng, 2018; Ollila, & Macy, 2019; Sant, 2019), and 5) understanding of multiple perspectives (Hess, 2005; McBee, 1997; Malikow, 2006; Misco & Patterson, 2007). Regarding the ubiquity, one pre-service asserted, “Controversial issues reside in every corner of teaching and learning. As a teacher, you can’t skip talking about them with your students.” Another individual claimed, “It is so important to teach controversial issues ... Dealing with disagreements more often will help us develop conflict-solving skills.” On the matter of critical thinking skills, one pre-service contended, “Teaching controversial issues helps students to be selective of information, values, and thoughts to form their own reasons, so they could think critically.” His/her classmate emphasized, students “must grow into democratic citizens, and facing controversial, difficult issues is part of it.” Furthermore, “teaching controversies can facilitate open discussion and advance student recognition of various perspectives,” another participant added.

Third, a larger number of examples for controversial issues were produced by the findings. The most-reported controversy was concerning the representation of two historical events, Thanksgiving and Columbus Day, by 18 times. Controversies of representation regarding race, gender, sexuality (with native Americans mentioned 10 times, LGBTQ community six times, and Asian Americans twice) were also cited 18 times. Political controversies, including controversies of the 2020 election received a frequency of 14. Whether or not racism should be taught at school took fourth place with a frequency of eight. Controversies over the inclusion of critical race theory, BLM, school uniforms, and abortion were respectively reported five times. A synthetic

analysis of the participants' understanding of these examples could reveal a tendency amongst them to fostering and protecting equity and social justice. For instance, seven pre-service teachers (54%) advocated for teaching accurate, respectful, and just Thanksgiving to young citizens in the U.S. They recognized the oppressions posed by the European, traditional account of the holiday, and then equity was called upon with regard to other historical events, figures, and dates (Holcomb, 2020; Moris, 2015). Meanwhile, activist advocacy for increasing the representation of Native Americans, LGBTQ community, African Americans, and Asian Americans in teaching and learning was proposed 21 times. Thirteen comments were made for including racism- and critical race theory-related topics in social studies classrooms.

Research Question Two: Challenges of Teaching Controversial Issues

The second question asked, What challenges do pre-service teachers perceive in controversial issues teaching? Participants reported five primary categories of challenges regarding controversial issues teaching in elementary grades, 1) fear of conflicts with or retribution from parents, administrators, or colleagues, 2) deficiency of content and instructional preparation, 3) confrontation of misinformation among other teachers, 4) flawed standards, policies, or instructional materials, and 5) criticism of political self-disclosure.

First, the leading challenge came from the fear that potential conflicts with parents, colleagues, or administrators or retribution might occur, testified by 11 participants (85%). Pace (2019) confirmed that fear of retribution can be an emotional obstacle for teachers who hope to integrate controversies into instruction. Teaching controversial issues “may provoke conflict, resistance, and inflammatory speech” (p. 254) amongst students, families, or colleagues at school. Some pre-service teachers expressed feeling anxious about the possibility of messing up controversial issues instruction.

Second, six participants (46%) perceived a hindrance posed by formal schoolteachers and school leaders who hold misinformation, misbeliefs, and misguided pedagogies. False, inaccurate, or inequitable information sometimes permeates daily formal education in elementary schools. Several pre-service teachers found themselves in a dilemma, confrontation with those colleagues might lead to conflicts and repercussions,

whereas turning a blind eye to the problem would make their conscience suffer. In this regard, I have found much literature thus far to relate to.

Third, 38% of the pre-service teachers conveyed the concern of having not been efficiently prepared with reference to content and pedagogy for teaching controversies in the future. This finding aligned with current studies (Misco & Tseng, 2018; Nganga et al., 2020; Ollila & Macy, 2019).

Fourth, five participants informed that Common Core Standards, educational policies, and instructional materials have weaknesses (Brown & Brown, 2010), as a result, creating hurdles for teaching controversial issues in early grades. For example, the state social studies standards never specify what issues should be considered controversial, what grade levels should include these issues, or how these issues should be taught. The mainstream, official policies in education, and school text innately underserve those communities that are not in the power positions based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, etc. (Gay, 2004; Banks, 2003), and this renders equitable instruction on controversies difficult. Under such circumstances, some educators and learners tend to be influenced by misassumptions and misunderstandings while discussing controversial issues.

Fifth, disclosure of political opinions or leanings may come with “inherent risks” (p. 27), and complications could follow for teachers addressing controversies in class (Journell, 2016), confirmed by 31% of the participants. Issues of controversy such as the 2020 election, BLM, and the inclusion of 911, inevitably involve personal political views on both the teacher’s and student’s parts. Revealing these views in a vastly polarized society can possibly result in retribution, criticism, or negative reactions to a classroom teacher, and it is understandable if teachers feel challenged to teach controversial issues (Hess, 2009; McAvoy & Hess, 2013; Pace, 2019). However, some researchers advocate for teachers’ disclosure of their political views during the teaching of controversies. For one, Journell (2016) found out that students are less likely to confuse their teachers’ political leanings with political fact when teachers explicitly share their political views. Similarly, Levinson’s (2012) study suggested that political disclosure of the teacher can furnish a useful context for

students to conceptualize political issues and eliminate negative political stereotypes that may affect their judgements of the issues.

Research Question Three: Preparedness in Teaching Controversial Issues

The third question targeted pre-service teachers' perceived readiness in controversial issues teaching after they graduate from the teacher education program. What are pre-service teachers' perceptions of their preparedness for teaching controversies? I came up with a scale from one to five (1 = Not at all, 2 = Poorly prepared, 3 = Somewhat prepared, 4 = Prepared, 5 = Well prepared) to allow for self-evaluation. At the first interview, the 13 senior participants scored an average of 2.23 level of preparedness, slightly higher than a two—'poorly prepared.' At the end of the fall semester, their readiness increased to an average of 3.19, roughly equal to somewhat prepared. The unpreparedness across the board resonates with literature in the field (Hawkman et al. 2015; Misco & Tseng, 2018; Nganga et al., 2020; Ollila & Macy, 2019;). Data analysis yielded four causes, 1) lack of practice, 2) lack of content knowledge, 3) lack of pedagogical knowledge, and 4) fear of repercussions. Eleven pre-service teachers (85%) ranked the lack of practice as the primary reason for being deficiently prepared in teaching controversial issues. They have not had enough opportunities to put their knowledge into application, so they were uncertain about its practicability. The first three causes indicated an overlap with the answers to the second research question. The first cause revealed the disconnection between theoretical teacher education instruction and the realities of K-12 classrooms (Pace, 2019; Wideen et al, 1998; Woolley, 2011). This realistic issue demands urgent attention from teacher educators, researchers, and policymakers. Pertinent suggestions will be made to education programs in the implication section.

Research Question Four: Effects on Pre-service Teachers' Civic Ideology in Education

The fourth question stated, How might deliberating controversial issues affect pre-service teachers' civic ideologies in education? To begin with, all participants gave a positive response to the close connection of the deliberation of controversies with their civic ideologies in education. First, perspective awareness and empathy were two significant connectors. On the one hand, by discussing issues of controversy with those with

competing values and beliefs, they became more aware of the existence of other deliberators' perspectives, other than just personal viewpoints (Hahn, 2006). Though possibly uncomfortable with being confronted or challenged during specific deliberations, pre-service teachers developed increasing respect and appreciation of multiple perspectives (Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Hess & McAvoy, 2015). They understand that others' civic ideologies and their properties may be equally valid and rational as theirs. On the other hand, their ability to empathize with others who hold conflicting views increased. With an empathic mindset facing controversial issues, pre-service teachers were capable of showing compassion for individuals from different political camps, religions, sexual identities, and the like (Lo, 2015). Second, all participants agreed that the deliberation of issues of controversy affects their civic ideologies in education. The perceived effects occurred in various ways; however, one consistent feature of these effects was the direction of change of their civic ideologies. Among conservative, liberal, and critical civic ideologies in education (Knowles, 2018), the influence of deliberating controversial issues appeared to always travel from the conservative side to the critical end. Seven individuals (54%) reported such a change in their civic ideologies in education at the end of the fall semester, and this change never happened in an instant. Instead, a journey of change took place, with controversial issues deliberation being a key vehicle in the journey. Expanding appreciation of multiple perspectives, empathic attitudes, understanding of differences, and exposure to inequalities tend to promote one's critical tendencies in education.

Research Question Five: Effects of Deliberating Controversies on Critical Consciousness

The fifth question surveyed, How might deliberating controversial issues affect their critical consciousness? With a 100% confirmative response from all the pre-service teachers, the deliberation of controversies helped with applying a critical lens to interrogate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, thus fostering one's critical consciousness. This fostering process was realized in five methods, 1) advocating for multiple perspectives, 2) enhancing critical thinking skills, 3) urging self-reflection, 4) stimulating understanding of misrepresentation, marginalization, and exclusion in education, and 5) developing the capacity to disrupt the master narrative and unequal power relations. First, several pre-service teachers of the

white race expressed a further realization of the “stratification of knowledge” in an inequitable society (Young, 1978; Apple, 2018), so points of view supported by the knowledge of those excluded by power relations deserve equal attention and respect. Perceiving this critical civic knowledge in mind, therefore, they would be highly eager to advocate for multiple perspectives. Second, critical thinking skills are essential for democratic participation (Pace, 2019; Kirlin, 2003; Ata, 2019). After deliberating controversial issues, the participants reported growth in their critical thinking skills. This growth arose when they became more effective in thinking outside the box, weighing information and evidence, scrutinizing personal and others’ reasons, and facilitating decision-making. Controversies encouraged the participants to leap out of their comfort zone to examine their sources of information, personal funds of knowledge, and reasoning. At the same time, they engaged with critical reflection on the curriculum, instructional materials, and instructional practices. Therefore, they partook in both retrospective and introspective activities toward critical consciousness that motivates change (Au, 2012).

In addition, the deliberation of controversies boosted the participants’ understanding of misrepresentation, marginalization, and exclusion in social studies education. The leading three manifestations were the dominance of the single narrative of the white perspective, underservice of marginalization based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, etc., and marginalization of social studies as a subject. Deliberation helps teachers discover deficiencies in education; besides, acknowledging a problem is a first step in solving it. Next, integrating controversies is essential to critical education for democracy. As research confirms, when learners are guided to discuss issues of controversy, they are well-positioned to cultivate critical consciousness (Misco, 2012; Nganga et al., 2020). Relatedly, the participants argued that critical consciousness produces transformational impact—it enables them to change how they appreciate others’ perspectives, the way they view the world, and how to contribute to a more equitable world for all beings. Undoubtedly, critically conscious individuals would change how they socialize with one another as well as how they solve public and social issues locally and globally. In critical democratic education, teachers must embrace critical consciousness because it is particularly useful to disrupt dominant ideologies, inequalities

rooted in the official curriculum, school text, and pedagogy (Gay 2004; Gay & Kirkland, 2003). As a result, teachers are more likely to tackle controversial issues regarding race, gender, religion, etc. in an equitable manner. Pre-service teachers should challenge what is normalized in education (Hlebowitsh, 2005).

Research Question Six: Effective Instructional Approaches

The next research question was designed to examine: What approaches are viewed as the best ways to teach controversial issues? Among the perceived teaching methods worth recommending, establishing a safe, welcoming, and affirming learning space won the gold medal. Similar to other subjects, controversial issues require a context where all deliberators feel comfortable, secure, and respected to share their personal opinions, emotions, and values, without worrying about getting ridiculed and attacked (Boys et al., 2018). A supportive, open deliberating environment is inclined to help elicit potential oppression, misrepresentation, or exclusion with respect to race, ability, sexuality, religion, etc., which was acknowledged by several pre-service teachers' personal experiences. The take-a-stand strategy (McBee, 1996) received several participants' endorsements as it can help students explicitly present a side on an issue or formulate one if they have none. All sides can supposedly be given equal time, attention, and respect in this approach. Another effective instructional technique was structured academic controversy (Parker & Hess, 2001), in which every learner listens to and constantly challenges each other. Each person and opinion are ensured an equal opportunity for contribution.

Limitations of the Study

The purposive sampling can be a source of limitations because a more diverse participant cohort from different social studies methods classes may bring more variations of perspectives and possibly themes and findings. The gender of the sample group is rather homogeneous, given only two males were enrolled in the study. Eleven pre-service teachers identify as white in race, and one does as Asian American. Therefore, the experiences and perceptions of the narrow range of race, gender, and geographic space in this study limit the results. Admittedly, there is a far heterogeneous population of pre-service elementary social studies teachers in

the U.S. and beyond, which the current study cannot represent. However, population-wise generalizability, a traditional golden standard, is not meant to be aimed for in this qualitative case study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In addition, the primary data source—interview—was collected via Zoom, which could lead to concerns about the protection of students' privacy and confidentiality. New power disparities between me and the interviewees (Gerber et al., 2017) could have conceivably rendered some participants tend to please me with positive answers. Besides, I might have accidentally disclosed my opinions and beliefs about certain aspects of the study such as my personal endorsement of the critical ideology in education. This concern could affect the data analysis and results finally generated. Furthermore, the peer coder only assisted with coding one-third of the data collected in the study due to time and Covid-19 constraints. A comprehensive recoding of all the data and cross-checking of our results afterwards would be ideal. The more participants a qualitative case study concentrates on, the less depth in any single participant can be (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is possible that I have not put in sufficient effort to do justice to each participant's data and underlying meaning.

Implications

This study is expected to expand the body of research on discussing social and public issues in pre-service, elementary social studies methods courses. I have conducted a productive attempt at tracing the relationship between controversial issues discussions and one's civic ideology in education; no previous studies have examined this regard. The findings revealed that the deliberation of controversial issues is closely associated with pre-service teachers' civic ideologies in education. Via perspective awareness and empathy, the former tends to push the latter rightward on the conservative, liberal, and critical spectrum. Hence, one's critical consciousness gets promoted. As an essential vassal for education for democracy, deliberating controversies can enhance appreciation of multiple perspectives (Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Hess & McAvoy, 2015), develop critical thinking skills (Ata, 2019; Kirlin, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 1988; Pace, 2019), motivate self-reflection (Au, 2012; Blue & Dale, 2016), reveal misrepresentation, marginalization, and

exclusion in education, foster the ability to disrupt the unequal power relations, and advocate for change (Apple, 2018; Journell, 2016; Misco, 2012; Parker, 2010) among pre-service teachers. Why wouldn't we embrace the incorporation of controversial issues in elementary education and beyond?

Suggestions

There are several areas regarding the Common Core Standards for social studies, teacher education, instructional materials, and policies that require improvement. First, for elementary grades, the Common Core Standards of 2010 never explicitly mention controversial issues, only including differences between perspectives in history. Thus, its elusive nature with respect to important issues and concepts in social studies leaves much to be decided by states, districts, schools, and educators. Could more details be added to the standards to help classroom teachers draw the line, on teaching controversies?

Second, the findings elicited in this study facilitates identifying critical gaps in the official knowledge (Apple, 2018) delivered to young American learners semester after semester. What is taught and fails to teach are going to impact their understanding, assumption, and treatment of inequalities in reference to race, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language, culture, ability, and the like. To be specific, this study again confirmed that racial, cultural, gender, and sexual orientation minorities are misrepresented, underrepresented, and/or excluded in the official knowledge base of the curriculum, textbooks, and other instructional tools. Thereby, adding and including representative narratives and revising current master narratives seem to be a rational suggestion (e.g., Banks, 2003; King, 2003). Besides, some in-service teachers appear to endorse and spread misinformation, adopt misguided pedagogies. Leaving this matter unattended enlarges the risk of reproducing citizens with questionable values and inequitable perspectives. Professional development events, targeting accurate narratives, equitable viewpoints, and proper teaching strategies, could be a beneficial offer to in-service educators. Meanwhile, it would be helpful to provide training to participate in

critical inquiry around the part race, gender, sexuality, and culture have acted, and continue to act, in constructing inequities in education and society.

Teacher Education Programs

Third, to promote critical democracy, teacher “educators must regularly exercise judgments about justice simply in the normal content of teaching and learning” (Levinson, 2015, p. 210). At the micro daily level of teaching, teacher education could try to add content related to social justice, root causes of injustice, lived realities of marginalized communities. Teaching controversies is a challenge-laden territory, teacher educators need to take the lead and teach pre-service teachers to manage the obstacles and risks. Theoretical knowledge from the courses in an education program must be married to pragmatic opportunities in the teaching field such as during practicum. The Covid-19 pandemic poses additional threats to teaching, so up-to-date approaches are in urgent need to help pre-service teachers turn challenges into opportunities. Offering both content and pedagogical tools for teaching controversies will benefit pre-service teachers, conducting reflective discussions about these tools (Parker & Hess, 2001), modeling the use of these tools (Ritter, 2012), and crafting occasions to enact them (Lampert, 2010) are crucial for preparation to controversies teaching. For instance, a good practice could be creating more opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage with issues of social justice, race, gender, and sexuality (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). One feasible beginning point may be guiding students to compose individual narratives and train them to self-critique to inspect how their backgrounds might impact their own instructional practices and choices. Learners can be granted more autonomy in selecting topics or issues for deliberation.

In addition, to address a controversial issue in a teacher education class, teacher educators should get to know their students and their lived experiences, so that they can possibly determine their motivations and interests (Asimeng-Boahene, 2007). Next, a safe, supportive, and open classroom space must be set up, where learners are inspired to articulate their feelings and be receptive to ideological (political, religious, or cultural) differences (Cotton 2006; Harwood and Hahn 1990). Naturally, a rationale for including controversial issues

should always be explained by the teacher. At the same time, teacher should present various ways of interpretation, coupled with arguments by which they are supported (Barton & McCully 2007). For purpose of stimulating students' interest, teachers should not only capture the emotions aroused by controversies, but also safeguard rational means to addressing conflicts that might occur. Ensuring sufficient and diverse sources of information is a necessary when teaching controversial issues (Barton & Mccully, 2007). Prospective teachers often lack pedagogical skills in controversial issues teaching and do not have a solid toolbox of practices. Therefore, teacher educators should develop various activities centered around socially, emotionally, and culturally meaningful issues that deeply interest students (Asimeng-Boahene, 2007; Harwood & Hahn 1990). Teachers can also consider encouraging inquiry-based, collaborative work, in which pre-service teachers can investigate with others to be exposed to diverse views and develop the most rational arguments, (Jacobs 2010). Practices can stress teaching learners to explore and scrutinize the evidence and reasons behind controversies in order for critical analysis of personal evidence and reasoning (Barton & Mccully 2007; Gonzalez-Monfor, 2011).

Future Research

Effective deliberation requires an open, safe, and supportive classroom climate (Journell, 2016; Pace, 2019), so what instructional practices can contribute to such a climate in social studies classrooms? Being critically conscious helps pre-service teachers shape their future students' equitable epistemologies and consciousness, nurturing "strong notions of civic participation, citizenship, and democracy" (Au, 2012, p. 92), so future research could examine how teacher educators can create particular opportunities for critical consciousness development? What instructional practices are helpful to promote individual critical consciousness? The integration of controversial issues begs the task of determining what controversies are. The vocabulary 'controversy' inevitably is entitled to patulous interpretations, sometimes contradictions. Districts, school leaders, teachers, and students may deem something controversial even when researchers do not. That

said, should we attempt to reach a unified criterion for defining controversial issues? During deliberations of controversies, should uncivil or belligerent perspectives be equally heard? Whether or not should a teacher disclose personal political views? To what extent? How do teachers' political views affect those of students? Vital to critical education for democracy, deliberation demands down-to-earth instruction and practice; otherwise, it will remain a cute goal. "Our education must help make the change towards what is true, accurate, and honorable. We can't afford mis-history for another generation" (A study participant, 2021). Furthermore, cultivating citizens competent in fostering social justice and equity locally and globally is a task that cannot be delayed any longer.

Chapter Summary

This study has conducted a productive attempt at expanding the body of research on discussing social and public issues among pre-service teachers. I also traced the relationship between controversial issues discussions and one's civic ideology in education; I found no previous scholarship in this area during the literature review. The findings led to suggestions to policymakers, standards designers, and teacher education programs in social studies. I pointed to critical directions for future research.

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Appendix A
Round One Interview Questions

1. What is your age?
2. How would you identify your gender or sexual orientation?
3. What is your race?
4. What year you are in the education program?
5. How did you like social studies when you were in elementary school?
6. How important is the subject to you?
7. What are some examples of issues that you classify as controversial?
8. How do you define controversy in a social studies classroom? Examples?
9. What controversial issues should be taught to elementary/secondary students in the social studies context?
10. Would you bring these issues into your teaching? Why or why not?
 - a. Why is it important to you to teach about controversial issues?
 - b. Do you have life experiences that influence your beliefs about global issues?
11. What life experiences influence your beliefs about controversial issues?
12. What challenges do pre-service teachers experience in teaching controversy in social studies?
13. How do you define your civic ideology as a pre-service teacher? (Will use this article: Knowles, R. T. (2018). Teaching Who You Are: Connecting Teachers' Civic Education Ideology to Instructional Strategies. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 46(1), 68–109.)
14. How does your civic ideology change before and after discussion and deliberation of controversial issues?
15. How might deliberating controversial issues affect your ability to understand multiple perspectives?
16. How might deliberating controversial issues affect your ability to understand social justice?
17. How does deliberating controversial issues relate to education for democracy?

18. How would you describe your level of preparedness to teaching controversial issues? (1 = Not at all, 2 = Poorly prepared, 3=Somewhat prepared, 4 = Prepared, 5=Well prepared). How do you explain your rating?
19. If applicable, what could be some ways that your teacher education program/social studies methods course help you better prepare?
20. What are the best instructional approaches to teaching controversial issues? Explain.
21. How would you teach these issues in your future class?

Appendix B
Round Two Interview Questions

1. Have you encountered any controversial issues during practicum/clinical? How were they discussed or handled?
2. Have you experienced or heard of any challenges regarding teaching controversial issues in social studies since the last interview?
3. Since the last interview, have your beliefs about controversial issues changed in any way? Any new experiences that have influenced your beliefs?
4. Now, would you bring controversial issues into your teaching? Why or why not?
5. How would you describe your level of preparedness for teaching controversial issues? (1 = Not at all, 2 = Poorly prepared, 3=Somewhat prepared, 4 = Prepared, 5=Well prepared). How do you explain your rating?
6. What are the best instructional approaches to teaching controversial issues? Explain.
7. How would you teach these issues in your future class? If applicable, how do they change from the first interview?
8. Do you have any suggestions for your teacher education program to help better prepare pre-service teachers in teaching about controversial issues?
9. How do you define your civic ideology in education as a pre-service teacher? (Conservative, liberal, and critical)
10. How does your civic ideology change before and after discussion and deliberation of controversial issues?
11. How might deliberating controversial issues affect your critical thinking ability?
12. How might deliberating controversial issues help you reflect on yourself, including your biases?
13. How might deliberating controversial issues impact your teaching or understanding of teaching (e.g., possibly help you reflect on, adjust it in any way)?
14. Do you agree that there is misrepresentation, marginalization, or exclusion in social studies instructional materials, curriculum, and ways of teaching?

- a. If so, any examples?
- b. If so, how do you think controversial issues teaching might contribute to addressing this problem?

15. How might deliberating controversial issues affect your ability to question or challenge the master narrative, unequal power relations, and social relations with regards to race, gender, sexuality, ability, socioeconomic status, religion, etc.?

Appendix C
Reflection Prompts

The three self-reflections that were collected for the research study occurred in weeks 3, 6, and 8.

1. A Different Mirror book club

Twice during the semester, you will meet with a small group to discuss the book *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*. During the book club conversation, you should address the following topics:

- What is the central narrative of this book?
- How is this narrative similar or different from what you learned in school?
- What aspects of this book could you implement in your teaching?

After completing the book club weeks, you should individually compose a reflection based on the conversation.

This should be roughly a page (solid paragraph or so per point) per topic and submitted on canvas.

Week 3: What are social studies standards and how do I use them?

Readings: Utah State Core Standards, Teaching Tolerance Standards, C3 Framework,

Podcast: Episode 10: C3 Framework for Social Studies with Kathy Swan

<https://visionsofed.com/2016/05/18/episode-10-c3-frameworks-for-social-studies-with-kathy-swan/>

Assignments: Book Club: A Different Mirror – Chapters 1-8

Week 6: Engaging Students as Citizens, Teaching with and for discussion

Readings: Christine Rogers Stanton “Now You Can’t Just Do Nothing’: Unsettling the Settler Self within Social Studies Education.”, Westheimer and Kahne, “What makes a citizen?”

Podcast: Episode 134: Unsettling the Settler Self in Social Studies Education with Christine Rogers Stanton

<https://visionsofed.com/2020/01/27/episode-134-unsettling-the-settler-self-in-social-studies-education-with-christine-rogers-stanton/>

Podcast: Leilani Sabzalian, An Anticolonial Approach to Civic Education

<https://visionsofed.com/2019/11/04/episode-128-an-anticolonial-approach-to-civic-education-with-leilani-sabzalian/>

Assignments: Based on the readings, reflect upon,

- What is your conception of a good citizen?
- How are citizenship and discussion connected?

This should be roughly a page (solid paragraph or so per point) per topic and submitted on canvas.

Week 8: Integration/Activity Ideas!

Readings: Olbrys, “The Deliberative Classroom”, Thacker, “Reading, Analyzing, & Creating informational graphics in the elementary classroom”

Podcast: Episode 84: Inquiry in Elementary Education with Emma Thacker, Erin Casey, Katie Knapp, & Carly Muetterties

<https://visionsofed.com/2018/06/29/episode-84-inquiry-in-elementary-education/>

Assignments: A Different Mirror Chapters 9-17

Appendix D
IRB Approval



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 Protocol # 12063
 IRB Approval Date: August 4, 2021
 Consent Document Expires: December 10, 2021

Critical Democratic Education: A Case Study on Controversy Deliberation and Its Effects Among Pre-service Elementary Teachers ^{v.9}

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Steven, P. Camicia, a professor, Shouqing Si, a student researcher, in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership at Utah State University. The purpose of this research is to learn more about how preservice teachers discuss social issues and how that relates to their views on civics and social justice. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

This form includes detailed information on the research to help you decide whether to participate. Please read it carefully and ask any questions you have before you agree to participate.

Procedures

Your participation will involve interviews. You will participate in two 30-60 minute interviews in week eight and week 15 via Zoom. Three of your weekly reflections, normal class activities, on social studies education topics regarding controversial issues will be collected via email as primary data too. The student researcher will observe for a class period in your classroom four times. We anticipate that 15 people will participate in this research study at USU.

Risks

This is a minimal risk research study. That means that the risks of participating are no more likely or serious than those you encounter in everyday activities.

Benefits

Although you will not directly benefit from this study, it has been designed to learn more about how pre-service elementary teachers experience and get influenced by discussing social and public issues. This study is expected to expand the body of research on discussing social and public issues in pre-service, elementary social studies methods courses.

COVID-19 Disclosures

Risks associated with contracting COVID-19 cannot be eliminated. Please carefully consider whether you are comfortable participating in person, particularly if you or someone in your home is at higher risk of serious illness [<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>] from COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccination is strongly encouraged, but not required, for Utah State University employees and students. This means that we cannot guarantee that the people you interact with in this research project are vaccinated. Masking or using other face coverings is strongly encouraged, but not required, for Utah State University employees and students. This means that we cannot guarantee that the people you interact with in this research project will wear a face covering. Researchers and fellow participants are not required to share vaccination information with you or to wear a facial covering, unless this research is not on USU's campus and the site where it will occur does require face coverings or vaccines. Research participation is always completely

voluntary, and you can decline or stop participating at any time. Below, you will be permitted to request certain safety accommodations from the research team, but please know that they are not required to comply.

The researchers in this project are taking the following steps to ensure your safety and comfort during the in-person portions of this research project:

- The research team has been fully vaccinated.

Confidentiality

The researchers will make every effort to ensure that the information you provide as part of this study remains confidential. Your identity will not be revealed in any publications, presentations, or reports resulting from this research study.

We will collect your information through audio recordings during interviews. You will email your written reflections to the student researcher. Qualtrics will be used to collect the informed consent online. Online activities always carry a risk of a data breach, but we will use systems and processes that minimize breach opportunities. Your written reflections will be securely stored in a restricted-access folder on USUBox.com, an encrypted, cloud-based storage system. Audio recordings will be stored in a locked drawer in a restricted-access office. They will then be deidentified and transcribed, which will be securely stored in the same restricted-access folder on USUBox.com. After transcription, the primary audio recordings will be destroyed. This form will be kept for three years after the study is complete, and then it will be destroyed.

It is unlikely, but possible, that others (Utah State University or state or federal officials) may require us to share the information you give us from the study to ensure that the research was conducted safely and appropriately. We will only share your information if law or policy requires us to do so. If the researchers learn that you are going to engage in self harm or intend to harm another, state law requires that the researchers report this intention to the authorities.

Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate now and change your mind later, you may withdraw at any time by emailing the Primary Investigator. If you choose to withdraw after we have already collected information about you, I will continue to analyze the information with a pseudonym. If you decide not to participate, the services you receive from the social studies methods course will not be affected in any way. The researchers may choose to terminate your participation in this research study if you experience severe health conditions or miss one of the two interviews. You will be notified via email with specific explanation.

Compensation

Upon completion of your participation in this research study, you will receive a \$40 Amazon e-gift card. Compensation will not occur if participation is incomplete, either due to your withdrawal or my termination of your participation. Compensation will not occur in increments.

Findings

Once the research study is complete, the researchers will email you the findings of the study, including aggregate results relating to your participation.

IRB Review

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human research participants at Utah State University has reviewed and approved this study. If you have questions about the research study itself, please contact the Principal Investigator at (801)518-3193 or steven.camiglia@usu.edu. If you have questions about

your rights or would simply like to speak with someone other than the research team about questions or concerns, please contact the IRB Director at (435) 797-0567 or irb@usu.edu.

Steven Camicia
Principal Investigator
(801)518-3193; steven.camicia@usu.edu.
Shouqing Si
Student Investigator
(903)513-4295; shouqing.si@aggiemail.usu.edu.

Informed Consent

By signing below, you agree to participate in this study. You indicate that you understand the risks and benefits of participation, and that you know what you will be asked to do. You also agree that you have asked any questions you might have, and you are clear on how to stop your participation in the study if you choose to do so. Please be sure to retain a copy of this form for your records.

Participant's Signature

Participant's Name, Printed

Date

I do not agree to allow my de-identified information/biospecimens to be used or shared for future research.

COVID-19 Safety Requests

Please note that the research team is not required to comply with these requests, but many researchers are happy to oblige where possible. The research team will inform you if they are unable to commit to any of your selections. You may decline to participate or withdraw your participation at any time.

I would like the researchers I interact with to be fully vaccinated (two weeks after their last dose of the vaccine)

I would like the researchers I interact with to use a facial covering

I would like the researchers I interact with to use a facial covering only if they are not fully vaccinated

I would like the researchers I interact with to take additional safety measures related to COVID-19:

Appendix E
Informed Consent Form

Critical Democratic Education: A Case Study on Controversy Deliberation and Its Effects Among Pre-service Elementary Teachers

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Steven, P. Camicia, a professor, Shouqing Si, a student researcher, in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership at Utah State University. The purpose of this research is to learn more about how preservice teachers discuss social issues and how that relates to their views on civics and social justice. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

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Procedures

Your participation will involve interviews. You will participate in two 30-60 minute interviews in week eight and week 15 via Zoom. Three of your weekly reflections, normal class activities, on social studies education topics regarding controversial issues will be collected as primary data too. The student researcher will observe for a class period in your classroom four times. We anticipate that 15 people will participate in this research study at USU.

Risks

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COVID-19 Disclosures

Risks associated with contracting COVID-19 cannot be eliminated. Please carefully consider whether you are comfortable participating in person, particularly if you or someone in your home is at higher risk of serious illness [if your informed consent process is in person, please include the text of the link:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>] from COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccination is strongly encouraged, but not required, for Utah State University employees and students. This means that we cannot guarantee that the people you interact with in this research project are vaccinated. Masking or using other face coverings is strongly encouraged, but not required, for Utah State University employees and students. This means that we cannot guarantee that the people you interact with in this research project will wear a face covering. Researchers and fellow participants are not required to share vaccination information with you or to wear a facial covering, unless this research is not on USU's campus and the site where it will occur does require face coverings or vaccines. Research participation is always completely voluntary, and you can decline or stop participating at any time. Below, you will be permitted to request certain safety accommodations from the research team, but please know that they are not required to comply.

The researchers in this project are taking the following steps to ensure your safety and comfort during the in-person portions of this research project:

- The research team has been fully vaccinated.

Confidentiality

The researchers will make every effort to ensure that the information you provide as part of this study remains confidential. Your identity will not be revealed in any publications, presentations, or reports resulting from this research study.

We will collect your information through audio recordings during interviews. You will email your written reflections to the student researcher. Qualtrics will be used to collect the informed consent online. Online activities always carry a risk of a data breach, but we will use systems and processes that minimize breach opportunities. Your written reflections will be securely stored in a restricted-access folder on USUBox.com, an encrypted, cloud-based storage system. Audio recordings will be stored in a locked drawer in a restricted-access office. They will then be deidentified and transcribed, which will be securely stored in the same restricted-access folder on USUBox.com. After transcription, the primary audio recordings will be destroyed. This form will be kept for three years after the study is complete, and then it will be destroyed.

It is unlikely, but possible, that others (Utah State University or state or federal officials) may require us to share the information you give us from the study to ensure that the research was conducted safely and appropriately. We will only share your information if law or policy requires us to do so. If the researchers learn that you are going to engage in self harm or intend to harm another, state law requires that the researchers report this intention to the authorities.

Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate now and change your mind later, you may withdraw at any time by emailing the Primary Investigator. If you choose to withdraw after we have already collected information about you, I will continue to analyze the information with a pseudonym. If you decide not to participate, the services you receive from the social studies methods course will not be affected in any way. The researchers may choose to terminate your participation in this research study if you experience severe health conditions or miss one of the two interviews. You will be notified via email with specific explanation.

Compensation

Upon completion of your participation in this research study, you will receive a \$40 Amazon e-gift card. Compensation will not occur if participation is incomplete, either due to your withdrawal or my termination of your participation. Compensation will not occur in increments.

Findings

Once the research study is complete, the researchers will email you the findings of the study, including aggregate results relating to your participation.

IRB Review

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human research participants at Utah State University has reviewed and approved this study. If you have questions about the research study itself, please contact the Principal Investigator at (801)518-3193 or steven.camicia@usu.edu. If you have questions about your rights or would simply like to speak with someone other than the research team about questions or concerns, please contact the IRB Director at (435) 797-0567 or irb@usu.edu.

Steven Camicia

Principal Investigator
(801)518-3193; steven.camicia@usu.edu.

Shouqing Si
Student Investigator
(903)513-4295; shouqing.si@aggiemail.usu.edu.

Informed Consent

By signing below, you agree to participate in this study. You indicate that you understand the risks and benefits of participation, and that you know what you will be asked to do. You also agree that you have asked any questions you might have, and you are clear on how to stop your participation in the study if you choose to do so. Please be sure to retain a copy of this form for your records.

Participant's Signature	Participant's Name, Printed	Date
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I do not agree to allow my de-identified information/biospecimens to be used or shared for future research.

COVID-19 Safety Requests

Please note that the research team is not required to comply with these requests, but many researchers are happy to oblige where possible. The research team will inform you if they are unable to commit to any of your selections. You may decline to participate or withdraw your participation at any time.

I would like the researchers I interact with to be fully vaccinated (two weeks after their last dose of the vaccine)

I would like the researchers I interact with to use a facial covering

I would like the researchers I interact with to use a facial covering only if they are not fully vaccinated

I would like the researchers I interact with to take additional safety measures related to COVID-19:

Appendix F
Curriculum Vieta

Utah State University
 School of Teacher Education and Leadership
 2805 Old Main Hill
 Logan, Utah 84322-2805
 (903) 513-4295
a02289328@usu.edu

EDUCATION:

Degrees:

Ph.D.	2018-Present	Utah State University - Logan, UT Curriculum and Instruction, the Cultural Studies Concentration
M.S.	2016	East Texas Baptist University - Marshall, TX Curriculum and Instruction
B.S.	2015	Lanzhou University of Technology - Lanzhou, China English
	2014	Exchange Student at East Texas Baptist University

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Fall 2021-Present	Assistant Editor <i>The International Journal of Multicultural Education</i>
Fall 2019 – Present	SCED 5100 Instructor (<i>taught in in-person, hybrid, and online modes</i>) <i>Utah State University - Logan, UT</i>
Fall 2018 – Spring 2019	University Supervisor of Student Teachers <i>Utah State University - Logan, UT</i>
Fall 2017 – Spring 2018	College English Instructor <i>Lanzhou University of Technology - Lanzhou, China</i>
Fall 2016-Spring 2017	Social Studies Teacher, 5th and Mandarin Teacher, 5-10th <i>Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy, Mesquite and Greenville, TX</i>
Fall 2015 – Spring 2016	Social Studies Teacher, 5th <i>Robert E. Lee Elementary School - Marshall, TX</i>
Fall 2014—Spring 2015	English Substitute Teacher, 6-8th <i>Lanzhou No.1 Middle School – Lanzhou, China</i>

SCHOLARSHIPS:

Si, S. (2022). *Culturally responsive practices foster cultural responsiveness of preservice teacher: A literature review* [Manuscript submitted for publication].

Camicia, S. P., & **Si, S.** (2021). Critical education for democracy under discourses of authoritarianism and nationalism. *Citizenship Teaching and Learning*, 16(3)381-395. <https://doi.org/10.1386/ctl.00072.1>

Oberg De La Garza, T., Lavigne, A. L., & **Si, S.** (2020). Culturally responsive teaching through the lens of dual language education: Intersections and opportunities. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(4):1557-1571. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.080450>

Ford, T., Lavigne, A. L., Gilbert, A., & **Si, S.** (2020). Understanding district support for leader development and success in the accountability era: A review of literature using theories of motivation. *Review of Educational Research*. 90(2), 264-307. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319899723>

Kozlowski J. S., & **Si, S.** (2019). Mathematical creativity: A vehicle to foster equity. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2019.100579>

PRESENTATIONS:

Si, S. Asian American representations in state social studies standards and critical democracy: A content analysis. The Annual Conference of American Educational Studies Association (AESA). Portland, OR. November, 2021.

Camicia, S., & **Si, S.** State social studies standards and social movements: A content analysis. The Annual Conference of American Educational Studies Association (AESA). Portland, OR. November, 2021.

Si, S. Asian American representations in 50 states' social studies standards: Inclusion or exclusion. USU Student Research Symposium. Logan, UT. April, 2021. Online Symposium due to Coronavirus.

Marx, S., Braden, S., Hawkman, A., Lavigne, Jones, I., A., Andersen, J., Gailey, S., Geddes, G., **Si, S.**, & Washburn, K. Examining why teachers of color leave the teaching profession. The Annual Conference of American Educational Research Association (AERA): New York. April, 2020. Online Symposium due to Coronavirus.

Hawkman, A., Marx, S., Braden, S., Lavigne, A., Andersen, J., Gailey, S., Geddes, G., Jones, I., **Si, S.**, & Washburn, K. Race reflections in qualitative research: Positionality and race/ism in a collaborative research group. The Annual Conference of American Educational Research Association (AERA): New York. April, 2020. Online Symposium due to Coronavirus.

Si, S. Exploring pre-service teachers' understanding of culturally responsive teaching. USU Student Research Symposium (SRS). Logan, UT. April, 2020.

Si, S. Exploring pre-service teachers' understanding of linguistically responsive teaching. USU Student Research Symposium (SRS). Logan, UT. April, 2020.

Washburn, K., Braden, S., Marx, S., Hawkman, A., Lavigne, A., Andersen, J., Gailey, S., Geddes, G., Jones, I. & **Si, S.** "Examining why teachers of color leave the teaching professions." Workshop conducted at the annual meeting of the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME), Tucson, AZ. November, 2019.

Marx, S., Braden, S., Hawkman, A., Lavigne, A., Andersen, J., Gailey, S., Geddes, G., Jones, I., **Si, S.**, & Washburn, K. Why teachers of color leave the teaching profession: An exploration through journey maps. 15th Annual International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (ICQI). Urbana-Champaign, IL. May, 2019.

Si, S., Geddes, G., Andersen, J., Gailey, S., Jones, I., & Washburn, K. (students). Marx, S., Braden, S., Hawkman, A., & Lavigne, A. (faculty mentors). Exploring why teachers of color leave the profession. USU Student Research Symposium (SRS). Logan, UT. April 2019.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS:

- International College Instructor Workshop, Utah State University, Logan, UT. August 17-21, 2020.
- CSOTTE Annual Conference. Corpus Christi, Texas. October 22-24, 2017.
- **TECH 1215** Integrating Technology into Project Based Learning, K-12th. Nacogdoches, TX. September 23-24, 2017.
- **SAEL 1003** Engaging with Families and Communities to Support Social-Emotional Learning (ESL Session), Preschool-8th. Dallas, TX. September 9-11, 2016.
- Differentiation in the Classroom: Instructional Strategies for Content, Culture, and Student Needs, 6-12th. University of North Texas, Dallas, TX. August 19-21, 2016.
- UT Dana Center Continuous Improvement Training, sponsored by University of Texas at Austin. Houston, TX, April 16-17, 2016.
- Strategies to Support Multilingual Learners (ELL/EL) in a Culturally Responsive Way, sponsored by University of Texas at Tyler. Tyler, TX. September 25-27, 2015.

SERVICES:

- Moderator for Anti-racist Fellowship in Education Event, “Deprogramming Whiteness to Advance Liberation: A Critical Examination of the ‘Self’ in Social Justice Endeavors” by Dr. Terrell Morton. Utah State University, Logan, UT. April, 2021.
- Doctoral Evaluator of Undergraduate Research Presentations, Utah State University, Logan, UT. 2019, 2021.
- Chinese Culture Ambassador and Chinese Calligrapher Instructor of the Texas Multicultural Festival, Dallas, TX. March, 2017.

HONORS & AWARDS

- Graduate Student Research Award—Dissertation, School of Teacher Education and leadership and School of Graduate Studies, Utah State University, Logan, UT. 2021.
- Graduate Student Travel Award, School of Teacher Education and leadership and School of Graduate Studies, Utah State University, Logan, UT. 2020, 2021.
- Teacher of the Year, Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy, Greenville, TX. 2017.
- Outstanding Graduate Student, Lanzhou, China, 2015
- National “FLTRP CUP” English Writing Certificate, Beijing, China. 2014.
- National “FLTRP CUP” English Writing Certificate, Beijing, China. 2013.
- National Scholarship - Lanzhou, China. 2012.