Considerations of Identity in Teachers' Attitudes toward Teaching Controversial Issues under Conditions of Globalization: A Critical Democratic Perspective from Canada

by

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Abstract

Controversy, as a vital principle of democracy, plays a central role in education for critical democratic global citizenship. Controversial issues, however, raise pedagogical challenges for teachers in that they are not only explicitly political, but also potentially threatening to the reproduction of status quo ideals and embedded national narratives – themselves keystones of citizenship education. The findings from this dissertation study report survey data on teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues from 202 Canadian teachers, as well as findings from interviews conducted with 16 Alberta teachers about how their multiple identities, and those of their students, intersect with their attitudes toward teaching controversial issues. The findings are discussed against indicators of critical democratic global citizenship education (CDGCE) which I advance in the thesis following from my investigation into the relationship between critical theory of a) democracy, b) globalization, and c) education. I engage the findings through the lens of critique and possibility and the reproduction and interruption of hegemonic discourse. Read through this lens, I found that hegemonic discourses of neutrality and universalism are being both reproduced and interrupted in complex ways that do affirm, but mostly refute, the promise of education for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization. Discourses of neutrality and universalism are being reproduced through insidious practices that affirm difference-blind and blank slate ideals and these need responding to. These have implications for how students in Canadian classrooms may be being prepared for critical democratic global citizenship education. Despite the misguided emphasis on the danger of teachers’ expressing extreme views in dominant discourses of education that question the place of controversial issues in school, I argue that the greater threat to deepening democracy is not teachers who express extreme views; it is curriculum and teachers who do not question familiar ones. In turn, I call for critical discursive and reflexive practices for teaching and learning with controversial issues that foreground identity, difference, and feelings as explicit material for learning. Finally, I delineate specific recommendations that are crucial responses for realizing the promise of education for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Anecdote

In the first year of my doctoral studies in the spring of 2007 I traveled to Chicago, Illinois for the American Educational Research Association conference where I attended a presentation by two professors and a handful of young students from Oakland, California. The topic of the presentation was on critical pedagogy and the civic agency of urban youth, and the tone of the presentation was strikingly different from anything I had previously experienced at academic conferences. The presenters began by expressing their anger with the levels of structural and youth violence they observed happening in their communities, the disconnections they perceived across youth and adult community members, with adults’ discernments of youth as passive and disruptive subjects rather than as contributing agents of change, and they were outraged with the role and function of the public education system in perpetuating these trends and narratives. The extent of their anger was so viscerally apparent to me because it disrupted my notions of social and professional norms of conduct; it felt as though they had walked into the room, picked us up, and began shaking us and pleading for us to snap out of what they implied to be an elitist slumber characterized by theorizing, more so than practicing, critical pedagogy.

I, and many others in the room, became visibly uncomfortable. I shifted in my seat, my eyes unable to look up from the floor. Some people left, as the decibel level of the presenters’ voices increasingly accelerated. Others listened attentively – excited by the shift in energy they were experiencing which was so distinct from earlier sessions of the day. In this moment, I simultaneously felt implicated, unsettled, and inspired. The room felt alive because the critical issues these scholars were raising, although not entirely distinct from other conference paper themes, were resuscitated through the tone of their voices, through the expression of emotion, through the uncomfortable statistics they shared, through the difficult questions they raised, and through the fearlessness in their eyes as they posed these difficult questions to their audience members and named us all as complicit in why these questions needed to be asked and thoughtfully provoked. Through this experience, not only the energy in the room, but also the practice of education, was swiftly re-invigorated for me.
Most significantly, these two critical pedagogues moved beyond theorizing about the critical importance of cultivating youth voice and agency as a means of responding to these issues, and instead told us about how they created opportunities for high-school aged students to conduct empirical research in their communities on adult impressions of youth and their roles in society, analyzed through a theoretical lens framed by themes of hegemony, power, knowledge, and civic engagement. Moreover, rather than speaking for the students, half a dozen of these students were present at the conference and shared their findings with us themselves, offering lucid and provocative analysis. This session was my first experience affectively appreciating the difference between talking about the importance of discussing difficult issues with children and youth that implicate their identities and experiences, and having a discussion with them about issues that raise controversial and challenging perspectives that are difficult, uncomfortable, and that render issues of violence, oppression, and structural inequality visceral and real. It was also an experience whereby I came to appreciate the complex multidirectional and bumpy terrain of the relationship between theory and practice, and better understand the implications for agency, power, and re-storying within this relationship.

That these academics chose AERA as the space to have this conversation was unquestionably intentional as they critically interrogated the power inherent in ways of knowing and in social-political relations, as they challenged any notion that there could exist more and less legitimate spaces for doing politics, and as they challenged traditional conceptions of what adults think children and youth can know and do in relation to both learning and teaching about issues related to citizenship, equity, culture, power, hegemony and difference. They worked with students to devise discursive and analytical tools and frameworks for engaging their communities about questions related to their socio-cultural identities and the future of their communities – as well as their own roles in envisioning and shaping change. They were not afraid to ask difficult questions or avoid tensions. Instead, they were interested in harnessing what it was that made the conversation a difficult one, and took advantage of that difficulty as an opportunity to learn: for their students, themselves, and each of us in the session. Indeed, while challenging and controversial questions can be uncomfortable, they create opportunities for transformative learning guided by democratic principles because they open spaces for critically engaging with diverse perspectives and difference, and with deeply held beliefs, feelings, values, and assumptions. They create opportunities for naming enduring legacies of hate, discrimination,
subordination, and violence, and for identifying underlying values, premises, structures, and institutions that reproduce these.

This anecdote raises many themes pertinent to this dissertation, and I have included it here for its significance as a critical moment that informed and provoked my own reflexive practice and the direction of my doctoral dissertation work. The presentation inspired much of my early thinking in the area of teaching and learning with controversial issues. It enabled me to more thoughtfully contemplate the difference between theorizing about controversial issues discussion in education versus the powerful outcomes (learning and civic) that are possible from providing opportunities for students to deeply engage contentious issues from the vantage points of their own identities and experiences. Such outcomes, it seems, can include not only students’ demonstrable preparedness for democratic citizenship, but also their demonstrable practices for critical democratic citizenship – practices which have the potential for effecting real-world contexts today (not only when students become adults) and for actively contributing to re-storying the contexts of tomorrow.

1.1 Context of the Research Problem

Controversy, as a vital principle of democracy, has a central role to play in educating youth for democratic citizenship. Classrooms that encourage students to openly discuss controversial public issues tend to foster positive attitudes toward participation in civic life (Blankenship, 1990; Ehman, 1969; Hahn, 1998; Niemi and Hepburn, 1995; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, and Schultz, 2001), which in turn predict adult civic participation (Damico, Conway, & Damico, 2000; Davies, 2005; Kerr, Cleaver, Ireland, and Blenkenso, 2003). Controversy, however, because it implies the existence of alternative perspectives on established stories (contra, meaning against, combined with verse, as in text), raises critical pedagogical challenges for teachers in that it invokes critique, contestation, and the recognition of diversity in relation to difficult and emergent issues for which there is no single and/or all-encompassing curricular script. Indeed, controversy and controversial issues are not only explicitly and recognizably political, but also potentially threatening to the reproduction of status quo ideals and embedded national narratives – themselves keystones of citizenship education.

Today, as learning to live together in contexts of diversity takes on new meaning, in response to and as a result of intensified and asymmetrical relations under conditions of globalization, these challenges are amplified: the notion of citizenship is more contested now
than ever before as controversial public issues are increasingly more global in their reach and scope, and political identities and responsibilities are reconfigured in turn – resulting in timely discourse on what it means to be a global citizen. Many public issues, furthermore, are controversial by the very fact that they invoke conflict of interests between national economic and/or military interests and global environmental and/or security interests, posing additional challenges for teachers as they attempt to negotiate these often competing curricular priorities.

1.2 Research Problem

Pivotal barriers to teaching controversial issues include teachers’ frequent fear of controversy, including fear of managing conflict in classrooms, sensitivity toward the multicultural populations of their classrooms, fear of reprisals from administration or parents, fear of losing control and facing embarrassment and loss of status among colleagues, fear of the emotional nature of the issues being discussed, concerns over the psychological safety of students, uncertainty about the appropriateness of expressing personal views, fear of being accused of bias and/or indoctrination, feelings of frustration that there is not enough time to address controversial issues comprehensively amidst a cramped curriculum, and feelings of a lack of confidence in teachers’ own knowledge of issues (Davies, Yamashita & Harber, 2004; Hess, 2004; Hicks and Holden, 2007; Werner, 1998). A further barrier is that public school classrooms, because they are public spaces, are popularly regarded as inappropriate spaces for having opinions that challenge established stories (contra-verse). Paradoxically, public education is at the same time regarded as a critical mechanism for strengthening democracy (thus serving a political function), and for instilling values inherent to citizenship, because of its public nature.

Despite the inclusion of curricular opportunities to teach controversial issues in Canada (Bickmore, 2006; Evans, Ingram, MacDonald, Weber, 2009; Schweisfurth, 2006), research has found that in practice citizenship education in Canadian classrooms has generally involved teaching and learning about politics and democracy in a passive fashion, rather than actively engaging with current and complex public issues (Hodgetts, 1968; Osborne, 1997; Sears & Hughes, 1996; Torney-Purta, Schwille, Amadeo, 1999). In part, this civic passivity is influenced by the predominance in Canadian identity discourse of a moral philosophical tradition that prioritizes social harmony (Kymlicka, 2003; Lee and Hebert, 2006), often at the expense of dissent or conflict-acknowledging discourse. It is also likely influenced by the alignment of Canadian national identity with a political and military tradition that positions Canadians as
neutral peacekeepers in relation to international conflict (Francis, 1997; Sugars, 1999) and as “impartial referees on the global stage” (Justin Trudeau in *The Toronto Star*, October 18, 2007).

Canadian curriculum policy documents, nevertheless, do increasingly recognize that students’ civic identities, and in turn their civic responsibilities, are diverse and multiple (simultaneously local, national, and global). They also increasingly include expectations that students be provided with opportunities to learn about and engage global issues as a means of preparing them to enact their global civic responsibilities (Evans et al., 2009; Mundy, Manion, Masemann, Haggerty, 2007). However, in the context of the existing research on the predominantly transmission-oriented (Miller, 2000) nature of Canadian civic education, and in the context of varied and contested interpretations of meanings and implications of globalization, the question of how these global oriented expectations of democratic citizenship are being enacted and experienced as lived curriculum (Marsh and Willis, 2003) in Canadian public school classrooms should not be taken for granted.

In 1968, A.B. Hodgetts produced a comprehensive report on the status of civic education for national understanding in Canada, in which he shared his findings from over 900 observations in elementary and secondary school classrooms across ten provinces. He reported having observed “an almost total absence of any conflicting or controversial material” (p. 24), “three-quarters of all classes using the lecture format and assignment methods” (p. 45-46), and “discussion periods which roamed at will, virtually undirected” (p. 50). Since Hodgetts’ report, no follow-up empirical research on a national scale has been conducted to assess the degree to which a) controversial perspectives, b) the in-depth study of issues, and/or 3) opportunities for informed, co-facilitated deliberative dialogue (his overarching recommendations) are today enacted in the subject-matter content and pedagogy of contemporary civic education in Canada. Now, 40 years later, not only is this empirical undertaking valuable for understanding what teaching and learning national identity and democratic civic engagement look like in Canadian public school classrooms, but also for understanding and critically engaging the range of possibilities for what teaching and learning for global civic identity and global democratic civic engagement can look like. This range includes critical global citizenship education, for example, which argues for explicit attention to rethinking embedded assumptions about self and Other, which is distinguished from softer approaches (Andreotti, 2006) that have potential to re-inscribe paternalistic and inequitable geo-political relations. In the 21st century geo-political context wherein complex tensions proliferate with regard to considerations of democracy in global politics, including the associated risks of new imperialisms and neo-colonial projects, the
research problem at hand is learning about Canadian teachers’ attitudes towards teaching controversial issues that implicate their own and their students’ multiple identities, including their identities as Canadians in the world, and assessing what role conflict and contra-verse are playing in how teachers and students understand, negotiate, and enact their multiple (and sometimes conflicting) identities as Canadian and global citizens (among other identity locations). Both the contemporary geo-political context and the increasing presence of global citizenship in Canadian curriculum policy command and create space for the enactment of these opportunities. In an era of increased consciousness of individuals’ multiple identities, and by extension multiple spheres of obligation and avenues for public civic participation, these are timely issues commanding critical empirical investigation.

1.3 Research Objectives

The purpose of this doctoral research was to learn about teachers’ attitudes towards teaching controversial issues in Canadian classrooms and the range of factors that inform them, and to learn how teachers’ and students’ multiple identities figure in teachers’ attitudes by investigating a single provincial case. The broader aim was to critically assess the implications of these findings for the critical democratic global citizenship education (CDGCE) of Canadian students.

I was interested in learning (in breadth) what Canadian teachers attitudes are toward teaching controversial issues, which meant inquiring about what educators believe about teaching controversial issues, how they feel about it, and what their pedagogical dispositions are toward it. Additionally, I was interested in focusing more in-depth on what could be learned about the research focus from the specific case of Alberta as a Canadian province that recently implemented human rights legislation involving the teaching of topics related to sexuality, sexual orientation, and religion (topics that are commonly perceived to arouse controversial issues), and as a province where conflicts across citizens’ multiple identities as Albertans, Canadians, and global citizens are consistently provoked in the context of oil and gas industries and the tar sands (among other things). This study was consequently more purposefully designed to learn how a sample of Alberta teachers are teaching controversial issues that invoke potential conflicts of interests across multiple dimensions of their own and their students’ identities (cultural, gender, religious, academic/professional, political, personal, civic, provincial, national, global). I also designed it to learn to what extent these teachers regarded their multiple identities, and their
students’ multiple identities, as pedagogically relevant resources for teaching and learning with controversial issues and for global citizenship education.

A central premise underscoring my interest in this topic is my own belief that critical democratic global citizenship education (CDGCE) necessitates opportunities for teachers and students to discursively and reflexively engage with intra (within individuals) and inter (between individuals and groups) identity conflicts that are so central to rendering some topics issues and, more specifically, controversial issues. In turn, my interest in the topic of teaching controversial issues and in researching teachers’ attitudes on this topic is less concerned with identifying factors and strategies to improve students’ capacity to make decisions, problem-solve, take action, or resolve controversial issues. Instead, I am more interested in identifying possibilities and impediments that teachers experience with regard to enacting opportunities for them and their students to engage with questions and tensions about what makes issues controversial, to consider for whom some issues are deemed controversial and why, and to reflexively locate themselves (their identities and experiences) within these understandings.

1.4 Research Questions
The principal research questions guiding this study were:

- What are teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues in Canada?
- In what ways do the attitudes of a group of Alberta public school teachers intersect with their multiple identities?

Subsidiary questions included:

- What issues do teachers consider to be controversial and why?
- What is the range of factors that impact teachers’ attitudes?
- In what ways do students’ identities impact teachers’ attitudes (beliefs, feelings, practices) toward teaching controversial issues?

1.5 Frame Work: Theoretical, Conceptual, and Methodological Parameters of the Study
In designing this dissertation study, I made decisions concerning the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological parameters within which I framed the research questions, collected and interpreted data, and considered the research findings and their potential implications. In what follows, I review the principal parameters of my theoretical, methodological, and conceptual
frameworks in order to set the stage for understanding the scope of this study. In chapter 3, I elaborate the conceptual and methodological frameworks, in more depth.

**Imprints an author leaves on her text**

I highlight the work involved in erecting these frames to stress that these were not natural or given, but were instead decisions (some conscious, others not) that followed from my own subjectivity, multiple identities, and experiences, and as such were influenced by my values, beliefs, feelings, interests, assumptions, and biases. These decisions, what Said (1979) referred to as imprints that an author leaves on his or her texts, implicate not only the theoretical, conceptual, or paradigmatic frames that I privilege within these parameters, but also those that I exclude.

Foremost, the composition of my subjectivity, multiple identities, and experiences has been informed by my social identity location as a white, Canadian born, English-speaking, middle-class, able-bodied, woman of European descent who has been privileged to access and do well in public and higher education systems designed by people who look and sound like I. My social identity locations of privilege have also positioned me as a scholar capable of engaging in critical work from a comfortable vantage point to the extent that I have been significantly distanced from first-hand experience on the receiving end of injustice, marginalization, oppression, and exclusion (with the exception of my identity as a woman and my socio-economic status as a child). At the same time, I engage in critical work from the more proximate, yet much less comfortable, vantage point as someone whose identity is deeply implicated in legacies of colonialism and in contemporary neo-colonial relations.

I can identify several experiences that may have contributed to engendering a critical perspective in me. As a child, I grew up in a low/middle-income household and community positioned on the margins of the city limits. There, I experienced some of the challenges and opportunities that accompany socio-economic stresses and marginalization. I learned to appreciate and value play and friendship over material accumulation, and I had the opportunity to become an extended member of various families on the street whose first languages were other than English. I attended Filipino school, for example, with my friend Jennifer on Tuesday nights. I would regularly visit Ziny from Trinidad, next door, to have my hair cut. In grade 3, my family moved to Quebec City. There, I experienced the challenges of trying to fit into a new
school culture where I spoke a minority language. I returned to Quebec for my post-secondary education and attended McGill University. There, I began taking courses in socio-cultural anthropology and world religions. It was during this experience where I began engaging notions of culture, worldview, structural violence, institutionalized oppression, relativism, ethics, human and animal rights, and value conflicts through my own formal learning. It was there that I was asked for the first time to define my cultural identity – and not know how to respond. I studied the history of First Nations Peoples in Canada and I studied contemporary environmental conflicts and resistance movements led by First Nations communities in Canada. I studied the ethics of non-violence from Hindu and Christian perspectives, and I took courses in Jainism, Sikhism, and civil society in the Muslim world. I studied the representation of children in Iranian arts and interrogated the political implications, and I studied social inequality in stateless societies. My learning experiences during these years solidified my interest in conflicts across values and worldviews, in cultural imperialism, in non-violence, justice, and human-earth relationships. It was then that I began to be involved with activist organizations working toward peace and equity. Through this work, I became more and more interested in formal K-12 schooling and teacher education.

**Theoretical Framework: Critical Theory of Democracy, Globalization, and Education**

The theoretical parameters within which I framed this dissertation study are principally informed by critical theory, as well as some attention to post-colonial criticism. More specifically, the theoretical framework that I enacted involved my looking closely at intersections across critical theories of a) democracy, b) globalization, and c) education with the aim of identifying common emphases and tensions across these three foci, and for considering the implications of these for teaching and learning critical democratic global citizenship education (CDGCE). The central question that guided my interrogation of the intersections and tensions across these three foci was: *What does deepening democracy under conditions of globalization look like under the scope of critical theory, and what are some key indicators of teaching and learning critical democratic global citizenship education?*

The central motivation informing my delineation of these parameters was my interest in probing theories and practices of democracy and democratic citizenship education under conditions of globalization and assessing their implications for equity. A central premise that I
operated from was my belief that in order for schools not to function as instruments for the reproduction of hegemonic discourses of liberal democracy and globalization that feign neutrality, presume universality, ignore differences, advance neo-liberal agendas, exacerbate exclusion, privilege status quo interests, and perpetuate neo-colonial relations, they necessitate critical discursive and reflexive engagement with difference and inter and intra-identity conflicts. These are the specific aspects of critical theories of democracy, globalization, and education that I privileged in my theoretical framework. Taken together, these foci comprise a confluence across critical theory, political theory, post-colonial criticism, and philosophy of education.

Critical Theory

Critical theory is a social theory that posits criticism, over explanation, as imperative to knowledge production, and examines ways in which prevailing conceptions of social and political life perpetuate relations of domination, oppression, and injustice. Whereas critical theorists of the early Frankfurt School focused on questions of class division, political economy, and ideology (Adorno, 1973; Horkheimer, 1982; Marcuse, 1941), critical theory in a postmodern era has expanded its purview to address injustices rooted in prevailing conceptions and practices of gender, sexuality, racialization and racism, and nationalism, among other topics, thereby reconciling with postmodern assertions that we live in a world of partial knowledge, local narratives, situated truths, and evolving identities (Lyotard, 1984). In this study I emphasize critical theory’s commitment to: critique and possibility, engagement with the discourse dimension of knowledge, attention to contradiction and uncertainty, assertions that power is constitutive of identity and social relations, examination of the ways in which prevailing conceptions of social and political life perpetuate relations of domination and oppression, and commitment to transforming oppressive relations by identifying and realizing conditions of possibility toward that end. The common emphases and tensions that I privileged in my review of critical theories of democracy, globalization, and education significantly align with these premises in their attention to 1) the relationship between power, discourse, and hegemony and how this relationship imposes constraints on democracy, equity, inclusion, agency, and justice – and 2) discursive and reflexive engagement with difference, discourse contestation, and identity-related conflicts as practices that hold the conditions of possibility and hope for responding to and transforming these constraints.
Following from this work, I identified 3 categories of indicators of critical democratic global citizenship education. These synthesize the key characteristics which I purposefully...

1) Challenging Pretence of Neutrality: Identity, Power, and Difference

- **Conception of Identity** - Deepening democracy under conditions of globalization means challenging conceptions of identity as fixed, singular, contained, essentialized, neutral, and knowable, and instead acknowledges identities as plural, complex, vested, and unfinished (Appiah, 2005; Hall and du Gay, 1996). It means regarding identity conflicts and their continued contestation as a condition of possibility for deepening democracy (Mouffe, 1993).

- **Approach to Difference and Conflict** – Deepening democracy under conditions of globalization involves challenging pretences of liberal neutrality and the difference-blind ideal of pluralism and universalism that mask power and difference (Marion-Young, 2001). It involves attending to the political dimensions of difference and identity, including the ideological and identity conflicts that these provoke (Benhabib, 1996; Marion-Young, 2009). These conflicts have implications for equity: to ignore differences and advance sameness under guises of equal treatment results in some interests being advanced, normalized, and universalized over others.

- **Neutrality in Schooling** - Critical democratic global citizenship education thereby involves challenging pretences of neutrality in schooling and teaching, and acknowledging that education is political (Apple, 2000 & 2004; Freire, 1970 & 1998; Giroux, 2001 & 2005; Jackson, 1968; McLaren, 1999). It involves paying explicit and consistent attention to the political nature of education and the ways that schooling can reproduce discourses of neutrality and universalism that mask power and difference, and it involves re-appropriating education toward more deeply democratic ends in its potential to interrupt and unmask such discourses by privileging critical engagement with difference and identity as a resource for teaching and learning (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1998). CDGCE looks like affirming the belief in teachers and students as powerful agents and authors of more deeply democratic communities (Portelli and Vibert, 2001).
• **Identity in schooling and education** – Relatedly, CDGCE means being mindful that the political nature of education has consequences for the cultivation of students’ social and political identities (Bickmore, 2006), it critiques dominant paradigms of schooling that exclude explicit attention to teachers and students’ identities (including the power dynamics inside and outside the classroom), and it enacts culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy that is responsive to *all* students’ social and cultural identities (not just those perceived as Other) as valuable material for learning (Ellsworth, 1989). Students will have opportunities to engage the ways that schooling constructs identities, advances status quo interests and meta-narratives, and legitimizes existing social and economic structures (Andreotti, 2006; Freire, 1970).

2) Privileging Engagement with Discourse & Practices of Discursive Democracy

• **Recognizing power in discourse and discursive practice** - Deepening democracy under conditions of globalization involves paying attention to the ways that discourses condition norms and perceptions of actors, advance some interests over others, and essentialize Other identities toward that end (Foucault, 1972; Milliken, 1999). It involves being attuned to the power of hegemonic discourses to advance *particularized* ways of knowing and being as though these were predetermined, natural, universal, neutral, and operating beyond the scope of human agency (Willinsky, 1998).

• **Critical engagement with dominant discourse of globalization** - Deepening democracy under conditions of globalization involves interrupting and challenging hegemonic discourses of market liberal globalization that 1) assert *the logic of no alternative* (Hay and Watson, 1998), 2) advance particularized constructions of global and globalization as universal and that presume its direction of influence from the European core to the Southern periphery, and that 3) de-historicize discourses of globalization from its relationship to colonialism, resulting in new articulations of economic and cultural imperialism and neo-colonial relations (Rizvi, 2009; Shiva, 1993; Spivak, 2004; Tickly, 2009).

• **Recognizing power of discursive practices** - Deepening democracy under conditions of globalization involves engaging the political dimensions of difference and identity through *discursive* practices that underscore attention to the power in discourse to both reproduce and interrupt hegemonic narratives and practices that perpetuate oppression,
exclusion, and injustice (Dryzek, 2006; Foucault, 1980 & 1999; Gramsci, Forgacs, and Hobsbawn, 2000). CDGCE means responding to the discursive reproduction of hegemonic discourses that occurs through cultural practices, and in turn affirming culture as a critical site for social action and intervention – where power relations are both established and potentially unsettled (Hall and du Gay, 1996). By devaluing consensus (Mouffe, 2006) and privileging the potential of critical discursive practices for knowledge construction, deepening democracy under conditions of globalization involves creating more inclusive spaces for the articulation of divergent views and diverse modes of communication and expression (Boler, 1997) (e.g. reasoned argument, storytelling, passion and emotional expression). It involves affirming and realizing the possibility of discursive practices to enable transformative relations (O’Sullivan, 1999).

- **Implications for schooling & education: attention to ways of thinking & speaking** - Critical democratic global citizenship education thus involves critical engagement with dominant discourses through discursive democratic classroom practices (Enslin, Pendlebury, & Tjiattas, 2001; Guttman, 1999 & 2004). Students will have opportunities to critically engage presumptions of inevitability and universalism implied in dominant discourses of globalization that de-historicize it from colonialism, that advance neoliberal market values as natural, and that reify binaries between East/West and nation/globe (Rizvi, Lingard, and Lavia, 2006). CDGCE asserts that creating more equitable and just democratic communities (including classroom and school communities) means attending not only to behaviour, but foremost, to ways of thinking and speaking and the relationship between these, including the discourse dimension of action (Andreotti, 2006).

- **Implications for schooling & education: critical attention to privileging of answers, standards, and consensus** - CDGCE advances critical literacy practices for identifying hegemonic discourses operating in texts, schools, and society that privilege answers, standards, and consensus as goals and indicators of learning, and that privilege reason as the primary domain of communication (Apple, 2000). CDGCE involves creating opportunities for students to articulate questions and thoughtfully engage tensions, contradictions, and conflicts.

- **Implications for Schooling and Education: Creating more space for the expression of emotion** – CDGCE values the expression of emotion as a manifestation of discursive interruption with hegemonic discourse of presumed neutrality in identity and schooling
(Boler, 1997; Ellsworth, 1989). It encourages students to combine passionate response with critical analysis, to define and identify how and when particular emotions inform and define knowledge, and to outline the mutually interdependent ways in which feelings and reality construct one another (Boler, 1997).

3) Enacting Critical Reflexive Practice for Transformative Possibility

- **Critical reflexivity as responsive practice** - Deepening democracy under conditions of globalization means advancing critical reflexivity as emancipatory practice for enabling critique and possibility (Beck, Giddens, and Lash, 1994; Dryzek, 2006). Reflexive practice is enacted for its potential to enable individuals’ capacity to pay attention to and name hegemonic discourses of neutrality and universalism and the ways that these construct assumptions, and to recognize these discourses as human constructions, underscoring their implications for personal complicity and agency (el-Ojeili & Hayden, 2006).

- **Learning to be reflexive about the operation of power in schooling and education** - The powerful ways that hegemonic discourses of neutrality and universalism impact ways of thinking, perceiving, and behaving means that attending to the discourse dimensions of identity, beliefs, feelings, and action is difficult and runs counter to mainstream culture and schooling practices (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). CDGCE means recognizing that for this reason, teachers and students necessitate consistent reflexive practice in order to stay mindful of these dimensions so as not to reproduce structural inequity and exclusion (Appleman, 2000). Critical democratic global citizenship education looks like opportunities for students to practice being reflexive about the political dimensions of education and the discourse dimensions of identity, and the relationship between these.

- **Critical reflexivity for teacher and student agency** - CDGCE looks like teachers and students reflexively engaging with learning material in terms of how it intersects with their own polyvocal identities, including their social identity locations, values, beliefs, emotions, taken-for-granted influences, locations of privilege and disadvantage, cultural identities, assumptions, experiences, prior knowledge, everyday behaviours, and interests (Andreotti, 2006; Ellsworth, 1989). It involves questioning the traditions in which one has been socialized and the social bases on which society is built, and reflexively
engaging with the multiplicity of identity locations from where one is speaking. CDGCE thus involves subverting dominant discourses of education and schooling that regard both teachers and students as agents that can only be acted upon, and instead regarding teachers and students as active reflexive agents of cultural production (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2010).

- **Praxis** - CDGCE means affirming Freire’s attention to the relationship between conscientization and praxis, and his statement that “only beings who can reflect upon the fact that they are determined (by various socio-cultural, economic, political forces) are capable of freeing themselves…Conscientization is viable only because [human] consciousness, although conditioned, can recognize that it is conditioned” (1985; p. 68-69; my emphasis). Critical reflexivity is enacted for its practical potential to affirm the power of/in education to transform social and political relations toward more democratic and equitable ends (Freire, 1970 & 1998; hooks, 2003; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; Shor, 1992; Zinn & Macedo, 2005). Reflexive practice is regarded as a mechanism for diffuse (and not immediate) transformation (Dryzek, 2006; Mouffe, 2000) because rather than narrowly prioritizing changes in behaviour, CDGCE recognizes the potential of reflexivity for unlearning and for dislodging deeply engrained ways of thinking about knowledge, common sense, identity, and difference. CDGCE means affirming that transformation cannot be a quick-fix exercise with simple tick-this-box standards of success (Spivak 2004) – the latter itself a manifestation of dominant discourses of outcomes and standardization.

Indeed, relations between ideas and practices, relations of conflict (threats to privilege and power, the negotiation between different identities and layers of value systems), and generative relations between different peoples are at the core of this study; consequently I position myself and the parameters of this dissertation study within the theoretical landscape of critical theory.

**Conceptual Parameters (Preview)**

In designing this study I directed my attention to four conceptual foci. These include 1) teacher attitude, 2) global citizenship education, 3) teaching and learning with controversial issues, and 4) post-modern conceptualizations of identity. Here, I provide a brief overview of these and their specific intersections with central premises and priorities of critical theory. I speak to controversial issues and post-modern conceptualizations of identity as conceptual foci
that I subsume within my broader conceptual focus on global citizenship education because these cannot be easily separated.

**Teacher Attitude**

The study of teacher attitude has a long history in educational research, although the diverse range of ways that it has been conceptualized over time have aligned with the paradigm wars. Psychological and educational research have commonly conceptualized attitude as consisting of 3 central components:

Cognitive (*beliefs*): The cognitive component is an expression of an individual’s beliefs about an attitude object. For example: I *believe* young students are incapable of understanding *controversial issues*.

Affective (*Feelings*): The affective component involves the expression of an individual’s feelings about an attitude object. For example: I am *worried* that parents will be upset with me if I teach *controversial issues*. Emotion is understood to work hand-in-hand with the cognitive process (the way we think) about something, and may override purely cognitive rationales (Boler, 1997).

Conative (*Behavioural Dispositions*): The behavioural component of attitude refers to the way that attitude influences practices, actions and behaviours\(^1\). For instance: when there is a story in the news about a *controversial issue* in the morning, I *raise it* in class by *having students research the issue*. This component also refers to the predisposition to act towards the attitude object in a certain way, including behavioural inclinations. For example: I *do not teach* controversial issues *very often*. Finally, it refers to behavioural intentions and commitments, or what people say they *plan to do*, or *would do*, under particular circumstances. For instance: if my principal were ever concerned about my teaching *controversial issues*, I would *probably invite him/her to come into my class to observe me*.

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\(^1\) In this study I did not observe teachers in their classrooms and so the notion of behavioural *dispositions* was deemed particularly appropriate.
This three component model is also referred to as the ABC model of attitudes and the structural approach to the analysis of attitude (Bandura, 1977; Hogg & Vaughan, 2005; Kretch, Crutchfield, and Ballachey, 1962; Pennington, 1996; Richardson, 1996; Rosenberg and Hovland, 1960). As Richardson (1996) writes, however, shifts in research paradigms in both social psychology and educational psychology in the late 1960’s significantly moved the study of attitudes in teaching and teacher education out of the limelight, and attitudes began to be separated from beliefs. Fishbein (1967), for example, argued that the notion that attitudes consisted of three components led to conceptual confusion because the three components were not always correlated with each other in empirical studies of individual attitudes. To deal with this problem Fishbein limited the word attitude to the affective component and designated the cognitive dimension to mean beliefs about objects and the conative dimension to mean beliefs about what should be done concerning the object. The growing interest in cognition within the discipline of social psychology drew interest away from the affective (attitude) and toward the cognitive (beliefs),

In this dissertation research study, I conceptualize teacher attitude using the three component model of attitude. I do not regard the absence of correlation between beliefs, feelings, and practices as an obstacle or as evidence that this model is not valuable. Instead, I believe that the disconnections between these components of attitude are illustrative of the internal contradictions that characterize the post-modern condition and the complexity of identity. Whereas the paradigm shift at the time had been toward empiricism and neat formulations that made sense, postmodern conceptualizations of knowledge and identity trouble this desire for reconciliation and turn instead toward naming tensions and contradictions and acknowledging complexity and multiplicity. As a manifestation of teacher’s identities, conceptualization of teachers’ attitudes as neat and tidy constructs that separate their feelings from their beliefs (and relegate the former as a subordinate construct) disregards the complex and messy relationship between these, and reifies hegemonic discourses that relegate emotion as a subordinate construct. Neither does Fishbein’s conversion of the conative dimension (dispositions toward behaviour) to the cognitive dimension (beliefs about what should be done) in his revised conceptualization of attitude undo the messiness that accompanies the distinction between beliefs about what should be done and what actually is done. The three component model of attitude, conversely, leaves enough room to consider the relationship between what an individual believes should be done
and what s/he actually does, and to provoke questions about the potential (dis)connections between these.

Critical Global Citizenship Education: Post-Modern Conceptualizations of Identity and Teaching Controversial Issues

Within conceptualizations of global citizenship education, the specific foci of teaching and learning with controversial issues explicitly addresses the political dimensions of social relations, schooling, and curriculum (Hess, 2009; Hess & Posselt, 2002; Clare & Holden, 2007; Oulton, Day, Dillon, and Grace, 2004; Hahn, 1999; Finn, 1990; Kelly, 1989; Carrington and Troyna, 1988; Johnson & Johnson, 1988; Ehman, 1969; Oliver & Shaver, 1966). Broadly speaking, I locate the focus on teaching and learning with controversial issues conceptually within considerations for reconfigurations of citizenship, identity, and democracy under conditions of globalization (including theories of deliberative and radical democracy), and more specifically within theories and practices of critical global citizenship education (Andreotti, 2006 & 2011; Eidoo, Ingram, MacDonald, Nabavi, Pashby, and Stille, 2011; Lapayese, 2003; Rizvi et al., 2006).

While educational research has more than adequately attended to the practices and challenges of teaching controversial issues, less attention has been paid to a more holistic examination of the relationships between teachers’ beliefs and these concerns (an expression of teachers’ feelings) – including teachers’ beliefs and feelings with regard to their own and their students’ identities. Less attention has been paid to assumptions that may underlie and/or perpetuate some of the challenges teachers face, such as what teachers believe schools are for, what they believe their roles as teachers within these broader aims are, who they believe their students are, and what they are capable of doing, or what they believe about the teacher-parent relationship. Moreover, the existing research has not sufficiently attended to the challenges confronted by teachers (i.e. how to respond to those challenges) in ways that go deeper than identifying pedagogical strategies and that instead prioritize naming the constraints imposed by the operation of power and the reproduction of hegemonic discourses within dominant discourses of schooling that delineate assumptions and expectations with regard to what schools are for, and who teachers and students are (including assumptions about what they can know and do). In other words, by focusing narrowly on identifying the challenges that teachers confront teaching controversial issues and responding to them by identifying practical strategies, they presume and
thereby reinforce dominant discourses of schooling (e.g. problem-solution; marginalization of conflict) and teaching (e.g. individuals acted upon) rather than working toward discourse disruption as a component of an emancipatory pedagogy.

**Methodological Parameters: Research Design Preview**

The intention of this study was to learn about teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues in Canadian classrooms and how these intersect with teachers’ and students’ multiple identities, and to consider how these attitudes inform an understanding of how students are being prepared for critical democratic global citizenship education. Toward that end, I conducted a multi-phase sequential multiple-method research study that employed survey and interview methods and involved 202 public school teacher participants from across Canada who taught a range of subject areas at every level of the K-12 Canadian education system.

The data collection process for this study consisted of two principal phases. In the first phase of the study, with the assistance of provincial teacher associations, I administered an online survey on the topic of *Attitudes Toward Teaching Controversial Issues* to 99 public school teachers from across Canada (see Appendix A). Employing the *Three Component Model of Attitude*, the survey questionnaire included a combination of open-ended and fixed-choice questions that were focused on hearing from teachers about their beliefs, their feelings, and their frequency of practice with regard to the teaching of controversial issues. Among the total 15 survey questions, I included three fixed-choice questions that explicitly asked teachers about each of the three components of their attitude. Teachers were also asked to identify a sample of issues that they considered to be controversial and asked to explain why (open-ended) – which I interpreted as a further manifestation of their beliefs. Additionally, they were asked to elaborate on the range of considerations that informed their attitude toward teaching controversial issues (also open-ended), which manifest as all three components of attitude. The surveys did not include explicit attention to teachers’ and students’ identities, but were instead intended to focus specifically on teacher attitude toward teaching controversial issues in Canadian classrooms. The intention behind this survey was to learn, in breadth, about Canadian teachers’ beliefs, feelings, and behavioural dispositions as they relate to the topic of teaching controversial issues. This data was not intended to represent the attitudes of Canadian teachers as a generalizable population. Instead, I was interested in learning about teachers’ attitudes toward teaching
controversial issues from diverse regions of a country that is frequently cited as regional in character, and one wherein education is administered provincially/territorially (and via regional curricular alliances), in order to provide some broader context to my more purposeful and in-depth study of the Alberta case.

In the second phase of the study I travelled to Alberta where I personally administered a survey on the topic of *Attitudes toward Teaching Controversial Issues* (see Appendix B) to 103 teachers at two subject specialist teacher association conferences. There I conducted 16 semi-structured interviews with Social Studies and Science teachers (K-12) about their attitude toward teaching controversial issues and about how their identities and the identities of their students intersected with their attitudes (see Appendix D). Social Studies and Science teachers were purposefully sampled for because review of curriculum policy revealed that these subject disciplines included the most explicit attention to the teaching of controversial issues (Social Studies is the traditional home of democratic and global citizenship education; Science is grounded in positivist paradigm yet includes curricular attention to environmental issues, bioethics, religion, and evolution).

I selected Alberta as a case site in response to Bill 44 which was passed in Alberta in 2009. This Bill was initially meant to enshrine gay rights into Alberta’s human rights legislation following the Supreme Court ruling in *Vriend vs. Alberta* (1998). In this case, Delwin Vriend, a lab coordinator who was dismissed from his position at a private religious college in Edmonton when the administration learned that he was gay, brought forward a court application seeking a declaration that the Alberta Individual’s Rights Protection Act violated his equality rights under the Charter because sexual orientation was not included as a protected ground under the Act. The trial judge determined that a legislative omission can be the subject of a Charter violation (section 15 of the Charter, in this case). After the Alberta Court of Appeal allowed the province’s appeal, Vriend appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada. The court held that writing sexual orientation into the legislation was the appropriate response, the result of which became Bill 44. The passing of Bill 44, however, also resulted in amendments being made to Alberta Human Rights Legislation (section 11.1) that required schools to give parents written notice when lessons on sexuality, sexual orientation, and religion are going to be taught. This legislation (currently in effect) grants Alberta parents the right to opt their children out of classes and exclude them from discussions on these topics. Alberta teachers, in turn, are now mandated to
advise all parents, in advance, before teaching these topics (topics frequently described as controversial in news media about Bill 44 and section 11.1 of the Human Rights Act, and by many of the Canadian teachers that I surveyed). If teachers do not comply, and fail to notify parents, they may find themselves in front of the Alberta Human Rights tribunal. An amendment to the bill states that this expectation does not apply to incidental or indirect references to these topics. In other words, what is being communicated to Alberta teachers is that they should not be thoughtfully or deliberately planning lessons around these topics, and are encouraged to treat them superficially when they do arise in class. A second reason why I purposefully selected Alberta as a case site is because Alberta is also precariously positioned geo-politically as the home of the Canadian tar sands. The controversial issues surrounding the development of the tar sands elucidate timely tensions across multiple civic identity interests and social, environmental, and economic interests.

This multi-method approach produced a comprehensive picture of the range of teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues in Canadian classrooms, and how these intersected identity in Alberta.

### 1.6 The Alberta Context

Alberta is Canada’s 4th largest province and the third most diverse province in terms of visible minorities. With a population of approximately 3.5 million in 2011, Alberta not only has a high immigration rate but also a high rate of interprovincial migration, in part due to the employment opportunities created by the tar sands. Alberta has an Aboriginal population of approximately 200,000 peoples including dozens of First Nations such as the Plains Cree, Woodland Cree, Chipewyan, Blackfoot Confederacy. Aboriginal Albertans make up approximately 7% of Alberta’s population, and nearly 44% of them are under the age of 19. According to the 2001 census of population conducted by Statistics Canada, the majority of Albertans live in urban areas (81%) and identify themselves as Christian (71%). Roughly 2% of Albertans identify as Muslim (Alberta’s capital city, Edmonton is home to Canada’s oldest

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2 In this study I purposely frequently employ the term tar sands instead of oil sands to underscore that it is bitumen that is mined from the sands which is then refined into oil. This process involves both extraction and separation, and the amount of oil, water, and energy required in this process is exorbitant. Tar sands mining consequently releases at least 3 times the carbon emissions as regular oil production.
Mosque and the city of Calgary is home to Canada’s largest mosque, 0.5% as Hindu, and 0.4% as Jewish.

With a landscape that includes prairie, boreal forest, Rocky Mountains and badlands, a river that spans 1500 kilometers and oil reserves approximately equal to those of the rest of the planet combined (1.6 trillion barrels), Alberta is one of the strongest economies in Canada. In 2011, the Fraser Institute ranked Alberta as the most economically “free” jurisdiction in North America. Its per capita GDP in 2007 was the highest of any province in Canada at $75,000 – 61% higher than the national average. The median family income, after taxes, moreover, according to the 2006 census was $71,000. Certainly, Alberta’s status as the largest producer of conventional crude oil, synthetic crude, natural gas, and gas products in the country, and its status as the world’s second largest exporter of natural gas, contribute to its economic prosperity. It is estimated that currently there are over $100 billion worth of tar sands projects under construction and Fort McMurray is becoming one of Canada’s fastest growing cities.

Alberta has a long history of political conservatism and has been governed by a progressive conservative (PC) government since 1971. Alison Redford was elected as leader of the governing Conservative Party in 2011, and in the most recent provincial election (in which the progressive conservatives won a majority government) she became the first female elected Premier in Alberta. This most recent election in May, 2012 also signalled other changes including support for The Wild Rose party, which secured the position of official opposition in the province, replacing the Liberals. The Wild Rose party is a conservative party that formed out of the Alliance Party in 2008 (itself formed out of the Reform Party, of which current Prime Minister Stephen Harper was a founding member). The party has been described as being on the extreme end of social conservative values. In the most recent election, leader Danielle Smith stated that controversial social issues would not play a part in the party’s election platform. The party platform, nevertheless, makes clear its position on some issues, including its critique of international climate change treaties, and its view of climate change science as ‘inconclusive.’ Other changes in Alberta politics over the course of the last few years include the election of Canada’s first Muslim mayor in Calgary, Naheed Nenshi, in 2010.

In addition to having a long history of political conservatism, Alberta also has a significant history of social activism, critique, and change. This can be traced through such initiatives as the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA), a government lobby group founded in 1909
following a merger between the *Alberta Farmers Association* and the *Canadian Society for Equity*. A supporter of the cooperative movement and women’s suffrage, the UFA won a majority government in 1921 and under leadership of Herbert Greenfield initiated several reforms, including improving medical care and labour rights, and implementing electoral reform in the form of proportional representation. Further historical initiatives include Albertan participation and leadership in the founding of the *Canadian Association for Adult Education* and in the *National Farm Radio Forum*, a program that originated in the economic depression of the 1930s aimed at providing farmers with a new incentive for group action, greater understanding of their problems and a widening sense of community. More recently, the Alberta Government Community Initiatives Program (CIP) has provided funds to enhance and enrich community initiatives throughout Alberta. The program is intended to reinvest revenues generated from provincial lotteries in communities, to empower local citizens, and community organizations to work together and respond to local needs. There are three categories of funding support available, ranging from project-based grants to support community organizations, community operating grants to support Albertan non-governmental organizations, and international development grants that support Albertan non-governmental organizations working in majority world countries. More recently, social democratic change initiatives have also included the *Alberta Climate Dialogue*, a research alliance that brought together leaders from Albertan cities, industries, environmental NGO’s, and Canadian and international organizations. This community-university research alliance designed and held public citizen deliberations with thousands of Albertans who were supported in understanding scientific, economic, social, and individual aspects of climate change. Combined, universities and community organizations in Alberta committed over $3 million to this project aimed at expanding public participation through deliberative efforts at identifying specific actions and recommendations for provincial and federal government policy. These are just some examples of how Alberta’s history of social activism has been juxtaposed alongside its history of political conservatism – underscoring the complex terrain of competing discourses operating within the macro socio-political landscape in Alberta.

*Alberta Education* is the provincial department of education. The K-12 publically funded system consists of both public and separate schools. Of the 59 public school jurisdictions in Alberta, 17 operate as separate school jurisdictions, and these are funded on the same basis as public schools. In Alberta the right of religious minorities, *either Protestant or Roman Catholic*,
to establish a separate school district, is enshrined in legislation. Additionally, Charter schools and Private schools also follow the program of studies and curriculum of Alberta Education. The province has also developed an international reputation as a leader in second language education. Alberta’s largest school board, Edmonton Public, for example, established the Institute for Innovation in Second Language Education (IISLE) and offers bilingual education programs in 7 languages (Arabic, American Sign Language, Chinese, German, Hebrew, Spanish, and Ukrainian), and offers second language courses in 12 languages (Arabic, American Sign Language, Chinese, Cree, ESL, French, German, Hebrew, Japanese, Punjabi, Spanish, Ukrainian). The board also has an extensive French immersion program. According to the Alberta government, the province’s 35,000 active certified teaching personnel in the K-12 education system are the highest paid in Canada, with teachers average salary at approximately $92,000 (education.alberta.ca).

The tension between political conservatism and social activism in Alberta has played out numerous times in the arena of public education as well, as evident in the passing of Bill 44 and the implementation of section 11.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act. While section 11.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act pertains to the teaching of topics that some people consider to be controversial, the question of the passing of the bill itself became a controversial issue in Alberta that has garnered considerable reaction from multiple stakeholder groups over the last 3 years. The controversy surrounding the passing of Bill 44 elucidates how the aforementioned tensions can create opportunity for deepening democracy. Some students, for example, responded to Bill 44 by holding protests. Students also started a Facebook group called “Students against Bill 44” which had close to 11,000 members. Parents, too, established networking sites to talk about the Bill and its significance. Transcripts of Department of Education council meetings, moreover, also underscore how the passing of Bill 44 has been a contentious issue within Alberta Education. In light of these responses, it is important to note that while the content of section 11.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act is principally concerned with the denial of difference (a manifestation of the discourse dimension of identity reproduced through schooling), the controversy surrounding Bill 44 in Alberta meant that questions pertaining to identity conflicts, deep differences, the reproduction of status quo beliefs, values, and ideals were discursively taken up and engaged through various manifestations of deliberation and demonstration, and this has implications for democracy and for students’ democratic citizenship education. Students’ experiences responding to this controversy, for example, were opportunities for learning and
engaging with deep difference in their communities. In important ways, the contestation that arose as a response to Bill 44 opened space for dialogue on matters implicating whose beliefs and values are presumed as neutral and as the norm, which created opportunity for engaging questions and tensions related to themes of xenophobia, subordination, equity, agency, and power and the ways that these get reproduced and/or interrupted through education policy and schooling practices.

**Policy on Teaching Controversial Issues**

Each year, Alberta Education issues its *Guide to Education ECE-Grade 12* (2011-2012). The contents of this guide are consistent with the objectives and principles of the Alberta school act, and they describe key requirements for the implementation of education programming in Alberta. The guide includes sub-sections on various themes that invoke section 11.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act and the teaching of controversial issues in Alberta. Variations of the following statement are repeated throughout the guide to Education:

Section 11.1 of the *Alberta Human Rights Act* requires boards (including charter schools) to provide parents with notice where —courses of study, educational programs or instructional materials, or instruction or exercises … include subject matter that deals primarily and explicitly with religion, human sexuality or sexual orientation. Where a parent makes a written request, teachers shall exempt the student, without academic penalty, from such instruction, course of study, educational program or use of instructional material. These requirements do not apply to incidental or indirect references to religion, religious themes, human sexuality or sexual orientation. The requirements in this legislation are not intended to disrupt instruction or the discussion of controversial issues in the classroom. Teachers and schools should continue to respectfully handle the decisions and perspectives of parents when providing instruction and choosing instructional materials. (Alberta Guide to Education 2012-2013; p. 72-73)

It also provides some examples to assist teachers in clarifying the parameters of the legislation:

For the instructional material, exercise, outcome or course to be considered to deal explicitly with religion, human sexuality or sexual orientation, there must be no question that the subject matter is intended to be about religion, human sexuality or sexual orientation. A religious interpretation of an otherwise non-religious subject matter would not be considered explicit. For example, the intent of including evolution in the science programs of study is to explore its foundation in scientific theory. Although there may be religious interpretations of the origin of life, the inclusion of evolution is not intended to be explicitly about religion. Similarly, in order to be considered explicitly about —human sexuality, an outcome, course, exercise or instructional material must also address human sexual behaviours. Therefore, outcomes within the science programs of study that deal only with the anatomy and physiology of human reproduction are not explicitly about human sexuality; however, outcomes in CALM that examine aspects of healthy sexuality and responsible sexual behaviour are explicitly about human sexuality. (Alberta Guide to Education 2012-2013; p. 73)
CALM, or Career and Life Management, is a course taught in high school that includes curriculum addressing human sexuality. For this reason, it is noted specifically as a course relevant to the passing of Bill 44. Themes in this course also include family interactions, community, values, personal relationships, conflict resolution and management, health and wellness issues, and ethical investment. The curriculum states:

CALM deals with many topics considered to be sensitive and these topics must be treated with care. Students need to have a safe and caring environment in which to explore feelings, ideas and issues surrounding personal choices and decisions. Issues of sexuality are but a few topics that are sensitive in nature and need to be dealt with in a responsible, respectful and professional manner in the classroom. Instruction in human sexuality education requires communication with parents about the learning outcomes, topics and resources. All human sexuality outcomes have been boldfaced and italicized in this course to assist in identification of these outcomes (Career and Life Management, Revised 2004; p. 3).

Several teachers in this study spoke about CALM when talking with me about teaching controversial issues (see chapter 5-7).

The Alberta Guide to Education also states that section 11.1 does not apply to student behaviour or interactions that are not related to courses of study, education programs, instruction, exercises or instructional materials. Therefore, it does not affect the ability of boards and teachers to address bullying or disciplinary issues, including those related to religion, human sexuality or sexual orientation. These, apparently, are not a matter of education, but are regarded as disciplinary issues that get in the way of education. Finally, included amongst the ‘General Principles for Effective Programming,’ is a principle pertaining to communication between home and school, and teachers and parents:

Parents are the first and ongoing educators of their children. Schools should enable families to continue their involvement in their children’s education. The linkage between school and home enables teachers and parents to exchange information, jointly support student learning and ensure the continuity of learning experiences (Alberta Guide to Education 2012-2013, p. 5).

In addition to the focus on the passing of Bill 44, the Alberta guide to education also includes a section specific to Controversial Issues:

Controversial issues are those topics that are publicly sensitive and upon which there is no consensus of values or beliefs. They include topics on which reasonable people may sincerely disagree (Alberta Guide to Education 2012-2013, p. 72).

While they use the term “issues” at the outset, the language quickly turns to “topics” and these seem to be used interchangeably. Relatedly, this definition also conflates controversial with
sensitive. Specific criteria that render some issues (or topics) controversial from the perspective of Alberta Education include publicity, lack of consensus of values and beliefs, reason, and disagreement. Teachers, students and others participating in discussion of controversial issues are also encouraged to exercise sensitivity to “ensure that students and others are not ridiculed, embarrassed or intimidated for positions they hold on controversial issues” (Guidelines for Recognizing Diversity and Promoting Respect, Alberta Education 2010, p. 12).

In 2005, Alberta Education released *The Heart of the Matter: Character and Citizenship Education in Alberta Schools*. This 275-page resource provides an overview of character and citizenship education and articulates a framework for building and sustaining ‘a culture of character.’ The focus of this K-12 policy includes fostering a positive school culture, preventing bullying, infusing character and citizenship education across subject areas, and involving parents and community. In the introduction, the policy states:

… it is next to impossible to separate the teaching of values from schooling itself; it is a part of schooling whether people are willing to acknowledge it or not. The question... is how the educator can influence students’ character development effectively so that the impact is positive… [This policy] represents a consensus on certain attributes or core values such as respect, responsibility, fairness, empathy, and self-discipline that transcend socio-economic and cultural lines (2005; p.1).

Some of the key goals it names include fostering a climate of respect, learning the attributes of active citizenship, higher academic achievement, improved interpersonal relationships, self-discipline, fewer behavioural problems, focus on safe schools, positive school culture, and enhanced employability skills. Further, the policy states that these goals are aimed at “shaping future society” by “preparing students to be productive and contributing citizens” by “influencing students’ ability to fulfill the social and economic potential of the province...through reinforcement of essential values” (p. 3). While this policy invokes citizenship education, the primary focus is on character education in its emphasis on teaching students to conform, rather than to question.

In addition to the guide to education, aspects of subject specific curriculum policy also address considerations for teaching controversial issues. The Alberta *English Language Arts High School Guide to Implementation*, for example, includes significant attention to choosing resources which addresses the topic of teaching controversial issues, because “even literature’s best books may contain material that students, their parents or the community find troubling”
Foremost, the policy discourages teachers from opting out of “discussing sensitive issues,” however, because to do so, it affirms, would be a disservice to students. While it acknowledges that students encounter controversial issues in their everyday lives, nevertheless, it also views opportunities for learning with controversial issues as “rehearsal for life” (2003; p. 103) – thereby not regarding students’ as living in the world, or as citizens, now but instead reproducing discourses of children and youth as citizens-in-waiting. This policy also names gender, class, and race as “issues and dilemmas of the human experience” (ibid) that have the potential to “help students develop empathy and understanding” (ibid). It also notes that “everything from Shakespeare to National Geographic have been targets of controversy” (2003; p. 104) and explains that “classics as well as contemporary works can be open to criticism” (ibid). Criticism, here, is evidently not regarded as a skill for students to cultivate but is regarded as an obstacle that they may confront in text.

While controversial and social issues have historically been most principally located in social science curriculum, more recently the science curricula of various Canadian provinces have extended their attention to social and environmental issues and their connection to science. This trend is evident in the Alberta science curriculum. While the policy makes no reference to controversial issues specifically, the science policy document is replete with the term “issues” (up to as many as 85 times). The front matter delineating the foundations for the K-12 Science curriculum, for example, states that the science curriculum, is intended to “ensure relevance to societal needs” (Science 20-30, 2007; p. 1) and is designed so that students have opportunity to “become aware of the role of science in responding to social and cultural change and in meeting needs for a sustainable environment, economy, and society” (Science 20-30, 2007; p.1). Students, in turn, are expected to learn to critically address science-related societal, economic, ethical, and environmental issues. They are also expected to “appreciate that scientific understanding evolves from the interaction of ideas involving people with different views and backgrounds” (Science 20-30, 2007; p. 15). The curriculum becomes more explicit by addressing some of the political implications and the implications for students’ democratic citizenship education:

Today, research is often driven by societal and environmental needs and issues. As technological solutions have emerged from previous research, many of the new technologies have given rise to complex social and environmental issues. Increasingly, these issues are becoming part of the political agenda. The potential of science to inform and empower decision making by individuals,
communities and society is central to scientific literacy in a democratic society (Alberta Education Science 20-30; 2007, p. 6).

In the elementary science curriculum, the term “issue” appears a single time, stating:

Children learn to inquire and solve problems in a variety of contexts. Each subject area within the elementary program provides a rich source of topics for developing questions, problems and issues that provide starting points for inquiry and problem solving. By engaging in the search for answers, solutions and decisions, students have a purpose for learning and an opportunity to develop concepts and skills within a meaningful context (Alberta Education Science Elementary, 1996; p. 2).

In junior and senior high, there is slightly more attention to conflict – albeit a single expectation is repeated several times: “students are encouraged to demonstrate sensitivity and responsibility in pursuing a balance between the needs of humans and sustainable environment.” The Secondary Science 20/30 curriculum (an applied course for students not considered university-bound) makes no reference to issues, conflict, or controversial issues. The Physics 20/30 and Chemistry 20/30 however make several references to “issues,” including some focused on “evaluating the choices that some scientists make when carrying out controversial research,” but foremost, these are primarily limited to expectations regarding stewardship of the environment specifically. This is noteworthy, because the main area that this traditionally positivist discipline acknowledges as areas of uncertainty are with regard to environmental issues (i.e. leaving room to question the science of climate change, for example).

The Alberta Social Studies curriculum includes significant attention to themes and priorities emphasized in this study. As an “issues-focused” (Social Studies K-12, 2005; p. 1) curriculum centered on “citizenship and identity in the Canadian context” (ibid) and “democratic life in a pluralistic society” (p. 5) the program’s vision, goals, values and attitudes, for example, include themes of difference, pluralism, democracy, global consciousness, students’ lived experiences, deliberation, social cohesion, world issues, globalization, complexities and current issues, and ideology. “Investigating current affairs from multiple perspectives” (p. 6) is described as having a central role in learning, and the program of studies was written to “provide the flexibility to include these topics” (p. 6). The program of studies, furthermore, is designed to “promote metacognition through critical reflection, questioning, decision making and consideration of multiple perspectives on issues” (p. 6). At the same time, the policy states that “through this process, students will strive to understand and explain the world in the present and to determine what kind of world they want in the future” (ibid). The emphasis on ‘understanding’
and ‘explaining,’ however, suggests that opportunities for critique of the world in the present, and for realizing the kind of world they want in the future may be limited. Strands across the K-12 Social Studies curriculum include a) power, authority, and decision-making, b) culture and community, c) global connections, d) economics and resources, and e) the land: places and peoples. The consistent thread across all strands is an emphasis on the examination of multiple perspectives.

The curriculum focus on identity aligns with post-modern conceptualizations of identity to the extent that it emphasizes opportunities for students to: “understand the complexity of identity formation in the Canadian context; understand how identity and self-esteem are shaped by multiple personal, social, linguistic and cultural factors; and demonstrate sensitivity to the personal and emotional aspects of identity” (Social Studies K-12, 2005; p. 4). It also includes attention to students’ learning that their identities are not only multiple and complex but “evolving” (ibid). Students are introduced to global citizenship identity in grade 3. Further, a consistent thread throughout the front matter of the K-12 Social Studies foundations is “respect for democratic principles and processes for decision-making such as dialogue and deliberation” (p. 5). Specific outcomes for skills and processes include “social participation as a democratic practice” (p. 8) and “research for deliberative inquiry” (ibid). In grade 6, democracy and participation are the focus of the social studies curriculum.

Studying controversial issues is described in the policy as “important in preparing students to participate responsibly in a democratic and pluralistic society [because] such study provides opportunities to develop the ability to think clearly, to reason logically, to open-mindedly and respectfully examine different points of view and to make sound judgments” (2005; p. 6). Despite being referred to as “an integral part of Social Studies education in Alberta” (ibid) when the notion of teaching controversial issues is specifically addressed, however, the policy refers to these only in the sense that teachers may either “anticipate” (ibid) or respond to them when they “arise incidentally” (ibid), and there is less emphasis on controversial issues being opportunities for learning that teachers can plan for. Where difference is addressed, moreover, it is treated significantly within discourses of social cohesion and accommodation. The focus is on “working out differences by drawing on the strength of diversity” (p.5). In grade 5, for example, although the focus is on the foundations of Canada, and although ‘power and authority’ is a strand, emphasis is put on contact rather than colonialism. Similarly, in grade 7, when students are
intended to learn the origins and histories of People in Canada, emphasis is on intercultural contact and immigration, not colonialism or imperialism.

The secondary curriculum is divided into three foci, by grade level. In grade 10, students are expected to learn about perspectives on globalizations (for the applied classes this is framed as ‘living in a globalized world’), in grade 11 the focus is on ‘perspectives on nationalism’ (for applied classes this is framed as understanding nationalism), and in grade 12 students are expected to learn perspectives on ideology (again, contrasted against applied students who are intended to learn understandings of ideology). I emphasize the distinctions between the phrasing for academic and applied because these are important for considering the ways that academic students, through perspectives, seem to be intended to have more opportunity to learn about multiplicities and complexities and room for question, whereas understanding connotes singularity and fixity and more transmission-oriented/teacher-centered pedagogy. This is an example of the ways that curriculum and schooling construct students’ identities by narrating for them what ‘it’ believes particular students can know and are able to do, and what kinds of citizens it is preparing them to be.

1.7 Defining Key Terms

For the purpose of conceptual clarity, I advance working definitions of CDGCE and key terms that I employ in this dissertation. Certainly, these definitions do not ‘encapsulate’ the varied potential meanings ascribed to them. By defining how I am conceptualizing these terms, nevertheless, it is my hope that my own biases and beliefs become more transparent to the reader. This experience also facilitated my own reflexive engagement with my identities as an educational researcher and scholar of critical democratic global citizenship education.

Critical Democratic Global Citizenship Education (CDGCE)

CDGCE articulates a philosophical orientation and pedagogical approach to teaching and learning concerned with deepening democracy under conditions of globalization (promoting equity and inclusion; disrupting neo-colonial relations of subordination). Distinct from conceptualizations of global citizenship education that regard learning about global as Other and that prioritize taking action without critical engagement with dominant ways of thinking and their implications for equity, CDGCE is concerned with deepening democracy and promoting equity in particularized local contexts and communities wherein individuals and social
institutions are both impacted by conditions of globalization and are complicit in reifying discourses of globalization that perpetuate relationships of subordination and exclusion through everyday behaviours and practices.

**Controversial Issues**

In this dissertation study I did not impose a working definition of controversial issues on the teachers who participated in the study. Instead I was interested in hearing from them what issues they considered to be controversial, and why, because these were valuable indicators of their attitudes. Nevertheless, although in this study I prioritize teachers’ conceptualizations of controversial issues, it is important that I articulate what I mean when I say controversial issues, here. I do understand, however, that what I consider to be controversial, others may not, and vice versa – and I believe that conversations directed at talking about why this is likely the case are extremely important for democracy and education.

In the conceptualization of controversial issue that I personally hold, I focus on the political and ideological conflicts implicated in issues. Instead of the primacy of reason, I prefer to emphasize the primacy of power, because often what is at stake on matters pertaining to controversial issues is more than a matter of resolving disagreements. Controversial issues often (not always) implicate discourse contests on some level, even though these often require purposeful unearthing. Foremost, I believe that it is important to consider the question: what makes a controversial issue an ‘issue’ (i.e. identifying the specific tensions) and for whom is it controversial and why?

I also find it helpful to break down the etymology of the word controversy in order to understand its broader implications for equity: Contra, means against, and is combined with versus, as in verse, or lines of text. Taken together, the etymology of controversy means to turn or bend in an opposite direction, disputed, turned against (Oxford English Dictionary). I interpret verse to represent what is known and inscribed in established stories, master narratives, and dominant discourses, and contra as a prefix that connotes perspectives that are against the grain and that dispute these. Looking at it this way, important questions are raised: What is the grain and who participates in determining it? Whose voices and experiences are represented in the grain and whose are viewed as against it? How does the grain change over time and space? What role can
the contra play in re-storying master narratives? Whose norms, values, beliefs and ways of knowing are presumed as the norm, and whose the contra and why? By naming an issue controversial we acknowledge and recognize that the verse is not settled, accepted, closed for contestation, not single, not right. We acknowledge that there exist more perspectives, layers of complexity, differences, and tensions across people’s values, beliefs, interests, experiences, intentions, and worldviews.

There are two points that help elucidate how I personally define controversial issues: 1) distinct from conceptualizing controversial issues as topics (e.g. religion in schools), which can connote a level of neutrality that marginalizes conflict; I believe that it is important to identify specific conflicts, questions, and tensions. At the same time, in framing controversial issues as questions, a central challenge that I experience is how easily these have the potential to conform to binary ways of thinking that imply there are only two possible positions at stake, even when making a concerted effort to try to avoid this (e.g. should religious symbolism be permitted in public schools? What reasons can you articulate for and against the notion of religious symbolism in schools?). Questions which are framed this way, however, have the potential to reinforce positivist paradigms that oversimplify complex issues – thereby reinforcing a broader discourse of binary thinking. By focusing questions instead on inviting consideration for the potentially diverse and complex range of possible positions implicated in an issue, discourses of binary opposition can be interrupted (e.g. Why do you think the notion of religious symbolism in schools arouses strong feelings in people and what are the range of conflicts and stakeholder interests involved?)

Second, as I have already alluded to, I believe that it is important to acknowledge that an issue that is considered to be controversial by one person or interest group may not be by another. The reasons for this are complex and varied because they are often contingent upon values, beliefs, biases, vested interests, ideology, paradigms, and social identity locations. Let alone jumping to the question of taking a position on a controversial issue, the very act of naming an issue as controversial (or not controversial) communicates a position that reflects these various influences. Themes relevant to deepening democracy including difference, identity, equity, justice, representation, and inclusion are not just themes taken up in discussion of controversial issues, but are also implicated in the act of naming and framing an issue as controversial.
An individual, for example, might state that the sexual education curriculum that was developed in Ontario is controversial because of its explicit attention to homosexuality which conflicts with the values and beliefs of some parents and students. In this instance, however, contrary to my statement about controversial issues meaning acknowledgement that issues are open to contest, I would argue that this issue is not open to contest. While I am aware that homosexuality runs counter to the values and beliefs of some individuals, I believe that it is important to attend to the political dimensions of difference that operate in practices that privilege some interests and values over others and that perpetuate relations of oppression, subordination, and exclusion. While I can acknowledge that some people believe that homosexuality is a controversial issue, I disagree. I believe that naming homosexuality a controversial issue communicates homophobic attitudes. Nevertheless, I do believe that the discussion that can be had about why homosexuality is perceived by some to be a controversial issue or not is incredibly valuable for deepening equity and democracy for the ways that it provokes questions and engagement with difference and conflicting values and beliefs. Another related premise that I hold about the meaning of controversial issues is that these discussions are difficult, uncomfortable, and often emotional because they invoke questions and challenges to beliefs, feelings, and practices intimately tied to identity.

Finally, I also believe that there are important differences between sensitive and controversial issues. These two terms are often conflated and used interchangeably in popular speak, and I do believe that they are related to one another. Nevertheless, I also am weary of the ways that particular topics like the Holocaust are sometimes named as controversial, instead of sensitive. Particular events, actions, and inactions that happened during the Holocaust provoke tensions and questions that raise controversial issues, but the Holocaust in and of itself is not a controversial issue; it is a sensitive topic. Calling it controversial discursively reinforces the notion that the ‘verse’ which asserts its historical veracity is open to dispute. While a controversial issue can also be a sensitive issue, sensitive issues are not always controversial. As a teacher, for example, I may be sensitive to the fact that there are students in my classroom who have experienced the death of a loved one to cancer, but this would not be sufficient for me to name the topic of death a controversial issue. I believe that it is important to pay attention to the ways that some sensitive topics are named as controversial in ways that do not necessarily implicate a conflict, because I believe this is a component of a broader discourse that legitimizes the marginalization of emotion in society and in classrooms. By subsuming sensitive issues
under the umbrella of dominant discourse about controversial issues that reinforces avoidance and the marginalization of conflict, the emotions that accompany sensitive issues (hurt, anger, guilt etc.) can be similarly avoided.

**Democracy / Deepening Democracy**

Embedded in the significance of, and rationale for, democracy is a recognition of difference (Fine, 1993; Hebert & Sears, 2001; Oliver and Shaver, 1974), regarded not as an obstacle to be overcome, but as a reality to be accounted for, represented, and legitimated in the public sphere of deliberation and decision-making in regard to issues that impact and are impacted by diverse peoples with distinct interests, values, beliefs, and circumstances. Additional characteristics of democracy that I privilege include: a) understanding democracy as a complex ideal which, while not fully realizable, can nevertheless be consistently engaged and strived for (Mouffe, 1999) b) understanding democracy as a way of being and living together and as a way of life rather than as a form of government (Dewey, 1916; Portelli & Solomon, 2001), and c) understanding democracy as a way of thinking and as practices that do not come naturally to people but that require learning and discursive engagement (Parker, 1996). When I talk about deepening democracy I am not referring to getting more people to vote. I am referring to increasing equity and inclusion in social and political relations mediated by power by attending to, rather than trying to overcome, difference. I draw on Mouffe’s model of radical democracy and agonistic pluralism involving “a vibrant clash of democratic political positions” (2000, 16). By *deepening democracy under conditions of globalization* I am also referring to attending to equity and inclusion in geo-political relations. Deepening democracy requires paying attention to legacies of exclusion, subordination, and colonialism and being responsive to these by paying attention to persistent neo-colonial relations.

**Globalization**

Globalization is a contested term that is ascribed various meanings by a range of stakeholder groups. Generally, the term globalization is used to describe the intense confluence of a range of processes that implicate relationships and actors across a variety of social, political, economic, and environmental systems and spheres which have real material consequences for a range of vested interest groups (Delanty, 2006; Falk, 2000). Dominant discourses of globalization align it with market liberal values and assert it as an inevitable and knowable fact that peoples, nations,
and global governance institutions can only respond to by ascending to its Universalist pretensions rather than a phenomenon that they can contribute to shaping. Globalization, however, has never existed outside the purview of social relations mediated by power and human agency. Nor is it novel or disconnected from history, including as an enduring legacy of colonialism and its ideological pursuits. Explicit attention to the constructed and ideological nature of discourses of globalization points to the ways that its meanings and implications are not fixed, inevitable, nor universal in nature. This realization, in turn, points to the potential for its meanings and implications to be disrupted, subverted, and re-storied through human agency.

**Discourse / Hegemonic Discourses**

Discourses refer to chains of language that bind social beings together and play a key role in the social construction of knowledge and reality (Foucault, 1980). They shape peoples’ perceptions of the world, create chains of associations and organize the way peoples behave towards material phenomena and towards other people. The power of discourses lies in their capacity to convince people to unquestionably accept particular statements as true. Knowledge is not something that exists independently of language but rather is organized through the structures, interconnections, and associations that are built into language. Discourses operate through social networks of power, and in turn they allocate social, cultural, and political power. They are multiple and competing (Dryzek, 2006). A hegemonic discourse refers to a discourse that has become so embedded in a culture that people tend not to question its assumptions and taken-for-granted truths. Cultural hegemony refers to the sociological theory advanced by Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci that a culturally diverse society can be dominated by one social class through the manipulation of culture (individuals’ beliefs, explanations, perceptions, values). The motivation is so that ruling-class worldview is imposed as the norm which is then perceived as a universally valid ideology beneficial to all of society. Hegemonic discourses thus not only determine answers to questions, but they also determine the questions that tend to be asked. Discourse analysis involves analyzing diffuse power, struggles over meaning, and power conflicts that can occur in many different discursive sites and on multiple levels, including ways of thinking, perceiving, talking, interpreting, and behaving (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Discourse theory assumes that ideas structure social spaces and therefore ideas can play a significant role in historical change. In this way, discourses are not only constraining but also potentially transformative. Discourse theory encourages paying
attention to small shifts in how ideas are expressed in language. Like globalization, discourses do not exist independently of human social relations – they are constructed, reproduced, and transformed by peoples (Foucault, 1982).

**Reflexivity**

Reflexivity refers to intentional, thoughtful, and critical engagement with assumptions and what we take as given and consideration of the implications of these for social equity and justice (Andreotti, 2011). Principally, what we take as given implicates individuals’ multiple identities (who we are, who Others are) because it involves questioning what we think we know and why, including looking closely at our assumptions, values, traditions, beliefs, worldview, biases, norms, convention, and practices. Reflexivity is difficult because it challenges people to confront privilege and complicity in harm; it dislodges our sense of security and interrupts our habitual ways of thinking and behaving. It is also difficult because it runs counter to powerful hegemonic discourses that pervade everyday life and consequently it is important that reflexivity be consistently practiced (*flexed*). It requires learning to recognize and name hegemonic discourses and the ways that we reproduce them through ways of thinking, perceiving, talking, and behaving.

### 1.8 Principal Argument and Preview of Whole

The central argument that I am advancing following from these themes and priorities is the following: Naming and challenging hegemonic discourses of neutrality and universalism in schools and education, and asserting explicit discursive and reflexive attention to difference, identity, conflict, power, and agency are vital conditions of possibility for deepening democracy. These signal the difficult work involved in and necessary for, deepening democracy under conditions of globalization, and the promise that education holds toward that end. The study of teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues in school is an important avenue for engaging this promise, and for identifying concrete avenues towards its realization.

This dissertation comprises 9 chapters. In chapter 2, I review the literature pertinent to the scope of this study, including a review of shifting conceptualizations of citizenship and identity in political theory, critical global citizenship education, teaching controversial issues, and teacher attitude. Next, in chapter 3 I outline the conceptual framework and research methodology, and I attend to the ways that these both reconcile with and bump up against critical theory. In chapters
4 through 7 I report the research findings. First, in chapter 4, I report the survey findings on teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues in the form of an executive summary. In chapters 5, 6, and 7, I report Alberta teachers’ attitudes towards teaching controversial issues and their intersections with teachers’ and students’ identities based on the 16 interviews. Each of these three chapters reports on one of the three components of attitude. In chapter 8, I discuss the research findings and their implications through the lens of critical theory and post-colonial criticism. Foremost, I discuss the findings against the indicators of critical democratic global citizenship education and I address how the research findings inform an understanding of how students may be prepared to enact CDGCE. In chapter 9, I provide an overview of the research findings and I advance my dissertation thesis. I also enumerate a range of specific recommendations for teacher education and development that I believe are vital for realizing the promise of education as a principal site for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization.
Chapter 2

Literature Review: Situating the Study

2.0 Introduction to the Chapter

In order to situate this study within existing bodies of research and literature on themes pertinent to its theoretical and conceptual parameters, I have organized this review into 4 principal headings: 1) Reconfigurations of Citizenship, Identity, and Democracy in the (Post) Modern Era: Shifting Constructs 2) Critical Global Citizenship Education 3) Teaching and Learning with Controversial Issues and 4) Teacher Attitude.

2.1 Citizenship, Identity, and Democracy in the (Post) Modern Era: Shifting Constructs

Nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word’s multiple significations, ‘nation-ness’, as well as ‘nationalism’, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. To understand them properly we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy. (Benedict Anderson, 1983; 4)

I begin with this quote from Benedict Anderson’s seminal work Imagined Communities because it highlights several critical themes embedded throughout the literature review that follows: the construction of civic identity and political space, the power embedded in discourse and the contested nature of language, the collusion of multiple perspectives, and the enduringly valuable project of historical contextualization.

It is common practice to begin any discussion of citizenship by attending to its contested nature (Aristotle, 1946; Heater, 2004). Citizenship is a contested and constructed concept deeply weighed by the premise, promise, and power of exclusion, status, and ideology (Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983). Thus its potential scope and meanings are open to change. Although traditional connotations of citizenship emphasize fixity and borders, a closer review of the history of citizenship in political theory and practice elucidates something much more fluid, shifting, and malleable.

The terms nation, nationality, and nationalism are consistently cited in the literature as notoriously difficult to define (Seton-Watson, 1977), yet their ambiguity also points to some critical issues. In contextualizing the changing configurations of citizenship, it is important to also consider the implications of the changing configurations of these terms in so far as they raise critical themes and questions related to the notion of political space and to themes of inclusion, exclusion, and conflict both within and between nation-states. Probing their changing nature and function also helps to elucidate the ways that these are constructed concepts, capable of being
charged with new meanings and functions as changes occur in the geo-political landscape of transnational decision-making.

It is from this starting point of recognizing the nation as a construct (as imagined political community) that I proceed by considering how political community has been and can be further re-imagined, including in the context of shifting conceptualizations of political space under conditions of globalization.

**Abbreviated History of World/Cosmopolitan Citizenship in Western Philosophy & Political Theory**

Political and philosophical discourse over the course of early/modern history has been saturated with deliberation on the possibility of expanding the parameters of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship both within and beyond national boundaries to consider notions of multicultural, universal, world, cosmopolitan and/or global citizenship (Arendt, 1958; Habermas, 1994; Kant, 1798; Kymlicka, 1995 & 2003; Linklater, 1998; Marshall, 1950; Miller, 1999; Nussbaum, 1997 & 2002; Walzer, 1999). The condition that renders contemporary versions of global citizenship unique, however, is the globalized context of the 21st century characterized by human-driven asymmetrical interdependence in social, cultural, political, economic, and ecological relations that are today *more proximate* at the same time as their impacts are *increasingly inequitable*. Global issues are manifestations of these relationships, and they provoke questions for reconfiguring the significance of nations and national identity and for contemplating the purpose and practices of democracy. The project of understanding what makes global issues ‘issues’ points to the collusion of power, interests, and the material, physical, and cultural well-being of peoples and the earth as a living system. Global environmental issues offer a lucid example of the intersection between eco justice and social justice, and between human rights and earth rights, and these are inducing a more explicit vocabulary of ecological, environmental, and/or planetary citizenship (Dobson, 2004; Haugestad and Wulfhorst, 2004; Henderson and Ikeda, 2004; Jelin, 2000; Spivak, 2004; Steward, 1991). The controversy over climate change today, for example, is not about whether it exists. Instead, the controversy involves questions over what to do about it and who should bear the burden of responsibility.

The decisions made by Canada, the United States, and Australia not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol until China and India were committed to doing the same is an example of how security today is defined more by reference to the global economy than it is in relation to the defense of
territorial integrity (Falk, 2000). This is a reality made ever-more visceral in the context of the global economic recession and the evocation of protectionist ideals. In Canada, specifically, Paehlke (2008) argues that one of the primary areas of contention are the difficult decisions the country faces in weighing the global, national, provincial, and local environmental, economic, social and political effects of *tar sands development*. He asks: “What will be the effect of oil wealth and the economic temptation inherent in it on Canadians and their sense of obligation to the international community and on the functioning of Canadian democracy?” (p. 40).

A complex web of national, international, and global cultural exchange now influences citizens’ values and judgments. In the 21st century, the market driven politics of neo-liberalism is a further example that has far-reaching consequences across all areas of the planet. Indeed, globalized capitalism is the context for today’s human rights struggles (Yarker, 2009). As an ideology, neo-liberalism has promoted the thesis of economic globalization, wherein belief in free markets transcends state frontiers. Effects of global financial flows, for example, influence the economic policies of individual nation-states. The globalization of production and the globalization of financial transactions further intensify the relationships between individuals, the political and economic policies of their nation-states and the degree to which both impact the global market. Critics of economic globalization warn of global corporations ruling the world, usurping the power of states and local governments without undertaking their social responsibilities (Barber, 1996; Barnet and Cavanagh, 1994; Klein, 2000). Offshoring activities of multinational corporations have an influence on economic policies of nation-states but also individual workers’ spheres of international activity and identity affiliations. Economic globalization thus has “significant and discernible characteristics which alter the balance of resources, economic and political, within and across borders” (Held, 1997; p. 28). In this way, Held argues, the neo-liberal tradition is itself in a sense well suited to endorse its own version of global citizenship (a version that understands individuals primarily as consumers). This is evident in the extent to which it has appropriated social and environmental responsibility as a marketable good by manufacturing green corporate images as consumer demand for environmentally friendly products becomes increasingly profitable. Here, the notion of conflicts of interests takes on new significance.

These versions of global citizenship are intimately connected to one another, which is why it is important to acknowledge that the notion of global citizenship encompasses these multiplicities that have inequitable consequences but also potential for democratic civic action on a transnational scale. A striking feature of globalization in the 21st century is the differential
degree that it impacts individuals, groups, and countries. Globalization can lead to vastly unequal access to the dominant organizations, institutions, and processes of the emerging global order. In postmodern parlance (Dobson, 2004), for example, inhabitants of globalizing nations are “always already acting on others, as when, for example, their use of fossil fuels causes the release of gases that contribute to global warming” (p. 8). According to Held (1997), recognizing this is what calls forth the virtues and practices of citizenship – namely, responsibilities and obligations. However, while this is citizenship with international and intergenerational dimensions, he insists, it is not itself universalizable. Instead, this is a citizenship for those with the capacity to always already act on others. Most articulately, environmentalist Vandana Shiva points out how not only the fruits of global free trade are shared unequally around the planet, but also the very possibility of being global. She writes:

The construction of the ‘global environment’ narrows the South’s options while increasing the North’s. Through its global reach, the North exists in the South, but the South exists only within itself, since it has no global reach. Thus the South can only exist locally, while only the North exists globally. The G8 can demand a forest convention that imposes international obligations on the Third World to plant trees. But the Third world cannot demand that the industrialized countries reduce the use of fossil fuels and energy. The ‘global’ has been so structured, that the North (as the globalized local) has all the rights and no responsibility, and the South has no rights, but all responsibility (1998, p. 233).

At the heart of such differential access is power, which, according to Held (1997), has to be conceptualized as the capacity to transform material circumstances – whether social, political or economic – and to achieve goals based on the mobilization of resources, the creation of rule systems, and the control of infrastructures and institutions. The particular form of power that is of concern to a theory of globalization is characterized by hierarchy and uneven-ness. Carter (2001) argues that post-colonial theory, for example, “makes the subtle charge that western universalism, even when voiced by groups in global civil society, is always a form of cultural imperialism” (p. 9). These considerations may undermine the attempt to discuss global citizenship today in a vocabulary that derives from western universalism, since the language may be taken to express membership of only a privileged section of the world. Brennan (2003), however, raises the important point that neither should the West or North be generalized and/or homogenized to the point that the unevenness and inequities that exists within them be unaccounted for. While many agree that there are winners and losers in globalization, Brennan argues, even people living in those countries that purport to benefit from globalization can also suffer its effects because globalization also exacerbates socio-economic hierarchies within
countries by generating cutbacks in welfare, education, and health benefits. As a force that impacts interdependent systems, globalization also places significant constraints on domestic democracy. In these ways, the renewal of democracy is both an internal question for individual states and a matter for international political life as well (Held, 1997).

Global public issues are challenging the meaning of nations and nationalism as well as citizenship, individuals and nations increasingly recognize that they have multiple levels to their identities. As identity is increasingly made up of multiple and conflicting subject positions (Lecourt, 2004), efforts at problem solving on controversial global issues can thereby involve conflicts of interests not only between individuals and between nations, but also within them. The important political question then becomes how structures can be devised that strike the right balance between these (Archibugi, Held, and Kohler, 1998).

**Nation-State Citizenship & Global Citizenship: Tensions and Possibilities**

A pertinent question is whether citizenship is the appropriate framework for talking about global reconfigurations of political identity and political space. Some object to the use of the term global citizenship, as I have already suggested, arguing that its core ideals are more appropriately defined through the language of humanitarianism and civil society rather than citizenship (Arendt, 1958; Jelin, 2000; Miller, 1999; Walzer, 1999). The differences between these perspectives point to the critical importance of how such elusive terms are defined, or constructed, both personally and more collectively in public discourse, as what impacts the parameters within which citizenship-type obligations may be understood and carried out.

Others, however, argue that although the meaning and function of the nation-state is undergoing changes, this does not mean that it is becoming irrelevant (Anderson, 2006; Bhabha, 1990; Carter, 2001; Delanty, 2006; Falk, 2000; Kymlicka, 1995; Tan, 2005). Carter (2001), for example, argues that the role of those who endorse global commitments is to press their governments to pursue policies that take these wider commitments more seriously. In his argument for a revitalized global public sphere, Habermas (1994) posits a discursive theory of democracy toward that end, whereby the public sphere acts as a space for critical discussion, open to all, where private people come together to form a public whose public reason is intended to act as a check on state power. A move in this direction will be possible only when electorates are prepared to reward their political elites for decisions that demonstrate a concern for global governance. From these perspectives, the concept of global citizenship as an extension of
national citizenship obligations and the concept of global citizenship as membership in global civil society can coincide. In sum, what makes the republican or communitarian criticisms of global citizenship distinct from these latter perspectives is that they rest on the requirement of stringent criteria for the concept of citizenship (narrowly and traditionally defined), which cannot conceive of global citizenship except in the context of a fully established federal world government.

Arguably, any discussion of global citizenship presupposes a model of citizenship in the nation-state (Carter, 2001) – and just as the nation and nation-state are critical in conceptualizing citizenship, they are also important for critically reflecting on the meaning(s) of citizenship in the globalized context. In this context, nationalism and globalization need not be interpreted as a paradox (Bhabha, 1990; Delanty, 2006; Falk, 2000; Kymlicka, 1995 & 2003; Tan, 2005). Instead, nations themselves can be interpreted (and critiqued) as global civic actors (Beck, 2002; Byers, 2007; Held 1997, 2000; Kymlicka, 2003). Globalization, from this perspective, could be viewed as leading to new expressions of national identity (Delanty, 2006; Ong, 1997; Soysal, 1994; Triandafyllidou, 2006). In other words, strong national identities could be a motivator for people to fulfill international obligations. These, moreover, need not only be interpreted narrowly as moral obligations but also as global civic responsibilities (Kymlicka, 2003). In this way, it could be argued that global citizenship does not make the nation-state irrelevant; rather, it challenges individuals to recognize overlapping and multiple communities of fate and obligations and their implications for the responsibilities of individuals and nation-states as global civic actors in transnational decision-making (Bhabha, 1990; Beck 2007; Byers, 2007; Habermas, 1992; Held 1997, 2000; Kymlicka, 1995). Following from this perspective are ever more calls for democratic practices that go both deeper and wider within and beyond the confines of nation-state borders (Held, 2000; Jelin, 1995; Linklater, 1998). In this way, the nature of democracy is changing as new spaces, new publics, and new means for congregating and deliberating together take form.

**Deepening Democracy under Conditions of Globalization: Deliberative Democracy & Agonistic Pluralism**

Embedded within connotations of global citizenship are invariably questions about the blurred boundaries between unity and diversity, the universal and the particular, and about critical issues related to power, hegemony, voice, difference, ideology, and imperialism. Similar to the post-colonial critiques of global citizenship as they relate to the linkages with western
universalism, post-colonial critics also point to cautionary considerations with regard to the location of democratic ideals within a political theory of global citizenship. A difficult question is whether framing the discussion of problem-solving on global issues in the language of democracy reflects the imposition of Western values on global matters. A critical question that is raised is whether democracy implies universalism, or whether it commands and creates space for the inclusion and representation of diversity in decision-making. Andreotti (2006), Biccum (2005) and Gaudelli (2003), for example, draw attention to the prevalence of colonial assumptions operating in current processes of global governance - ranging from feelings of self-righteousness and/or cultural supremacy, uncritical action, and the potential reinforcement of the ideal of neo-liberal capitalism as the only context for global governance. These are concerns over equitable and just decision-making processes in the global landscape – or more aptly, questions of who (and in what ways can) should govern decision-making in relation to global issues affecting diverse peoples in distinct ways. While the global imperative does indeed further provoke these questions, the contemporary discussion is a reminder of how citizenship always refers to a conflictive practice related to power, which reflects the struggles about who can say what in the process of defining what is to be considered common problems, and how are they are to be faced (van Gunsteren, 1978).

Today, it is not only the idea of political space that is being re-conceptualized, but also mechanisms for democratic political engagement and civic participation in global affairs. This is because the shifting significance of physical space and of public space in the globalized context impacts the nature of, and possibilities for, citizenship engagement. If globalization can be defined as “the processes through which sovereign nation-states are crisscrossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientation, identities, and networks” (Beck, 2000; p. 11), then it becomes vital to consider the emergent forms of political participation that can, and are, facilitating this endeavour.

Deliberative democracy has received considerable attention in political theory over the course of the last 20 years, at least, as a response to the perceived inadequacies of representative democracy concerned with how to make legitimate decisions for society as a whole in the face of fundamental disagreement that is itself regarded as reasonable disagreement (Bohman 2000; Cohen, 1989; Fishkin, 1991; Guttman and Thompson, 2004; Habermas, 1991; Rawls, 1993). Guttman and Thompson (2004), for example, define deliberative democracy as “a form of government in which free and equal citizens justify decisions in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible, with the aim of reaching
conclusions that are binding in the present on all citizens but open to challenge in the future” (p. 7). Deliberative dialogue on controversial global issues could be regarded as a critical manifestation of civic engagement that can happen in, but is not limited to, territory or bounded physical space, capable of occurring both within and across nation-states. In the context of intensified globalization and interdependence when political decisions made within local and national contexts impact international politics and citizens of diverse nations, the characteristic of deliberative democracy that insists on justifying decisions to people who have to live with their consequences seems to imply that people living beyond the borders of individual polities should be included in the deliberative exercise on matters that impact them. Despite this contemporary context, nevertheless, most theorists of deliberative democracy apply its principles exclusively to domestic systems of government, and the question of the potential scope of deliberation is an area of disagreement among them (Guttman and Thompson, 2004).

The theory of deliberative democracy has also been critiqued for its elitist roots, neglect of difference, presumption of already-existing opinions, and emphasis on achieving consensus (Dryzek, 2001; Marion-Young, 2001; Mouffe, 1992 & 2000). A central premise underscored in these critiques is that democracy requires difference and deliberating with conflict – with controversies – and that consensus always involves some level of hegemony and exclusion (Mouffe, 1992 & 2000). For this reason, bringing controversy (and contra-verse) into the discussion of public issues via what Mouffe (2000) labels processes of radical democracy and agonistic pluralism - is essential for striving toward the creation of just and equitable democratic projects internally and internationally. The reason is because power is constitutive of identity and social relations; to deny this in processes of rational deliberation is essentially un-democratic. In her model, there is no rational resolution of conflict, rather - compromises are temporary respites in an ongoing confrontation because a truly democratic society acknowledges the pluralism of values and the unavoidable conflicts that it entails. While radical democrats agree on the need to recover such ideas as common good, civic virtue and political community, Mouffe concedes, they believe that they must be reformulated in a way that makes them compatible with the recognition of conflict and division. Certainly, the very question of what makes particular verses contra is vital to this project: contra to what and whom? A core question for deliberation is whose verses on particular issues are presumed as the norm against which contra-verse can be articulated.
Global Citizenship: A Cultural Artefact of a Particular Kind

The purpose of this overview has been to trace and identify some of the critical themes surrounding the notion of global citizenship via historical contextualization of its varied uses, meanings, criticisms and possibilities in order to contextualize the pedagogical perspectives advocated for in theories and practices of global citizenship education. What the overview reveals is that the notion of global citizenship, like the notion of citizenship, is a contested and fluid term – and as such, represents a cultural construct of a particular kind (Anderson, 1983). Just as is the case with citizenship, the contested nature of this concept, however, need not be interpreted as an obstacle for understanding its varied meaning(s). Instead, its uncertain nature can be critically engaged as an opportunity for addressing and deliberating the conditions that make it controversial – namely, the collusion of multiple perspectives and identities in problem-framing and problem-solving on global issues which implicate questions related to power, equity, and justice both in ways of talking and theorizing about global citizenship, and in the very real ways that individuals and systems are affected by contemporary global conditions. As with the notion of citizenship, recognizing how global citizenship is also a contested term is meaningful in that it commands acknowledgement of its ideological nature – and commands that we therefore interpret it, and discourse on it, through a lens filtered by questions of power and equity. Indeed, in these ways, controversy plays a critical role in any attempt at assessing what global citizenship might be, or mean – and for whom.

Underscoring the controversial dimensions of considerations for conceptualizing global citizenship need not be regarded as stifling but, more constructively, should be regarded as critical opportunity for engaging in practices of deliberative dialogue and agonistic pluralism in public spaces. Where deliberation invokes the activity of talking through unsettled issues from a variety of perspectives, for example, both the language of global citizenship and the varied complex global issues that the term invokes are indisputably unsettled. Yet, rather than striving for consensus, the uncertainty that surrounds them is what is itself important to harness – indeed, it is how this contentious term is most valuable, because it necessitates that a multiplicity of perspectives influenced by diverse worldviews, interests, geo-political persuasions, and cultural identities be accounted for in the deliberation of controversial global issues. Deliberative dialogue can provide the means to use the controversial and political aspects of global citizenship as opportunities for global citizenship engagement that can be activated by adults and youth alike in diverse public spheres, including the dialogic space (and often diverse space) afforded by the public school classroom.
2.2 Critical Democratic Global Citizenship Education

Changes and reconstitutions of political identities under conditions of globalization also have critical implications for what it means today to educate for citizenship (Crick, 1999; Hahn, 1998; Kerr, 1999; Osborne, 1997; Parker, 1996; Torney-Purta et al., 1999 & 2001) – a pedagogical imperative with a long history in public education. In turn, this has prompted attention to the representation of global citizenship in school curricula.

Global + Citizenship Education

Since the 1980’s a popular conception of global citizenship education in the West has most commonly resembled the development of more globally-oriented model of national civic education. Overlaps between citizenship education and global education, specifically, have led to some discussion of how global education might in some respects be interpreted as an extension of citizenship education, connecting the national focus with the larger needs of the planet, with citizenship education having the potential to act as a vehicle for the mainstreaming of global education (Davies, 2006; Osler and Vincent, 2002; Young and Cassidy, 2004). Pike (2000) draws specific attention, for example, to the importance of recognizing the ways that global education is conceptualized and enacted through the influence of the distinct national culture within which it occurs, inevitably including the historical and contemporary perspectives the nation holds of itself in the world. The ways that global education is itself conceptualized and enacted, in other words, will be interpreted through the influence of national culture. The inclusion of national identity as a resource in global citizenship education thereby challenges positions like Alger’s (1986) who contends that global education "requires the removal of the national border" (p. 257). Pike instead argues that global citizenship education demands crossing the perceptual threshold into an arena of contemplation that considers the priorities of one's own country as well as comprehension of the nation’s place in the global system. Osler and Starkey (2003), too, have proposed a reconceptualization of education for citizenship under conditions of globalization that builds on rather than denies multiple loyalties and sense of belonging within multi-localities. What they call ‘cosmopolitan citizenship’ does not mean asking individuals to reject their national citizenship or to accord it a lower status. Instead, they argue, education for cosmopolitan citizenship is about enabling learners to make connections between their immediate contexts and the national and global contexts. It also implies a broader understanding of national identity comprehensive enough for students to integrate their own experiences and
multiple and dynamic identities that embrace local, national and international perspectives. They argue that to neglect the personal and cultural aspects of citizenship is to ignore the issue of belonging. These versions of citizenship education reflect the development of more global-oriented model of national education. In these models, teachers’ and students’ engagement with their multiple identities involves critically reflecting on a complex web of personal attitudes and beliefs about the needs and obligations of national and global citizenship. Beyond having students think global and act local, for example, Davies (2006) argues that a third or middle dimension can be added to the usual phrase, so that it becomes “act local, analyze national, and think global” (2006, p. 10). In this way, students’ national identities, too, could be utilized as a critical resource for global citizenship education (Byers, 2007; Kymlicka, 2003; Pike, 2000; Richardson, 2002). In light of these considerations, questions have been raised whether it might be time to do away with the barriers that have traditionally separated these curricular areas of citizenship education and global education and to instead refer to a single conception of global citizenship education that incorporates local, national, and global issues and spheres for civic participation (Davies, Evans and Reid, 2005). Arguably, this citizenship education + global education formulation raises important considerations for post-colonial critiques of global citizenship/education in that citizenship education has itself long functioned as an institutional instrument of nation-work (Kymlicka, 2003) – including, for example, abhorrent projects of cultural assimilation and exclusion. Moreover, it is rare to locate any program of citizenship education that underscores the nation’s own complicity in domestic and/or international violence or its failures in foreign affairs.

Post-Colonial Considerations for Theories and Practices of Global Citizenship Education:
Exclusion, Marginality and Legacies of the Imperialist Project

Arguably, more recent configurations of critical global citizenship education (Andreotti, 2006; Lapayese, 2003; Schugurensky, 2005) are recognizably distinct from this global education + citizenship education (Davies, 2006) formulation that has prevailed over the course of the last two decades. Beyond accounting for the intersections between democratic citizenship and global education, applications of critical pedagogy to global citizenship education can go much deeper in their post-colonial orientation (Andreotti, 2006; Ellsworth, 1989; Rizvi, 2009; Tickly, 2009). These perspectives attend to the implications of not only the reproduction of unequal power relations within and across communities and nations through schooling, but they also pay critical
attention to how global citizenship education discourse itself, and the range of assumptions and practices that it privileges and reproduces, can perpetuate more than interrupt hegemonic discourses of universalism and charity. Critical global citizenship education critiques the ways that these can bypass considerations of the structural and historicized roots of inequality and of personal complicity, and instead further re-inscribe unequal power relations and perpetuate neo-colonial relations through this aspect of schooling. These implicate a confluence of a variety of educational discourses, including not only global citizenship education, but also related fields such as critical multicultural education, anti-oppression education, post-colonial studies in education, culturally responsive and relevant teaching, equity studies, Aboriginal education, eco-pedagogy, queer theory, gender studies in education, critical race studies in education, neoliberalization of schooling and curriculum (e.g. standardization and accountability), critical emotional literacy in education, and critical social theory of education (Andreotti, 2006 & 2011; Boler, 1999; Ellsworth, 1989; Eidoo et al., 2011; Gadotti; 1996; Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006; Lapayese, 2003; Leonardo; 2004; Macedo, 1999; Mohanty, 2004; Rizvi, 2009; Shultz, 2007; Tickly, 2009; Willinsky, 1998).

I have argued that a key condition distinguishing global citizenship in the 21st century from the various ways that world or universal citizenship have been taken up over the course of history is that today relationships between individuals, between humans and the earth, and between seemingly distinct global issues have become more proximate at the same time as they have become increasingly inequitable (and consequently also increasingly controversial, in light of individuals’ multiple identities and membership across diverse interests groups). While it is true that the global education + citizenship or citizenship education + global formulations of global citizenship education include attention to critical reflexivity about these conditions and their implications for behaviour, they do not go as deep as they could by way of encouraging opportunities for teachers and students to also consider the implications of, and for, their self-concepts and identities. Opportunities to name and interrogate taken-for-granted epistemic assumptions, for example, could make the move away from a global education that merely informs worldview and behaviour toward one that transforms worldview and behaviour from a position that provokes and is accountable to how ways of thinking and knowing, and not only particular actions (of individuals or governments) have, and continue to, create inequitable, hegemonic, and unjust relationships within and across nations. It is this deeper level of critical reflexivity, wherein the political is recognized as most personal and vice versa, that is underscored by theorists of critical global citizenship education.
Included among these, for example, are arguments for the recognition of indigenous, feminist, and eco-justice perspectives on/in global citizenship/education and attention to interlocking oppressions (Brooks, 2000; Weber-Pillwax, 2008; Whitman, 2007; Yeatman, 1993). Despite calls for re-establishing marginal discourses within (global) citizenship education, Willinsky (1998) argues that the educational project of post-colonialism in the West is only beginning:

The West has barely begun to see beyond the divisions generated by the same sensibilities that drove imperial expansion over the globe. We need to learn again how 5 centuries of studying, classifying, and ordering humanity within an imperial context gave rise to peculiar and powerful ideas of race, culture, and nation that were, in effect, conceptual instruments that the West used both to divide up and to educate the world. What comes, we now have to ask, of having one’s comprehension of the world so directly tied to one’s conquest of it? (1998; p. 2-3)

His emphasis on the imposition of languages and literatures on the colonized past begs the question of the educational legacy of imperialism and how the languages and literatures of global citizenship/education present take up particular manifestations of the colonial legacy as a consequence of what he acknowledges is for many of us the unconscious aspect of “the colonially tainted understandings we carry” (p. 3). He argues that students in the West need to question “how it is that white is a color that need not name itself” (p. 8). From this perspective, a critical component of Canadian students’ global citizenship education then is to prepare them to address the history of identities that imperialism has bestowed upon them, and to understand their own education and the education of others as a worthy object of inquiry. In Willinsky’s words, “there is a need to examine education’s continuing contributions to what were and continue to be colonizing divisions of the world” (1998, p. 2). Toward this end, he appeals to Graff (1992) who calls on scholars to teach the conflicts and recommends that classrooms explore the contest of ideas that dominate public forums and scholarly enclaves.

Post-colonial considerations for global citizenship have also been raised from within the field of environmental education (Dobson, 2004; Gough, 2003; Stevenson, 1997). Gough (2003), for example, argues that a neo-colonialist discourse has pervaded environmental education by systematically privileging Western interests and perspectives, including through the development of models that promote the interests of developed nations by obscuring the exploitation, domination, and social inequities underlying global environmental degradation. Calling out the conflation of Western science with global science, Gough reminds us that the same scientific facts produce different meanings for different people, and argues that “pretending that these representations are a-cultural is an imperialist act and an act of attempted intellectual
colonization‖ (p. 63). Gough’s concern is with “the blind spots that may still remain in the vision of even the most culturally sensitive environmental educators” (Ibid). The critical question that he poses for consideration within the environmental education context is: How can we think globally without enacting some form of epistemological imperialism? From this perspective, students necessitate opportunities for understanding Western science as a specific way of thinking locally.

Indeed, the location of controversial issues in global citizenship education from these perspectives takes on ever-greater significance because controversy is not only raised in relation to deliberating questions about what to do about global issues, but also for deliberating difficult questions around what and whose verses underpin how controversial global issues are conceptualized, and for deliberating possibilities for contra-verbs to do the same. What makes this version of global citizenship education itself controversial is that rather than positioning itself in neutral, it invites teachers and students to explicitly challenge taken-for-granted assumptions within prevailing paradigms of globalization and citizenship that serve the interests of dominant groups (Lapayese, 2003; Pashby, 2008;). Thus, critical global citizenship education, distinct from soft (Andreotti, 2006) or caring (Schugurensky, 2005) global citizenship education, takes 21st century conditions and concerns surrounding the contentious relationship between equity, power, and democracy as core pedagogical foci. These difficult issues provoke difficult and controversial questions about identity, complicity, and processes for global civic engagement – yet their uncertainty similarly provokes opportunity for transformative exchanges within and between students. What is particularly novel about critical global citizenship education is the degree to which the theme of critical reflexivity is prioritized, encouraging teachers and students alike to engage their epistemic assumptions and their own social identity locations marked by power and privilege, within global interdependent relations characterized by deep inequity and injustice.

**Reflexive Practice: Identity, Beliefs, Feelings/Emotion, and Agency**

Only beings who can reflect upon the fact that they are determined are capable of freeing themselves…conscientization is viable only because [human] consciousness, although conditioned, can recognize that it is conditioned. (Freire, 1985; p. 68-69)

A central characteristic of critical pedagogy and critical post-colonial considerations of global citizenship education is reflexive practice. Teachers and students are encouraged to critically engage learning material in terms of how it intersects with their own identities,
including their social identity locations, values, beliefs, assumptions, experiences, prior knowledge, traditions, and interests. The focus on questioning in critical pedagogy implicates identity because it asks teachers and students to critically engage relationships – not only between external phenomenon believed to exist outside of the self, but relationships that implicate the self and how it perceives, interacts with, has been formed by, and actively shapes the material and social world across space and time. Naming and rethinking assumptions, for example, involves rethinking origins and implications of assumptions and the social construction of knowledge by attending to how particular aspects of self and identity are formed by, and contribute to shaping, assumptions about what one thinks one knows and why, including knowledge about who we believe we are in relation to others and to the world.

Paolo Freire’s conceptualizations of conscientization and praxis are early illustrations of critical pedagogical attention to reflexivity. Conscientization, or critical consciousness, underscores the importance of individuals’ capacity to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions so that individuals can take action against the oppressive elements of society. Individual perception, however, is significantly impacted by a myriad of influences, including culture and education, which are, themselves impacted by social relations mediated by power. As a result, perceiving these contradictions does not come easily, because in many instances these implicate systems, habits, traditions, and knowledge that are commonly perceived to represent common sense or how things are done. To perceive these contradictions necessitates learning, including learning to understand how perception always implicates exclusions (what we do not, or choose not, to see). Foremost, engaging with perception implicates engaging with identity and relationships between identities, ways of knowing, and ways of being. Critically engaging with perception implicates not only learning to look beneath and outside of texts and dominant discourses, but also looking beneath and outside of our perceptions. In this way, conscientization involves learning to critically engage the material comprising our sense of self and our identities. This is reflexive work – it involves paying attention to the relationship between inner consciousness and its external implications.

Freire argued that realizing one’s consciousness is a needed first step of praxis which he defined as the power and know-how to take action against oppression, involving engagement in a cycle of theory, application, evaluation, reflection, and then back to theory. Social transformation, he asserted, is the product of praxis at the collective level. Conscientization and praxis articulate reflexive practice in their attention to the multidirectional and intimate relationships between ways of thinking and ways of being/behaving, including engagement with
the discourse dimensions of identity and of action. Critical pedagogy recognizes that these discourse dimensions of identity and action necessitate reflexive practice because reflexivity involves voluntary critical engagement with involuntary responses (e.g. what we think we know about who we are and about the nature of knowledge and reality; what we take as given). This flexing practice, moreover, needs to be engaged consistently in response to the extent that notions of common sense are so deeply engrained in culture and everyday life. This identity work (distinct from conventional notion of taking action) and its potential for unlearning is wherein lie conditions of possibility for transformative education that not only acknowledges but responds to inequity.

Freire heavily endorsed students’ ability to think critically about their education situation, in particular, asserting that this way of thinking allowed them to recognize connections between their individual problems and experiences and the social contexts in which they are embedded. Critical pedagogy and critical global citizenship education call for increased pedagogical attention to learning material that is relevant and responsive to students’ identities and experiences, to complexities that surround teacher and student identity locations, and to how each of these considerations impact classroom climate and students’ engagement with the learning material. In addition to the diversity represented in school classrooms in terms of gender, race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity, students in today’s classrooms represent not only a variety of religions and cultures but also different perspectives within similar religions and cultures (Niyozov, 2010). Freire (1998) spoke about the importance of attending to students’ identities and experiences, stating:

> It is impossible to talk of respect for students, for the dignity that is in the process of coming to be, for the identities that arise in the process of construction, without taking into consideration the conditions in which they are living and the importance of the knowledge derived from life experience, which they bring with them to school. (p. 62)

Distinct from approaches to schooling and pedagogy that inscribe distance between what children learn in schools and what they experience in their homes, communities, and everyday lives, the pedagogical emphasis is instead placed on students’ concrete and experienced lives, or what Portelli and Vibert have called a curriculum of life (2001). A curriculum of life is grounded in the immediate world of students as well as in the larger social, political, contexts of their lives. Such approaches are concerned with breaking down the walls so commonly erected between the school and the world by addressing questions of how to live well together, and by asking difficult questions about the larger social and political contexts in which these worlds are embedded. In this conception of curriculum:
Students’ lives and worlds are not addressed as factors that need to be excused, pitied, mediated, or fixed in order to get on with the curriculum, but as the vital ground of, or for, learning. This is an approach to curriculum that presupposes genuine respect for children’s minds and experience – without romanticizing either…The curriculum of life attends to the actual, immediate and urgent experiences, issues, and questions of children in schools (Portelli and Vibert, 2001; p. 78-79).

One outcome that critical pedagogy is interested in is for students to reflect on their location (and degree of complicity) within a variety of competing ideologies and possibilities (Appleman, 2000).

Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989), in her critique of dominant discourses of critical pedagogy, asks us to go further and deeper in this pursuit. While we need classroom practices that are context-specific and more responsive to students’ identities and experiences, she argues, it is also vital that teachers deepen their own understandings of their social identities and situations. This includes teachers’ interests aligned with their own race, class, ethnicity, gender and other positions. For this reason, she argues, teachers cannot play the role of disinterested mediator:

Teachers bring social subjectivities that have been constructed in such a way that they can never participate unproblematically in the collective process of self-definition, naming of oppression, and struggles for visibility in the face of marginalization engaged in by students whose class, race, gender, and other positions they do not share. Critical pedagogues are always implicated in the very structures they are trying to change…. [When they] fail to examine the implications of the gendered, raced, and classed teacher and student for the theory of critical pedagogy, they reproduce, by default, the category of generic critical teacher…a discursive category predicated on the current mythical norm: namely, young, white, Christian, middle class, heterosexual, able bodied, thin, rational, man (p. 310).

Key responsive practices that Ellsworth advocates include understanding that students’ and teachers’ asymmetrical positions of difference and privilege intersect uneasily with assumptions that all classroom members have equal opportunity to speak, that all members respect other members’ rights to speak and feel safe to speak, and that all ideas are tolerated and subjected to rational critical assessment against fundamental judgments and moral principles. Teachers should not assume a classroom of students unified on the side of the subordinated against the subordinators, she argues, but should instead “confront dynamics of subordination present among classroom participants and within classroom participants in the form of multiple and contradictory subject positions” (Ellsworth, 1989; p. 315). If we are to respond to our context and the social identities of students in ways that do not reproduce the repressive formations we are trying to work against, she asserts, we need classroom practices that confront the power dynamics inside and outside of our classroom that make democratic dialogue impossible - including naming and addressing how all voices in the classroom do not cannot carry equal
legitimacy, safety, and power in dialogue at this historical moment. Social agents are not capable of being fully rational and disinterested, she reminds us, because they are subjects split between the conscious and the unconscious and among multiple social positionings.

Andreotti (2006, 2011) similarly attends to the importance of critical reflexive engagement with students’ and teachers’ multiple identity locations and considers the implications for critical global citizenship education. Critical literacy, for example, can function as reflexive practice to the extent that it encourages learners to read beneath the surface not only of texts, but of selves in terms of understanding the constructed dimensions of identity. In this sense, Andreotti argues, critical literacy is not about unveiling the truth for the learners, but about providing the space for them to reflect on their context and their own and others’ epistemological and ontological assumptions: how we came to think/feel/act the way we do. An important practice for critical global citizenship education that she advocates, then, is hyper-self-reflexivity as an opening to modes of being not anchored in (allegedly) universal reason, whereby subjects consistently and self-consciously take account of where they are speaking from. These locations, moreover, are plural to the extent that subjects occupy multiple identity locations and subject positions. In relation to global citizenship education, in particular, Andreotti encourages a critical orientation that involves teachers and students reflexively considering where they are speaking from as global citizens and as global educators/learners, including attending to the ways that they and their nation are implicated and complicit in local and global problems and contemporary civilizing missions.

Dominant discourses of schooling and society that operate within positivistic paradigms often reinforce the belief that identity refers to singular, stable, and secure – something that can be known and held onto. Such essentialist-oriented understandings can enable feelings of comfort and security for individuals’ self-conceptions, but also for validating what we think we know about Others. By creating opportunities for students to question and unlearn taken-for-granted assumptions that define common sense and consider their identities as complex, unsettled, multiple, and mediated by power, critical global citizenship education is unsettling in that it uproots feelings of comfort and stability that accompany understandings of knowledge and identity as given. In turn, students and teachers may experience an array of feelings such as discomfort, fear, uncertainty, relief, conflict, concern, anger, resentment, distrust, or complicity; they may feel defensive, guilty, threatened, and/or motivated etc. These emotions are entangled with the discourse dimensions of identity, beliefs, and behaviour. By recognizing emotion and feeling as ways of knowing, critical global citizenship education disrupts dominant discourses
that privilege reason and that relegate emotion as a binary extreme perceived to have no place in the public sphere or in education.

Arguably, the emotive aspect of critical reflexivity does not currently hold a prominent position within theories and practices of critical pedagogy or critical global citizenship education. It has, nevertheless, been prioritized by a range of critical pedagogues over the years via attention to pedagogy of love and community, and to naming feelings of despair as conditions for articulating conditions for hope (Freire, 2004; hooks, 2003; O’Sullivan, 1999). Freire, for example, addressed the sensation of total collapse of your world that accompanies conscientization. In her work on pedagogies of emotion, affect, and discomfort (1999), Megan Boler brings the feeling dimensions of critical pedagogy to the fore, and argues that a primary and under-explored source of transformation and resistance is our emotional experience. Our emotions, she argues, are a site of oppression as well as a source of radical social and political resistance in their capacity to help us to envision future horizons of possibilities and who we want to become, and to help us resist dominant cultural norms and the imposition of authority. Asserting her belief that emotions need to be brought out of the private and into the public sphere, Boler argues that educators and students thus require systematic accounts of how emotions shape the selectivity of our cognitive and ethical attention and vision. Toward that end, Boler argues for more attention to the relationship between identity, knowledge and emotion: including theories of subjectivity and epistemology. She argues for theories of knowledge that explore the role emotions play in shaping our perceptions, our selection of what we pay attention to, and our values that in turn determine what seems important to explore. This involves paying attention to how the boundary between truth and reason on one side, and subjective bias and emotion on the other (reproduced in hegemonic discourses of teaching controversial issues)—has not been constructed as a neutral division (relegating emotion to the negative side of the binary).

Following from these considerations, she asks us to pay attention to the effect of affect in classrooms and schools, and what both educators and students stand to gain by engaging in the discomforting process of questioning our learned values and assumptions through critical engagement with controversial issues.

Because of the intimate relationship between emotion and cognition, Boler argues that we need pedagogy that explores the emotional dimensions of our cognitive and moral perception. The pedagogies of discomfort and critical emotional literacy that she proposes invite teachers and students to examine how our modes of seeing have been specifically shaped by the dominant culture—examinations which may lead to defensive anger and fears of losing our cultural and
personal identity. Boler refers to emotional epistemologies (1999), for example, as a way of teaching students how to combine passionate response with critical analysis, including learning to define and identify how and when particular emotions inform and define knowledge, and learning to outline the mutually interdependent ways in which feelings and reality construct one another.

Andreetti (2006, 2011) also addresses how reflexivity in critical global citizenship education can lead to feelings of guilt, internal conflict and paralysis, critical disengagement, and feelings of helplessness. She asks: how do we support learners in the difficult stages of this undoing when they face the uncertainty, fear, loss of ground, anger and possible paralysis that comes in the early stages of the renegotiation of epistemic privilege? Her response is that teachers and students need to learn to conceptualize knowledge, culture and identities as verbs (Bhabha, 1994), and to resist homogenizations while affirming specificities.

Foremost, critical reflexivity involves paying attention to the relationship between inner consciousness and its external implications – that is, to the multidirectional and intimate relationships between ways of thinking, knowing, being, and behaving. Freire called this the enactment of praxis. Dewey called it education for direct participation. As a further subversion of dominant discourses of education and schooling that regard both teachers and students as agents that can only be acted upon, critical pedagogy and critical global citizenship education prioritize the enactment of teacher and student agency. They affirm that “learning is fundamental to the question of agency, and agency is fundamental to the question of politics” (Henry Giroux, www.freireproject.org/content/critical-pedagogy-tv). Together, educators build with students a discourse that reminds us all that our actions are inscribed by the very structures that we create, and that subjective agency creates conditions for objective institutional changes (Leonardo, 2004; Shilling, 1992).

Critical global citizenship asserts the possibility of education as a site of social transformation, but also a site wherein individuals can take action to recreate themselves and to become authors of their own world (Greene, 1988; p. 22). This is how Freire, for example, envisioned education as the practice of freedom. As a means of challenging dominant liberal demands for stable definitions of cultural groups that are presumed to be homogenous and unchanging, critical pedagogy involves attending to how students are constantly engaged in the production of their own cultural representations through expressive means, such as electronic media, music, dramatic play, fashion, and other forms of visual culture (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2010). Critical pedagogy’s conception of cultural production, then, views both students and
teachers as *makers* of culture. In this way, critical pedagogy asserts that students’ diverse identities are neither raw material nor a set of stereotypes already predefined. Instead, difference is embraced as the central value to be encouraged and from which the production of culture begins.

Critical global citizenship education also attends to the relationship between reflexivity and agency by cautioning that without opportunities to practice critical reflexivity, teaching kids that they can take action to save the world has the potential to re-inscribe dominant discourses of charity that perpetuate neo-colonial relations by positioning the Global North as comprised of global citizen actors and the Global South as comprising those who can only be acted upon. In response to this dangerous potential, critical global citizenship education calls attention to critical reflexive engagement with dominant ways of thinking and their implications for behaviour (the discourse dimension of action both as a constraint and a condition for possibility), which can itself be a form of action that students can engage in. This would involve teaching students to analyze their own position/context and to participate in changing structures, assumptions, identities, attitudes and power relations in their contexts. This approach tries to promote change without telling learners what they should think or do, by creating spaces to analyze and experiment with other forms of seeing/thinking and being/relating. The focus is on the historical/cultural production of knowledge and power in order to empower learners to participate in re-storying dominant discourses that are oppressive, inequitable, and unjust.

Andreotti (2006) and Ellsworth (1989), finally, also argue that a more deeply critical pedagogy is one that also involves *disciplinary* reflexivity - that is, critical engagement with its own goals, discourses, intentions, and practices. This might involve persistent critical discursive engagement with the ways that themes of empowerment, student voice, dialogue, and even the term critical can also perpetuate relations of domination. This position asserts that critical pedagogues are always implicated in the very structures they are trying to change.

**Global Citizenship Education: Controversial Construct**

Indeed, like the concepts of citizenship and global citizenship, education for global citizenship is a complex and contested concept (Shultz, 2007). Just as tensions between economic and environmental interests are highlighted in perspectives on global citizenship in political theory, similar tensions are also present in educational discourse with regard to *motivations for teaching and learning* global citizenship (i.e. global citizenship for what?). Where ecological and economic systems both drive intensified global interdependence,
Curriculum policy can highlight preparing students to participate and compete in the global market (Canadian Council of Ministers of Education, 2001; O’Sullivan, 1995), at the same time it highlights preparing students to act in the world guided by principles of social and environmental justice. In this way, democratic values and market values find themselves co-existing in policy, albeit in tension. In particular, one area of contention surrounds how the simultaneous representation of each of these interpretations of global citizenship has the potential to communicate conflicting messages for both teachers and students because global economic market structures are a fundamental factor in creating and sustaining social and environmental injustice. These provoke questions of who decides what a global citizenship curriculum should look like, particularly in a context of education for democracy, and in whose interests such definitions are operationalized in school curriculum and classrooms.

Whether teachers make it explicit or not, when they are educating for global citizenship they are teaching controversial issues, because both its purpose(s) as well as its curricular content, are intimately bound to questions of diversity, power, equity, and democracy. However, like global citizenship, the contentious dimensions of global citizenship education create opportunities for deliberating with students the conditions that make them controversial – namely, the collusion of multiple perspectives and identities in problem-framing and problem-solving on global issues which implicate questions related to power, equity, and justice in ways of talking about, theorizing, and practicing global citizenship, and in the very real ways that controversial global issues have material consequences for peoples and living systems. Indeed, students can learn to recognize how conflict plays a critical role in any attempt at assessing what ‘global citizenship’ might mean – and for whom. Deliberative dialogue in the classroom can invoke the activity of talking through unsettled issues from a variety of perspectives, including how both the language of global citizenship and the varied complex issues that the term invokes are indisputably unsettled. Teachers and students can learn to harness the uncertainty and controversy of these issues and themes to practice global citizenship engagement via reflexive practice and deliberative dialogue on contested issues in the public sphere of the school classroom. Later, I review perspectives that explicitly underscore the importance of controversy for students’ critical democratic global citizenship education, and I identify some of the challenges, pedagogical strategies, and learning outcomes that have been found to date. First though, I review historical and contemporary considerations of democratic and global citizenship education in Canada and Canadian curriculum policy.
2.3 Democratic Citizenship Education in Canada

There are important considerations specific to the Canadian context that enables a more holistic interpretation of the research findings. Most significantly, these considerations include: 1) the regional geo-political character of Canada, 2) the structure of the Canadian education system, 3) the history of the repression and expansion of civic rights in Canada to specific identity groups, 4) the primacy of liberal multiculturalism in policy (and critiques of multicultural policy in practice), 5) the dearth of empirical studies on democratic citizenship education and on the teaching of controversial issues in Canada, in particular, and 6) the implications of the educational research that has been conducted to date, and the further questions it provokes. I address these points together in the form of a synthesized review of [democratic and global] citizenship education in Canada.

Canadian Regionalism

“It is where we are that matters. We need to write in a detailed way the ‘topos’ - the particular places and regions where we live and work - and how these places are inscribed in our theorizing, as either presence or absence, whether we want them there or not.”

(Cynthia Chambers, A Topography for Canadian Curriculum Theory; 1999; p. 147)

While Canada is comprised of ten provinces and three territories, regionalism has historically been regarded as a “pre-eminent fact of Canadian life” (Simeon and Elkins, 1974; p. 397). This has, at least in part, contributed to the prevalent view of Canada as lacking national unity and identity. The Canadian socio-cultural, linguistic, economic, and geo-political landscape includes 2 official languages (although 1 in 5 Canadians have a first language other than English or French), pluralized politics, multicultural identities, geographical segmentation, and regional economic patterns (and location of specific natural resource industries) which all contribute to rendering Western, Northern, Central, and Eastern Canada distinct in character. The regional character of Canada has also been affirmed through patterns of conflict — the West versus central Canada, and so on – which tend to be taken up most commonly when referring to electoral behaviour and federal politics. Relatedly, representation in the Canadian Senate is also distributed on a regional basis (the West, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic). Regionalism is also evident in the metaphor of Canada’s “mosaic” intended to articulate its approach to cultural diversity. Distinct from the American “melting pot,” the mosaic affirms the lines between
individual pieces of a greater whole – at once separating and holding distinct pieces together. These can at once be interpreted in terms of the geographical and socio-political locations of Canada’s ethno-cultural-linguistic diversity as well as in terms of the provincial and regional character of this nation.

The education sector, in particular, is a telling indicator of the regional geo-political character of Canada. Education in Canada falls within provincial and territorial, rather than federal, jurisdiction, and while there surely exists a certain “common countenance of Canadian education” (Tomkins, 1986), and the Canadian Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC) works to achieve a particular level of congruence across the provinces and territories, there nevertheless exists a degree of differentiation that is most recognizable along regional, more so than provincial, lines. Various provinces and territories, for example, work together regionally to co-author and share foundation curriculum documents and educational policy frameworks (the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol and the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation). Additionally, although the Northwest Territories and Nunavut are members of WNCP, they develop their own programs of studies, including Inuuqatigiit curriculum, which is curriculum from the Inuit perspective, and Dene Kede, the curriculum from a Dene perspective (www.ece.gov.nt.ca).

I am highlighting the regional character of Canada for several reasons. For one, for the reasons that I just noted it was important to me to at minimum have representation from each region in the survey (if not from each province and territory), because the differentiation across curricular and policy frameworks occurs more across regional, than provincial or territorial, lines. A further reason is an argument put forth by John Porter in his seminal work The Vertical Mosaic (1969), in which he posits a relationship between regional identification in Canada and broader social values. I was interested in bearing this relationship in mind as I looked at which issues Canadian teachers working in diverse regions of the country identified as controversial and why, as well as what factors teachers in the diverse regions identified as impacting their work in this area. Finally, Canadian regionalism is also relevant for calling attention to the location of difference, cohesion, and pluralism in the history of Canadian citizenship education and as prominent markers of Canadian identity. Careless (1969), in his paper Limited Identities in Canada, argued that the distinctive nature of much of Canadian experience has produced a "continent-wide entity identifiable (my italics) in its very pluralism, constraints, and compromises” (p. 9). In other words, while the location of difference, plurality, and conflict in Canadian history and identity are often cited as obstacles to defining a singular Canadian
identity, these traits can be opportunities. If we describe our ‘identity’ as plural and difficult (distinct from plural and cohesive), we acknowledge conflict as a Canadian trait as well. These character traits associated with difference, difficulty, and conflict, if taken up explicitly and self-reflexively, can be assets both for democracy and democratic citizenship education in Canada. In order for that to happen, however, it is important that name the tensions, conflicts, struggles and stories that Canadians are not proud of – stories of inclusion and exclusion, non-intervention, approaches to difference and multiculturalism, and legacies of marginalization and assimilation – historical as well as contemporary.

**Democratic Citizenship/Education in Canada: Past & Present**

Tracing the trajectory of citizenship/education in Canada involves attending to questions of identity, belonging, and membership in political community - each delineating not only who ‘we’ are but also who ‘we’ are not (Delanty, 1999) and each underscoring the persistent political struggles implicated in inclusions/exclusions and efforts towards constructing an identifiable Canadian citizen and cohesive Canadian citizenry. In Canada as elsewhere, education systems were first created as part of the same state forming process that established the modern nation state (Davies, Evans and Reid, 2005). In this regard, citizenship education has long been recognized as one of the fundamental purposes of schooling (Anderson, Avery, Pederson, Smith, and Sullivan, 1997) with schools used as a vehicle for constructing national identity (Osborne, 1997), and for establishing parameters around who ‘we’ are as Canadians. Citizenship education has, in turn, long functioned as an institutional instrument of nation-work, including abhorrent projects of cultural assimilation and exclusion (Kymlicka, 2003) that serve as reminders that citizenship education for democracy in Canada is inextricably bound up with historical and on-going colonizing relationships. Exclusions are further evident when acknowledging that the extension of full citizenship rights to women, Aboriginal Peoples, visible minorities/global majorities, differently-abled, and sexual minorities has been gradual in Canada, invoking consistent struggle and advocacy work that persists in today’s Canadian political landscape (Ungerleider, 1992; Sears and Hughes, 1996; Nicholas, 1996). This has been most evident in the advocacy work by First Nations Peoples in their struggles for constitutional recognition of the inherent right to self-government; to be recognized as nations within Canada. Other prominent democratic citizenship-oriented struggles in Canada have also included questions surrounding minority language rights and Quebec sovereignty, and the rights of sexual minorities.
Canada is unique, however, in its institutionalization of the *Multiculturalism Act* (1988) and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. These policies and charters have helped shape citizenship and citizenship education in Canada in terms of establishing a pluralist ideal (Sears, Clarke, and Hughes, 1999) – evident, for example, by the range of public, separate, religious, language, and more recently, Africentric schools in Canada. At the same time, the pluralist ideal has also meant the establishment of a socio-political landscape primed for conflicts of interests and conflicts across and between individual and collective identity rights. In light of this historic-political context of citizenship in Canada, Sears, Clarke, and Hughes (1999) have argued that there has not been a single conception of democratic citizenship that has formed the basis for civic *education* in Canada but rather differing conceptions. They position these along continua of elitist to activist approaches to citizenship education. Over the course of the last few decades many educational researchers in Canada have posited that citizenship education in Canada has been, and continues to be, positioned closer to the elitist extreme of the continuum in its concern with cultivating political subjects more so than political agents. In these ways, Nabavi (2010) reminds us that Canada’s approach to citizenship education remains significantly antithetical to the recommendations of international (Torney-Purta et al., 1999) and national studies (Sears & Hughes, 1996), independent policy recommendations (South House Exchange 2001), and theoretical contributions (see Bellagio Citizenship Education and Diversity Conference in Banks, 2004). Despite this, she also succinctly identifies how educators, curriculum developers, and educational researchers (Dei, 1996; Evans & Hundey, 2000; Goldstein & Selby, 2000; Joshee, 2004; Shultz, 2007; Bickmore, 2008; Sears, Thompson, Peck, Joshee, and Chareka, 2010) continue to strive to push the boundaries of pedagogical approaches that address the complexities of citizenship education:

To this end, the focus is placed on social citizenship versus substantive, legal definitions of citizenship. Included are curricula attempts to infuse justice oriented approaches in citizenship education such as multicultural and anti-racist education, ecological education, and critical explorations of globalization… representing progressive views toward citizenship education and the view that democracy and political voice need be central to democratic citizenship (Nabavi, 2010; p.6).

Today, a concern for citizenship education figures in the policy of all jurisdictions, but only in Ontario and British Columbia does the term civic education appear as separate course designation in Canada. The notion of citizenship is nevertheless commonly located in curriculum policy documents in the front matter of policy which describes the broader rationale and essential learning goals of school curricula more generally in Canada. The following description
articulated by Sears, Clarke, and Hughes (1999), is an example of how the notion of citizenship and the contemporary goals of citizenship education tend to be taken up in Canadian curriculum policy mandates:

All students will become active and concerned citizens, knowledgeable about their community, province and country, and its place in the global village (NB curriculum development branch, 1996).

This excerpt also elucidates how global dimensions of citizenship are also increasingly visible in curriculum policy documents (principally the front matter), and the question of how these are translating into classroom practice has been the object of some recent educational research in Canada (Mundy, 2007; Evans et al., 2009). In their study of Canadian teacher’s conceptualizations and pedagogical practices for global citizenship education Evans et al. found that teaching controversial issues does not figure significantly in how Canadian teachers conceptualize or practice global citizenship education. Most recently, in their theoretical review of social cohesion and diversity in Canadian citizenship education, Sears et al. (2010) argued that attention to diversity education in Canada remains superficial and limited, and does not do justice to the complexities of difference and accommodation. They posited that citizenship education in Canadian schools still focuses, almost wholly, on creating citizens to operate in the context of the nation state. They argued that what is essential for moving forward toward a citizenship education that engages critically and productively with Canada’s deep diversity is a more substantial understanding of just what that diversity is and how people – particularly students and teachers – conceptualize it. The work conducted by Carla Peck (2010) out of the University of Alberta, for example, has examined the influence of British Columbian high school students’ ethnic identities on their constructions of Canadian historical narratives and ascriptions of historical significance. Peck found that students had explicit ideas about the kind of story of Canada they wanted to tell and in all cases their ideas were tied to their ethnic identities. In some cases, she found that students suppressed their own ethnic identities in favour of creating a narrative of Canadian history that would appeal to a more general population. In other cases, she found that students selected events for their timeline (either consciously or not) that reflected their ethnic identity and/or their perceptions of their place in Canadian history.

In the period since Hodgett’s study (1968), then, various studies have been conducted that have implications for approaching an understanding of contemporary Canadian citizenship education.

While the research that has been conducted on citizenship education in Canada over the course of the last 44 years has not attended specifically to the question of teaching controversial issues in Canada, it has nevertheless focused on distinct components of democratic citizenship
education that inform this dissertation study – from themes of social cohesion and diversity, to the representation of difference and conflict, to the passive versus more active citizenship-oriented learning goal and pedagogy, to the global dimensions of citizenship. These studies have called for demonstrable attention to more empirical data on teaching and learning for democratic citizenship education in Canada, including what challenges Canadian teachers are facing, how the knowledge, skills and dispositions of citizenship are not just being represented in education policy and curricula but also how they are being taught in Canadian classrooms, and how the conceptual and pedagogical approaches to citizenship education in Canada are aligning, and not (Evans, 2006; Joshee, 2004; Osborne, 1997; Sears & Hughes, 1996). It is my hope that the findings from this dissertation study, in their attention to teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues and how these intersect with the multiple identities of teachers and students can contribute to responding to these calls.

Narrating the Nation in the World in Theory & Practice: The Politics of Canadian Curriculum Policy as an Instrument of “Nation-Work”

“As I suspect you will agree, it is the thrust of one’s narrative that counts, not the accuracy of one’s details”
(from Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist, 2007; p. 118)

The political nature of curriculum text and policy is particularly powerful in its construction and delineation of ‘official’ and prescribed knowledge. While teachers who teach with controversial issues are often confronted by stakeholders’ concerns about whether they ‘impose their views’ when teaching controversial issues, the question of how curriculum policy itself imposes views largely goes unnoticed. Here, critical questions for consideration include: Whose views are represented in curriculum policy (Klein, 1991)? What knowledge is of most worth (Spencer, 1859)? Why and how do the views expressed via curriculum policy appear natural and legitimate? What function and whose interests do they serve? Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Giroux (1993), Apple (1993), McLaren (1999) and others argue that the views, or meta-narratives (Lyotard, 1993) expressed via curriculum policy are often those motivated by the reproduction of status quo ideals which function to marginalize and privilege distinct interest groups and legitimize existing social and economic structures at the expense of other perspectives. In these ways, the curriculum text symbolizes the relationship between power and knowledge and “the partial process through which textual meaning is produced through the interpretation of events that have a certain privileged visibility” (Bhabha, 1990; 2-3). Indeed,
one of the obstacles to recognizing the construction of curriculum policy is that it is difficult to see what has not been included in it – that is, the ‘null curriculum’, or what schools do not teach (Flinders, 1986). Together, these issues raise an important question for ‘teaching with uncertainty’ as a component of teaching with controversial issues: how does ‘not-knowing’ fit with our perceptions of curriculum?

The relationship between national identity and public education in Canada has always been an intimate one. Indeed, as “an instrument of nation-work” (Kymlicka, 2003), curriculum policy is one source for ‘reading’ the range of ways that Canada as a nation tells the story of what it means to be Canadian and a Canadian in the world. The school curriculum has long been used as a vehicle for promoting national values, and for establishing not only who ‘we’ are, but also who ‘we’ are not (Richardson, 2004; Goodson, 1990; Heater, 1980; Tye, 2003).

Curriculum, like the national anthem, is one mechanism for constructing, telling, and reproducing the story of the nation, or the ‘master narratives of the nation’ (Jelin, 2003). Questions provoked by this analogy might include: Who, or what, is the ‘thee’ for which ‘we’ ―stand guard‖? Is it the nation (as imagined community), the people of the nation (all?), or the story of the nation?

In Canada, one ‘great collective narrative’ (Letourneau, 2004) told has privileged this focus on characterizations of peace, inclusion, diversity, and tolerance. Certainly, one of the primary ways that Canada, as imagined community, has been narrated is as a multicultural nation (particularly in the Post-Trudeau era), a ‘mosaic’ comprised of diverse individuals who value inclusion, tolerance, democracy, and peace. Remembrance of Canada as a peacekeeping nation and a nation with inclusive policies of immigration and multiculturalism, for example, abounds in historical educational texts in this country. These stories function as one mechanism for narrating equitable, cohesive, horizontal comradeship of Canadian community in their emphasis on what are perceived to be overarching values, attitudes, and policies intended to guide, influence, and inform individual and collective behaviour and ways of relating to one another. The reality on the ground, however, diverges from this ideal in complex ways. Arguably, the consistent, and persistent, self-conscious reference to Canada as welcoming and tolerant of others could be interpreted as one way in which Canada reinforces discourses and practices of Othering by way of categorizing and labeling its attitude toward immigrants and immigration. Montgomery (2005), for example, argues:

So entrenched in national consciousness is the very idea of Canadian multiculturalism, it is practically taken for granted that Canada is representative of the good and tolerant civic type of
nationalism and not its more tribal and divisive counterpart, ethnic nationalism... Canada is heralded explicitly in history textbooks as a nation built and dependent on diversity for a sense of its own self and purpose...it is presented as a place now so tolerant, so ethnically plural and harmonious, and so thoroughly governed by state multiculturalism that racelessness has come to rule over matters of race (p. 314, p. 335).

The popular metaphor of Canada as a multicultural mosaic provokes questions concerning the symbolic emphasis in this metaphor on multiple identity groups being held together. What is understood to be the glue that holds these disparate pieces together? Moreover, distinct from being narrowly interpreted as the glue that connects them, how does this glue also act to keep these pieces apart from one another? I return to this question in the concluding chapter.

At a University of British Columbia symposium on the meanings of global citizenship in September 2005, Eunice Sahle, a Kenyan-born Canadian who teaches at the University of North Carolina, argued that those who invoke global citizenship tend not to address deep power structures (Byers, 2007). In response, Canadian scholar Michael Byers argued that if we are going to talk about global citizenship, let’s talk frankly about how and where power vests and is wielded in today’s world, about our own country’s complicity in the global power game. In other words, he argues that Canada should ‘tell it like we are’ (Barnes and Duncan, 1992). Canada, however, is commonly characterized for not being entirely sure of its identity. Nevertheless, the infamously uncertain dimension of Canadian identity is an opportunity for reconstructing and performing Canadian identity and for living out the question of who we want to be.

Teachers mediate the relationship between what students are intended to learn and what and how they do learn. Marsh and Willis (2003) argue that along this continuum between the planned, enacted, and experienced curriculum, gaps not only do arise but that they should, because teachers need the ability to modify plans about what should take place in order to maximize the benefits of what does take place. T.T. Aoki (1993) refers to these issues as illustrative of the “in-betweeness” that characterizes the lives of classroom teachers and the multilayered voices that represent the reality of teaching. Teachers are caught in the rough ground between the curriculum as authoritative text and the lived curriculum of the classroom as well as between static modernist constructions of national identity and their own (as well as their students’) experiences with more fluid, multiple civic identities. It is precisely this predicament that elucidates the uncertain space between the curriculum as plan and the curriculum as lived experience (Aoki, 1988, 1993, 2005). Indeed, the lived experience of teachers and students is
deeply influenced by their own multiple identities and the complex factors shaping these under conditions of globalization.

As the curriculum policy of various Canadian provinces begins to include more attention to global issues, it narrates one dimension of how curriculum imagines the nation as a global citizen. Paying attention to how this story is being told in curriculum policy is vital because stories are powerful devices affecting both identity formation and human behaviour in present and future contexts. While its appearance as text gives the impression that its contents are contained and somehow finished, the stories it narrates are always in the process of being re-written – not only by the authors of curriculum policy, but also by teachers in their own roles as storytellers (Egan, 1989), as well as by students via the ways that they engage these stories in the classroom, and enact them in the world. Conceptualizing teachers and students as authors of curriculum marks a considerable shift from traditional perspectives that have regarded teachers as occupying a technical role in education as the ‘dispensers’ of knowledge (and students the ‘receivers’) (Freire, 1970; Giddens, 1990). Here, the very notion of author-ity and its ‘power-full’ connotations is a further reminder of the political nature of curriculum. This feature of curriculum is also a reminder of the creative power inherent to teaching and learning – that is, to how imagined stories have the potential to come alive as lived stories. More specifically, it is a reminder of students’ power to author their own futures by rewriting the narratives of the nation via their actions in the world. This continuum of telling stories (policy), living stories (what happens in classrooms), and writing stories (affecting what happens in the world beyond the classroom) raises critical themes for theorizing curriculum. Curriculum could be understood as the construction of democratic public space capable of creating opportunities for the articulation of contra-stories to complement meta-narratives, to reconfigure the meaning and scope of citizenship, to challenge what adults think youth are capable of; to acknowledge ‘not-knowing’ as valuable to the project of democracy, and to rewrite what it means to be a Canadian global citizen as experienced in action. None of these stories are finished being told – they are in the process of being written. Making the political nature of all education explicit to students can be a valuable learning opportunity for developing students’ critical capacities and skills for participation in a democracy - effectively calling their attention to the ways that despite how they are often regarded by adults as citizens-in-waiting, they are already deeply implicated in political life. Because competing interests across multiple dimensions of their civic identities will at times be in conflict, a vital skill for democratic citizenship education for both teachers and
students alike is learning to be comfortable with, and learning how to critically engage, uncertainty and controversial issues in school and beyond.

2.4 Controversial Issues in Education: Import, Challenges, Pedagogy, & Learning Outcomes

Turning to a more comprehensive review of theory and practice of teaching controversial issues, it is my aim to delineate what some of the implications might be when considering how what we know from educational research in this specific area can inform theory and practice of critical global citizenship education (and vice versa).

Controversial Issues & Democratic Citizenship Education

The value of conflict and controversy for school curriculum was articulated by a number of curriculum theorists throughout the 20th century (Berlyne, 1960; and Bruner, 1990; Kohlberg, 1971; Piaget, 1928 & 1932). Foremost, however, teaching and learning with controversial public issues has been advocated for by progressive educators working within the social studies as an essential dimension for preparing students for effective citizenship by enabling students’ understandings of contemporary issues and providing them with opportunities to engage in democratic processes—each interpreted as valuable for their potential to develop democratic civic attitudes and capacities (Engle and Ochoa, 1988; Evans and Saxe, 1996; Hahn, 1998; Hess, 2002; Oliver and Shaver, 1966; Parker, 2005; Torney-Purta et al., 1999 & 2001). Such capacities have included, for example, fostering and encouraging mutual respect between individuals and groups, respecting evidence in forming opinions, developing a willingness to be open to the possibility of changing one’s mind in the light of such evidence, learning to view issues from a variety of positions and acquiring skills to uncover how particular knowledge claims may serve the interests of different claimants and to unravel the interplay of interests that underlie diverse points of view, etc. (Bickmore, 2006; Geddis, 1991; Johnson and Johnson, 1988; Parker and Hess, 2001).

Challenges

There is a vast amount of literature on the challenges of teaching and learning with controversial issues. Conflict is a notion that makes textbook publishers, school administrators, parents, students, and teachers, uncomfortable (Avery, Sullivan, & Wood, 1997) because it implies meaningful disagreement between viewpoints, values and needs and may arise from real
divergence of interests (Bickmore, 1993). As a result, political socialization within schools generally, and civics classes specifically, often support a culture that marginalizes the role of conflict and dissent in a democracy. This relegating of conflict to the fringes leads to a structures and functions of government orientation (where issues are more often presented than problematized), rather than spaces in which competing ideas about individual rights and the public good are argued, elaborated, refined, and integrated into a meaningful conceptual framework (Goodlad, 1984; Hodgetts, 1968; Merelman, 1990; Newmann, 1990).

Controversial issues can invoke experiences and feelings of uncertainty, vulnerability, complexity, insecurity, and emotional stress in the ways that the questions they raise have the potential to threaten and challenge deeply held values, behaviours, and comfortable locations within specific sets of social relations (Dewhurst, 1992; hooks, 1994; Lynch & MacKenna, 1990). Critically engaging with multiple perspectives on controversial issues can thus be uncomfortable for teachers and students alike, because they could perceive their exposure to diverse perspectives — from both beyond and within the classroom — as a threat to their own identities and to their own ways of meaning-making. Protective barriers in the form of strategies, prejudices and emotions can be erected in response, and these can lead to feelings of indifference or even violent defenses. Nevertheless, these emotional aspects of teaching and learning with controversial issues are important in the sense that constructive controversy requires dealing with feelings as well as with ideas and information (Johnson and Johnson, 1979; Oulton, Day, Dillon, & Grace, 2004; Vashist, 1993).

Further challenges invoked by teaching with controversial issues that are consistently cited in the literature include teachers’ frequent fear of managing conflict in the classroom, assumptions about children and youth as pre-political and too developmentally immature to be exposed to conflict, fear of reprisals from administration or parents, and fear of losing control and facing embarrassment. Further challenges that have been cited include loss of status among colleagues, fear of the emotional nature of the issues being discussed, concerns over the psychological and emotional safety of students, sensitivity toward the multicultural populations of classrooms, uncertainty about the appropriateness of expressing personal views, pressure to teach other more accountable aspects of the curriculum, fear of being accused of bias or indoctrination, concern over time to deal with issues comprehensively, and the complexity of issues and lack of confidence in their own knowledge of issues (Davies, Yamashita & Harber, 2004; Davies, 2005; Hess, 2004; Holden & Hicks, 2007; Werner, 1998). Students also face risks engaging in the discussion of controversial issues, including losing face among peers, for
example, when expressing unpopular or divergent views, feeling that they do not possess adequate knowledge, concerns about how they will be assessed in relation to the views they express, concerns of feeling excluded from discussion, using their voice, or being challenged by teachers and peers (Avery et al., 1997; Bickmore, 1993; Delpit, 1995; Hahn, 1991; Hess and Posselt, 2002).

Perhaps one of the strongest obstacles to teaching controversial issues in schools is the misperception that schools are an apolitical space and therefore inappropriate for doing politics (i.e. rather than simply learning about or simulating politics). Although the question of teaching with controversial issues is often regarded as only one dimension of curriculum, it is critical that teachers, students, and parents learn to recognize how irrefutably, public education is political education. Certainly, teachers’ own values impact how issues are raised and deliberated in the classroom, and teachers’ own political commitments are often expressed in the very choice of what to include and exclude in a course, and these also influence the teaching methods they employ, whether they provide opportunity for inquiry, fact finding, generalization forming, evaluation and/or action projects (Cotton, 2006; Graff, 2000). None of these choices are value-neutral (Freire, 1998; Richardson, 2004). Provincial curriculum documents are political by their very nature: the official knowledge they include (and exclude) is chosen, by peoples and processes influenced by established cultural and political norms and narratives about values and identity, and these have consequences for the cultivation of students’ political identities (Apple, 2000 & 2004; Bickmore, 2006; Freire, 1998; Giroux, 2005; Gross-Stein, 2007).

Appiah (2005) argues that the greatest controversies about education in democracies tend to occur when people feel that their own children are being taught things that are inconsistent with claims that are crucial marks of their own collective identities (identity claims). Trends such as the state’s recognition of some identities in schools (e.g. Christian) and non-recognition of others (e.g. lesbian, gay) elucidate the ways in which majority/minority politics are performed through schooling. Because of this, some parents may view public education as a threatening and disruptive force in their lives. A central finding of the Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) study is that there is a positive correlation between fear of conflict and the belief that one’s views are in the mainstream. Many adults either want schools to mirror their ideas or fear that adding controversial issues to the curriculum creates controversy. These considerations raise important questions around what schools and education are for. Appiah raises the possibility of education for broadening the world beyond the one we already inhabit – or, in his words, becoming “emancipated from the limitations of local circumstances” (2005; p. 200). It seems
reasonable, he argues, to teach children about the range of religious traditions in the communities within which they live without requiring them to assent to any of them. This enables children to make identity choices as they themselves grow to autonomy, but it gives parents a primary place in shaping those choices. The underlying tension is one between a parent’s right to decide what, when, and how their children learn about topics like religion and sexuality – and the rights of students to autonomously learn to make identity choices and to learn about the diversity that exists beyond the confines of local circumstance (Appiah, 2005).

Societal norms, school structures, and curriculum guidelines often mitigate against the in-depth study of conflict, and opening the classroom door to substantive conflict consequently means taking risks (Avery et al., 1997). A critical skill to be cultivated by both teachers and students alike in educating for critical democratic global citizenship is thus learning to relate to discomfort and developing strategies for learning to be comfortable with uncertainty. Uncertainty is commonly regarded as something to be avoided – an obstacle to overcome or a problem to solve. This vital dimension of being, nevertheless, can instead be understood and utilized as an opportunity for personal and relational growth. Andreotti (2007), for example, argues that learning to cope with complexity and uncertainty is the first step to learning to live, to be, and to do together. Within this framework, uncertainty is regarded as an opportunity for students to understand that perspective and knowledge are not given but instead are constructed in particular contexts, influenced by diverse values, worldviews, assumptions, biases and interests, and that ways of knowing and meaning-making of worldly phenomena are similarly varied and, at times conflicting.

Pedagogical Considerations and Strategies

Learning to become comfortable with uncertainty and unpredictability does not mean that teachers cannot plan for these learning opportunities. As I have argued, critical pedagogy is vital to teaching and learning with controversial issues (Britzmann, 1991; Darder, 1991; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1997; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2007; McLaren, 1997), and critical literacy practices facilitate this work (Andreotti, 2006; Freire, 1970; Freire and Macedo, 1987; Lankshear and McLaren, 1993).

In addition to critical literacy practices, various teaching strategies, activities, and methods have been identified for creating opportunities for teaching and learning with controversial issues. These include use of the inquiry method and inquiry projects (Oulton et al.,
2004), the use of role-plays and simulations (Camino & Calgagno, 1995), using literature and case studies (Kolstoe, 2000), journaling (Avery et al., 1997), and/or interviews (Cannard, 2005). General strategies include knowing who is in your classroom, drawing on students’ experiences and knowledge and the alternative perspectives on issues that they may be able to contribute, considering students’ interests on issues and soliciting their selection of issues for discussion, thoughtfully considering the students’ maturity levels, and using the opportunity to approach issues through a cross-curricular lens (Cotton, 2006; Evans and Saxe, 1996; Hess and Posselt, 2002; Hess and Parker, 2001; Johnson and Johnson, 1979, 1985 & 1988; Kelly, 1989; Oliver and Shaver, 1966; Oliver and Shaver, 1974; Oliver et al., 1992; Oliver & Newmann, 1967; Parker, 1996; Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989; Ratcliffe, 1997).

The literature on the use of discussion in the classroom, including the various forms it can take, strategies for striving for inclusion, and continua for conceptualizing the role of the teacher as a facilitator of discussion is vast (Hess, 2002; Parker, 1996; Parker, Ninomiya, & Cogan, 1999; Parker & Zumeta, 1999). From the point of view of its proponents, discussion is a way of knowing and a set of abilities that creates and sustains democratic publics (Parker and Hess, 2001). Four core pedagogical considerations for discussion that receive considerable attention in the literature on teaching and learning controversial issues include: 1) the importance of classroom climate 2) negotiating the relationship between teacher and student voice 3) the question of teachers’ expressing their own opinions and political commitments and 4) the importance of inclusion. Certainly, one of the most common themes in popular discourse on teaching controversial issues is the issue of teachers’ own political views and how they present these to students in ways that could either be susceptible to accusations of indoctrination, or conversely, in ways that are regarded as critical opportunities for modeling positioning oneself on controversial matters. The most commonly talked about ranges of positions that teachers can take include neutrality, balanced, committed, and devil’s advocate (Carrington and Troyna, 1988; Cotton, 2006; Hess, 2005; Kelly and Brandes, 2001; Oulton et al., 2004; Stradling, Noctor, and Baines, 1984). While the balanced approach seems to be the position that many teachers feel that they should strive for (Cotton, 2006; Stradling et al., 1984), various scholars have called attention to the ways this position is problematic for reasons that include the possibility that the controversial dynamics of issues may be minimized in the process and only ‘safe’ issues chosen for deliberation, the possibility that the influence of teachers’ own attitudes is greater than they sometimes intend or realize, and the inescapable reality that balance is very difficult, if not impossible to attain (Carrington and Troyna, 1988; Oulton et al., 2004). Despite the potential for
accusations of bias and indoctrination, the committed position has received some support on the grounds that it can provide the teacher with a platform to model what it looks and sounds like to take a position on issues and explain the reasons behind it. Strategies that could be used to counter teachers’ professed bias include explicitly encouraging students to critique and evaluate their teachers’ position, publicly engaging in self-critique, sincerely praising competing viewpoints, and honestly critiquing points that merely parrot those of the teacher (Kelly, 1986). A further consideration for discussion are the ways that teachers and schools can reproduce social inequality through the opportunities they create for encouraging, tolerating or discouraging conflict. Various scholars have documented the finding that smart, or cooperative or self-confident students who are given challenging material and whose voices are heard in many classrooms are disproportionately male, white, and affluent (Anyon, 1981; Bickmore, 1993; Fine, 1987; Metz, 1978; Parker and Hess, 2001; Sadker and Sadker, 1990). Reviewing the literature on the range of learning outcomes that have been documented on teaching with controversial issues highlights some critical factors in classroom discussion of controversial issues that have been shown to influence students’ democratic citizenship preparedness.

**Learning Outcomes**

Social scientists throughout the 20th century have noted the value of controversy for high quality problem-solving, decision-making, and understanding of another person’s cognitive perspective (Dewey, 1933; Ewbank & Auer, 1946; Harnack & Fest, 1964; Johnson & Johnson, 1979). Over the course of 30 years studying their structured academic controversy model in classrooms, Johnson and Johnson (1979 & 2000), found correlations between an exposure to controversial issues and students’ development of higher level reasoning strategies and conceptual structures, higher levels of critical thinking, curiosity, and motivation, more active interest in developing an appreciation of diverse point of view, higher comfort level changing their minds, higher self-esteem, and an increase in social support structures among peers.

Most notably, however, research in citizenship education over the course of the last 60 years has contributed various findings that support the view that when students are provided with opportunities to deliberate controversial issues in open classroom climates of public school classrooms they tend to develop a stronger sense of political trust, interest, efficacy, and participatory civic roles as adults (Blankenship, 1990; Damico, Conway, and Damico, 2000; Ehman, 1969 & 1980; Hahn, 1998 & 1999; Long and Long, 1975; Niemi and Hepburn, 1995;
Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Zevin, 1983). A democratic open classroom climate is viewed as one in which students are encouraged to investigate and express diverse views on social issues. Interest in this concept grows out of a tradition in democratic education that rests on John Dewey's (1916) and others' beliefs that for young people to become active, involved citizens in a democracy, they ought to experience democratic dialogue and open inquiry in their school classrooms (Engle & Ochoa, 1988; Hunt & Metcalf, 1968; Oliver & Shaver, 1966; Parker, 1996; Stradling, Noctor, & Baines, 1984). Others have also found controversial issues content, pedagogy and a democratic classroom climate to be associated with the development of critical thinking skills (Johnston, Anderman, Milne, Klenck, and Harris, 1994; Levin, Newman, and Oliver 1969), support for free expression, tolerance of dissent, and tolerance of rights for diverse groups (Avery, Sullivan and Wood, 1997).

The relationship between teaching with difference and outcomes for student agency has also been more recently empirically investigated by Diana Hess (2009). Hess argues that there is an intrinsic and crucial connection between the discussion of controversial political issues and the health of a democracy – especially among people with disparate views. She has been studying the role of ideological diversity in classrooms where controversial issues are being discussed. In part, her work is motivated by research finding that fewer people today engage in political talk with people with disparate views than in the past. Hess argues that in part, this is because more people choose to live in ideologically homogenous communities and tend to cluster in communities of sameness among people with similar ways of life, beliefs, and politics: “in these communities, people are more likely to talk with others who share their views, access media that reinforces and makes more extreme what they already believe, and then generally marinate what they hear in an echo chamber of like-mindedness” (p. 20). To confront this, Hess argues that schools should be used as sites of transformation by teaching young people how to engage in these discussions. Hess argues that schools are especially appropriate and powerful places for cross-cutting political talk — opportunities many adults do not have — because they have curricular opportunities for issues discussions, as well as teachers who can skillfully teach students how to participate using the dialogic space afforded by the school classroom. Furthermore, in schools there is a degree of ideological diversity that is more challenging to find elsewhere these days; and that can be turned into a deliberative asset.

Through her classroom research, Hess is beginning to see evidence that ideological diversity in the classroom plays an important role for students’ democratic citizenship education. She found that students in ideologically diverse classrooms are more likely to report that they
have a good understanding of political issues, they report a higher quality of discussion, are more likely to feel positive about expressing their opinions in a group, and are more likely to participate in political discussions outside of the classroom. These findings complement those found by Mutz (2006) who concluded that engaging in discussion of public problems, as long as there are people in the group with views different from your own, builds political tolerance. Hess describes a study conducted in the US by Schkade, Sunstein, and Hastie in 2007 called *Deliberation Day*. The researchers brought together adults from 2 Colorado communities that were notable for a lack of diversity, Boulder and Colorado Springs. On deliberation day, they brought together citizens from liberal Boulder and conservative Colorado Springs. They asked each person to record their views on the issues that would be deliberated, anonymously. Working in small groups with individuals from their own cities, they then deliberated 3 issues: global warming, affirmative action, and same-sex couples. The researchers reported that first; the groups from Boulder became even more liberal on all the issues. The groups from Colorado Springs became even more conservative on all the issues. Deliberation thus increased extremism. Second, while each group showed substantial heterogeneity before they started to deliberate, after a period of discussion, group members showed much more agreement, even in anonymous expressions of their private views. Thus, deliberation increased consensus and decreased diversity. The study provided a particularly powerful example of how talking with people who agree with you can cause what the researchers termed “ideological amplification” (Schkade, Sunstein, & Hastie, 2007; p. 917) – a process by which your pre-existing ideological tendencies become more pronounced and more extreme. These findings suggest important implications for including difference in schools, and for thinking about the common charge of teacher indoctrination associated with the teaching of controversial issues in schools. Indoctrination is more likely to occur in clusters of communities of sameness whereby people become increasingly hardened in their opinions or what Appiah (2005) refers to as identitarian allegiances – which can lead to greater likelihood of intolerance. Schools, therefore, by drawing out ideological diversity and utilizing opportunities for skillful discussion have the potential and responsibility to supplement homogeneous views that could lead to ideological amplification. Arguably, what matters most in this project is how these types of opportunities are facilitated – what matters most are teachers.

Hess concluded that ideological diversity could be an untapped resource in classes unless it is purposefully surfaced. She found that even in classes that appear to be extremely homogenous, students consistently report that they are more likely to recognize and appreciate
the ideological diversity in their midst if their teachers include discussions of controversial issues in the curriculum. Students report what difference teachers can make if they are skillful at *surfacing differences* of opinion that *exist* within the group and allow enough time for students to explain their views, and not just state them. She has found that it appears that skillful teaching in this realm is marked by a combination of *explicit instruction of discussion skills*, adequate preparation so that students have enough information about which to talk, and the creation of a learning environment in which students want to participate and express their views.

Together, this body of research demonstrates how teaching with controversial issues can prepare students for effective democratic citizenship. To date, however, less scholarly attention has been paid to theorizing the implications of controversial issues teaching and learning for *global* citizenship. *Global-ness* adds a new layer to teaching controversial issues theory because it implicates conflicts of interests and considerations for equity and social/global justice in relation to multiple sites of civic identity and spheres for participation. The nature of problem-solving on public issues with fellow citizens consequently looks different than it did in the past – because fellow citizens include individuals living thousands of miles away, and individuals who are not yet born (i.e. *inter-generational justice*). Democracy under conditions of globalization matters because more perspectives and interests are implicated in problem-solving on public issues and this need to be accounted for in democratic decision-making.

### 2.5 Teacher Attitude

As I introduced in chapter 1, in the time that attitude has been a focus in psychological and educational research, it has most commonly been conceptualized as consisting of 3 central components: cognitive, affective, and conative. This *three component model* is also referred to as the *ABC model of attitudes* and the *structural approach to the analysis of attitude* (Bandura, 1977; Hogg & Vaughan, 2005; Kretch, Crutchfield, and Ballachey, 1962; Pennington, 1996; Richardson, 1996; Rosenberg and Hovland, 1960). In this model these three components are defined separately but comprise the single construct of attitude. Questions as to how to interpret the relationship between these three components, however, have impacted research and discourse on attitude in a variety of ways. Some have tried to understand this relationship through linear models that look for relationships of cause and effect, such as looking to see whether the three components are structured in such a way that the beliefs and feelings (cognitive and affective) combine to give rise to an intention to behave in a certain way (Pennington, 1996). Ajzen’s *Theory of Planned Behaviour* (1991), however, took up this question and concluded that
attitudes combine with other important factors in predicting behaviour, including perceived social pressure and factors that may facilitate or inhibit performance of the behaviour.

Others have troubled the relationship between the three components for the ways that these sometimes seem not to reconcile. While beliefs may often be consistent with action, other times an individual may act in ways that are inconsistent with their beliefs (or feelings, values). Fishbein (1967) argued that the notion that attitudes consisted of three components led to conceptual confusion because the three components were not always correlated with each other in empirical studies of individual attitudes. To deal with this purported problem Fishbein limited the word attitude to the affective component and designated the cognitive to mean beliefs about objects and the conative to mean beliefs about what should be done concerning the object – effectively reducing all three components to the cognitive dimension. This aligned with the growing interest in cognition within the disciplines of social psychology at the time (Richardson, 1996). Nevertheless, while once conceptualized in a cause-and-effect formulation, Richardson points to the ways that the relationship between the three components later began to be more commonly viewed as interactive. While beliefs may be understood to drive actions, experiences and reflection on action may lead to changes/additions to beliefs. Any individual, moreover, is likely to have a series of beliefs which will probably be incoherent and contradictory (Zeichner, 1986), however individuals are likely not aware of these contradictions until they are explicitly challenged (Tann, 1993) because some of these beliefs reside within individuals’ conception of common sense (Calderhead, 1987). Rudman (2004), for example, describes these as implicit attitudes (impacted by such factors as memory and culture) and characterizes these as the automatic association people have between an object and evaluation (i.e. whether it is good or bad). Rudman argues that implicit attitudes, for example, impact researchers’ weariness of taking people’s self-reports of their own attitudes (explicit) at face value, “particularly when the topics being considered impinge on people’s morality” (p. 79).

The construct of attitude has been defined in a variety of other ways, although most conceptualize attitude through similar characteristics such as predisposition, consistency, and endurance. Jung’s definition of attitude (1921) was “a readiness of the psyche to act or react in a certain way” (p.687). Rokeach (1968) defined attitudes as “a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner” (p. 112). Richardson (1996) similarly defined attitudes as predispositions that consistently affect actions. Hogg and Vaughan (2005) have defined an attitude as “a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects,
groups, events or symbols” (p. 150). In everyday discourse, attitudes are frequently conceptualized more generally as evaluative dispositions.

The study of teacher attitude has a long history in *educational research*, although the diverse range of ways that it has been conceptualized over time have similarly aligned with paradigm shifts – particularly with regard to the value placed on cognition, and the ways that beliefs have been conceptualized within attitude and also regarded as related phenomena existing alongside teachers’ attitudes (i.e. studies that refer to teachers attitudes and beliefs). Certainly, many terms continue to be used interchangeably: beliefs, attitudes, values, judgments, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, knowledge, practical principles, perspectives, and personal theories (Pajares, 1992). In particular, there has been some focus on the question of how to differentiate between teachers’ beliefs and knowledge (Chen, 2008; Murphy and Mason, 2006; Richardson, 1996). Richardson (1996) and Green (1971) distinguish the former to mean a proposition that is accepted as true by the individual holding the belief, and knowledge which implies epistemic warrant. Richardson nods to Kagen (1990), however, and points out that if knowledge is understood as subjective, then it very much resembles beliefs. What many of the studies that employ these various terms have in common, nevertheless, is the premise that teachers’ attitudes are thought to drive classroom actions (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1994).

Richardson (1996) elaborates a historical review of teacher attitude in education research and I draw on her work here. Research on teacher attitude, she explains, received considerable attention in educational research in the period 1950-1970. One particular area of interest in the study of teaching during the 1950’s and 1960’s were teachers’ social attitudes toward students, other people and their cultures, learning, and the purposes of education. Researchers interested in the development of democratic and integrated classrooms, for example, examined teachers’ attitudes that hindered or ensured this vision of democracy and inclusion, interpreted against more authoritative approaches to teaching (Rokeach, 1960). Other areas of interest at the time included the attitudes and values of teachers and why they chose teaching as a career (Stem, 1963) and how teachers’ attitudes affected teacher-student interactions (Brophy and Good, 1974). During the 1980’s, behaviour, rather than mental processes, were more frequently investigated in educational psychology research on attitude (Brophy and Good, 1986; Richardson, 1996). More recently, Richardson (1996) notes that there is an increased focus on beliefs as a major construct of interest in studying teachers’ ways of thinking and classroom practices, and this has also involved a shift toward qualitative methodology and the attempt to understand how teachers make sense of the classroom. Today, interviews and observations are
the 2 most widely employed data gathering techniques in attitude research, she explains, because current thinking in the measurement of teachers' beliefs is that multiple choice measures are too constraining in the ways that choices are often pre-determined by the literature and the researcher. Instead, interviews and observations are being more frequently employed to understand the nature of teachers' thinking and worldviews. Less structured approaches, moreover, involve extensive interviewing in which attitudes are determined from the transcription of the interviews (see Richardson, Anderd, Tidwell, and Lloyd, 1991). Richardson notes that a significant trend in hermeneutic studies of teachers' beliefs, for example, is the use of the data for purposes of teacher change.

In her work, Richardson (1996) poses the question: Where do teachers' beliefs come from? She cites three principal sources: 1) personal experience, 2) experience with schooling and instruction, and 3) experience with formal knowledge. Personal experience refers to aspects of life that go into the formation of worldview (i.e. beliefs that impact perception), including beliefs about the self in relation to others (i.e. identity), understandings of the relationship of schooling to society and other forms of personal, familial and cultural understandings, ethnic and socioeconomic background, gender, geographic location, religious upbringing, and life decisions. These sources affect teachers' beliefs, which may, in turn, affect their teaching. The second source that Richardson cites is experience with schooling and instruction. Here she refers to Lortie’s (1975) discussion of the apprenticeship of experience (i.e. observation) which suggests that students arrive in pre-service teacher education with a set of deep-seated beliefs about the nature of teaching based on their own experiences as students and observations of their own classroom teachers as models of teaching. Combined with the practical challenges encountered by beginning teachers, these beliefs are purported to create strong barriers in terms of the potential impact of teacher education on teachers’ beliefs and practices. Finally, the third source that Richardson cites is experience with formal knowledge. Here, she refers to understandings that have been agreed on within a community of scholars as worthwhile and valid (e.g. curriculum, beliefs about the nature of subject matter and how students learn it, outside reading). Richardson argues that studies of the origins of teachers’ beliefs indicate that many different life experiences contribute to the formation of strong and enduring beliefs about teaching and learning, and she concludes by arguing that these need to be brought to surface and acknowledged if we are interested in effecting the deep structure of beliefs and knowledge.

A range of studies on teachers’ attitudes in educational research over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries have explicitly focused on teachers’ attitudes toward controversial issues
in education. McCauley (1965), for example, studied teachers’ attitudes toward controversial issues and whether these should be discussed in the classroom and found that over half believed they would be reprimanded for teaching controversial issues. In 1981, Soley looked at the attitudes of elementary social studies classroom teachers toward controversial issues and found that teacher opinions were generally consistent with the general public opinion. In 2004, Oulton, Day, Dillon, and Grace investigated teachers’ attitudes and practices pertaining to teaching controversial issues in England and found that many teachers were under-prepared and felt constrained in their ability to handle this aspect of their work. Ersoy (2010) investigated 15 social studies teacher candidates’ views on the controversial issues incorporated into their courses in Turkey, through interviews, and found that teacher candidates had difficulty discussing critical issues in class but could develop positive attitudes towards them through their professional experience. Mhlauli (2011) conducted a study of the conceptualizations of and practices for teaching controversial issues of 11 social science teachers in Botswana. She found that while the teachers acknowledged the merits of teaching controversial issues, they found it difficult to discuss these issues with their students as a result of factors including culture, religion, and socialization.

Teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues have also been the focus of doctoral dissertation studies over the course of the century. As early as 1937, for example, Frasier investigated the attitudes of 700 Arkansas teachers toward controversial issues in education. She found that ‘concerning the function of education,’ most of the nearly 700 teachers she surveyed believed that children should be trained to live in a democratic way, and that the school should act as a dynamic agency in the regeneration of society. Teachers also believed that the child’s needs and interests should determine the subject matter, that students should be trained to assume a critical attitude toward blind tradition and things as they are, yet also that they should be trained to be free of emotion. Her final conclusion was that a small number of teachers exhibited inconsistency across their responses by accepting an idea when it occurred in one statement and rejecting it in another. More recently, Zavagnin (2012) examined underlying factors affecting the decision-making of 20 secondary social science teachers with regard to the question of disclosing their views on controversial issues with students. Zavagnin concluded that the discussion on disclosure should shift from the question of whether or not teachers disclose, to focus instead on how they do.

In sum, the study of teacher attitude in educational research has aligned with paradigmatic conceptualizations of ‘attitude’ in social psychology research, both of which
received heightened attention beginning in the 1960’s. Foremost, particularly with regard to the work done in the United States, educational research has focused primarily on surveying high school social science teachers, and has concentrated on teachers’ beliefs about the importance of controversial issues in school, on their frequency of practice, and on factors informing these. The work conducted by Oulton et al. (2004) in England and by Mhlauli (2011) in Botswana has more purposefully focused on studying teachers’ attitudes toward controversial issues in the context of citizenship education. The focus of many studies, nevertheless, has been significantly similar in conceptual, theoretical, and methodological scope, and has yielded similar findings: many social science high school teachers from North America and Turkey, to England and Botswana find it challenging to teach controversial issues, and necessitate more support.

While this topic has occupied a clear presence in educational research for close to 100 years, there are some important gaps that I hope this dissertation study can begin to fill in. Foremost, there has been little work conducted in Canada on teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues. While there has been a strong tradition of studying democratic citizenship education in Canada, the attention paid to controversial issues has been peripheral within the broader scope of this work. Moreover, many of the studies conducted in the United States and elsewhere, focus disproportionately on high school social science teachers (Byford, Lennon, and Russell, 2009; Zavagnin, 2012) and little on teachers of other subject disciplines, or elementary grade levels. These methodological parameters reinforce assumptions that this focus is reserved for older students and for the scope of social studies, uniquely. Nor has work in Canada, or elsewhere, focused specifically on the intersections of teachers’ and students’ multiple identities with teachers’ beliefs, feelings, and practices for teaching controversial issues, or to how postmodernism and/or globalization inform these. Perhaps most striking is the little attention that has been paid to power in schooling, curriculum, and pedagogy within this research in terms of, for example, posing and responding to questions pertaining to teachers’ and students social identity locations, the reproduction and interruption of status quo norms and values, ideology critique, or the political dimensions of difference and identity. Next, I elaborate on how I designed this study with the goal toward responding to some of these gaps, and toward advancing research findings that may inform a deeper understanding of some of the more specific tensions being experienced by teachers in this area.
Chapter 3
Conceptual Framework & Methodology

3.0 Introduction to the Chapter

In this chapter I review the parameters of my conceptual and methodological frameworks. I begin by elaborating the specific intersections between the conceptual threads that I privilege in this study (teacher attitude, global citizenship education, teaching and learning with controversial issues, and identity) with the premises and practices of CDGCE (the theoretical framework). In the greater part of this chapter, I describe the research design and methodology, in-depth. I begin with an overview of the research design, and move on to describe the research methods, recruitment strategies, and the data analysis process. I also consider the ways in which the research methodology both reconciles and is in tension with critical theory.

3.1 Conceptual Framework: Teacher Attitude & Critical Global Citizenship Education

This study was framed conceptually by teacher attitude and by considerations for reconfigurations of citizenship identity, and democracy under conditions of globalization and theories and practices of global citizenship education. The latter includes content knowledge and skills considered critical to global citizenship identity and engagement – foremost, teaching and learning with controversial issues.

Teacher Attitude & CDGCE: If critical democratic global citizenship education (CDGCE) involves discursive and reflexive practices that provoke critical engagement with the discourse dimensions of knowledge (what we take as given and why, including the primacy of reason as a way of knowing), the discourse dimensions of identity (who we think we and others are and why, and the primacy of power in social relations), and the discourse dimensions of action (the relationship between how we perceive, think, and behave), then investigating the conceptual construct of ‘teacher attitude’ creates opportunity to learn:

1) What teachers understand as given: what they believe and how their beliefs reinforce/interrupt hegemonic discourses; including their beliefs about what and how they know, and how students can come to know; their beliefs about who they and their students are and what they can do; their beliefs about teaching and pedagogy; and their beliefs about what schools and education are for.
2) How teachers’ feelings intersect with their beliefs and their teaching practices, and how these underscore the ways that hegemonic discourses are being reproduced and/or interrupted, including hegemonic discourses that relegate feelings and emotions as outside the purview of knowledge and education.

3) How teachers critically engage with the discourse dimensions of knowledge, identity, and action through reflexive practices that involve critical engagement with, among other things, their beliefs, feelings, and practices (i.e., attitudes), and through pedagogical practices that create opportunities for their students to do the same.

Additionally, researching teachers’ attitudes is an important avenue for interrogating the location of critical democratic global citizenship education in classrooms for the ways that attitude is so intimately related to discourse, emotional expression, and reflexivity, in particular.

**Attitude and Discourse**: CDGCE involves explicitly attending to discourse contests. Discourses are systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak. Attitudes, in turn, are indicators of discourses. Education is political and, as institutions formed in the liberal tradition, schools play a role in the reproduction of hegemonic discourses that implicate difference and exclusion. Hegemonic discourses impact teachers’ beliefs, feelings, and practices. At the same time, teachers’ beliefs, feelings, and practices have the potential to reproduce as well as disrupt and re-story these discourses toward more deeply democratic ends. Learning about teachers’ attitudes, including their beliefs, feelings, and practices related to difference, identity, and conflict, is one avenue for learning the extent to which that is the case.

**Attitude and Reflexivity**: CDGCE advances critical reflexive practice as an emancipatory practice for teachers and students in that it can enable critique and possibility, including emancipation from, and transformation of hegemonic discourses that mask power and reproduce oppression, subordination, and exclusion. Reflexivity involves critical engagement with identity, including attention to feelings, beliefs and practices.
Attitude and Emotion: CDGCE challenges the subordination of emotions and its relegation to the private sphere and instead advances emotional literacy practices that name emotion as a site of oppression, as embedded in culture and ideology, as a way of knowing, and as a source of radical, social, and political resistance (Boler, 1997). If CDGCE involves creating more space for the expression of emotion in schools, it is important to learn how teachers feel. It is also important to learn what teachers believe about emotions, and how they regard their location in teaching and learning practices for engagement with controversial issues.

Teaching & Learning with Controversial Issues (w/ difference and Identity) & CDGCE
A central premise of CDGCE that I concluded from in my review of critical theory of democracy, globalization, and education is that in order for schools not to function as instruments for the reproduction of dominant and oppressive discourses of democracy and globalization, they necessitate critical discursive and reflexive engagement with difference and inter and intra-identity conflicts. Controversial issues are a primary pedagogical location for these themes and tensions to be addressed in teaching, curriculum, and schools in that they are opportunities for naming, engaging, and interrupting these dominant narratives. They are an instructional opening and tool that hold possibility for hope and transformation by narrating counter-hegemonic discourses that a) explicitly attend to the political dimensions of education and difference, b) challenge the privileging and normalization of only select values, norms, identities, interests and ways of knowing, c) regard children as agents and producers and not only subjects and recipients of knowledge, culture, and change, d) conceptualize identity and globalization as complex and shifting, and e) disrupt Othering and the reproduction of neo-colonial relations. At the same time, the inclusion of controversial issues alone will not necessarily lead to these outcomes and the realization of this possibility. Approaches to teaching controversial issues also have the potential to reinforce hegemonic discourses and to reify the power they mask. A single teacher, for example, may create opportunities for students to discursively engage with the underlying premises of dominant conceptions of globalization that render developing nations subservient to neo-liberal capitalist agendas, while staying silent when she hears a student make a homophobic joke.

Foremost, however, I assert that teaching and learning with controversial issues holds potential for attending to pedagogies of discursive democracy and emotion, for underscoring the primacy of teachers’ and students’ multiple identities, and for reflexive practice towards transformative democratic aims. These conceptual considerations, in turn, align with my
theoretical framework of CDGCE in their prioritization of themes of discourse contestation, identity conflict, difference, equity, and agency. They also align with my conceptual focus on ‘teacher attitude’ for the ways that they implicate classroom practices for teaching and learning with conterverse and with specific public issues that involve explicit attention to conflicts across peoples beliefs, feelings, and identity interests.

3.2 Research Methodology

I begin with an overview of the research design, and move on to describe the research methods, recruitment strategies, the data analysis process, and research method limitations and strengths. Next, I discuss the relationship between the theoretical framework and the research methods (i.e. methodology).

3.2.1 Overview of Research Design

The purpose of this research was to learn about teachers’ attitudes towards teaching controversial issues in Canadian classrooms and the range of factors that inform them, and to learn how teachers’ and students’ multiple identities figure in teachers’ attitudes by investigating a single provincial case. The broader aim was to critically assess the implications of these findings for the critical democratic global citizenship education (CDGCE) of Canadian students. With that in mind, I conducted a multi-phase sequential multiple-method research study that employed survey, interview methods, and multi-stage purposive sampling involving 202 public school teacher participants from across Canada who have taught at every level of the K-12 Canadian education system.

I designed a multiple methods study using survey and interview methods with the intention of learning, in breadth and depth, about teachers’ attitudes towards teaching controversial issues. In addition, I was interested in acquiring a more comprehensive understanding of how public school teachers are preparing Canadian youth for critical democratic global citizenship through opportunities for engaging controversial issues, especially those that implicate conflicts across their multiple and civic identity interests. Different, yet complementary, methods were used to measure these overlapping facets of teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues in Canadian public school classrooms, resulting in an enriched, detailed and elaborated understanding (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989).

The data collection process for this study consisted of two principal phases. In the first phase of the study I administered an on-line survey on the topic of Teachers’ Attitudes toward
Teaching Controversial Issues in Canadian classrooms to 99 (K-12) public school teachers from across Canada (random sampling). In the second phase of the study, I travelled to Alberta where I personally administered a hard copy survey on Teachers’ Attitudes toward Teaching Controversial Issues to 103 Social Science and Science teachers. I also conducted 16 semi-structured interviews with Social Studies and Science teachers about their attitude toward teaching controversial issues, and how their identities and the identities of their students intersected with their attitudes. Whereas the survey data provided information about teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues (including what issues they considered to be controversial and why), the interview data enabled me to learn, more specifically, how teachers’ attitudes intersected with their teaching of specific controversial issues that implicated potential conflicts of identity-related interests for teachers and their students.

As I explained in chapter 1, Alberta was selected as a focus case for several reasons. In part, this decision was in response to Bill 44 which had been passed in Alberta in 2009 and involved amending section 11.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act to henceforth require that schools give parents written notice when lessons on sexuality, sexual orientation, and religion are going to be taught (i.e. enshrining this as a parents’ right). This legislation grants Alberta parents the right to opt their children out of classes and exclude them from discussions on these topics. Consequently, Alberta teachers are now mandated to advise all parents before teaching these topics. If teachers do not comply and fail to do so, they may find themselves in front of the Alberta human rights tribunal. Not only does the legislation explicitly name issues that the media reporting on Bill 44 (and teachers in this study), considered to be controversial; but the Bill itself became a controversial issue in Alberta. A second reason why I selected Alberta as a case site is because Alberta is also precariously positioned geo-politically as the home of the Canadian tar sands. The controversial issues emanating from the development of the tar sands elucidate timely tensions across multiple identity interests (e.g. political, economic, social, cultural, regional, national, global), and I was interested in learning how Alberta teachers addressed these issues, specifically, in their teaching.

3.2.2 Research Methods & Participant Recruitment

Given my research questions, the data collection methods I employed were survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. I elaborate on each below by describing the data collection process more holistically.
Recruitment of teacher participants involved both random and purposive sampling in different phases of the study. In phase I employed random sampling. In phase II I employed purposive sampling by focusing on Social Science and Science teachers teaching in the K-12 public education system in Alberta for both the surveys and the interviews. Because I sought depth of information from a small number of carefully selected cases from which I could learn the most, I deliberately sampled for particular persons to be interviewed in terms of the information they could provide for answering the research questions (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2007; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). For the interviews I consequently selected teachers who had reported on their surveys that they felt comfortable teaching controversial issues and did so often.

**Survey Questionnaires Administered to Canadian Teachers (Phase I):** The first phase of this study involved my administering a short on-line survey questionnaire to public school teachers from diverse regions of Canada teaching across the K-12 system (see Appendix A). The purpose of the survey data was to begin to form a broader understanding of teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues in Canadian classrooms, and some of the factors that informed these attitudes. My intention in administrating this survey to teachers across Canada was to learn, in breadth, about Canadian teachers’ beliefs, feelings, and behavioural dispositions as they relate to the topic of teaching controversial issues. This data is not intended to represent the attitudes of Canadian teachers as a generalizable population. Instead, as a country that is frequently cited as regional in character, and as a country wherein education is administered provincially (and via regional curricular alliances), I was interested in learning about teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues from multiple regions of the country in order to provide some broader context to my more purposeful and in-depth study of the Alberta case.

In designing the survey questionnaire I consulted the instruments used in similar and related studies to measure teacher attitudes toward civic or global related content (Hahn, 1998; Hicks and Holden, 2007; Oulton, Dillon, and Day, 2004; Torney-Purta et al. 1999). I also contacted Dr. Justin Dillon, who was a principal investigator on similar studies in the context of citizenship education in the United Kingdom, for his feedback on the survey instrument before it had been distributed, which was extremely helpful. I also pilot tested the survey with 2 teachers and consulted them for their in-depth feedback on their experience completing the survey, which resulted in significant shortening of the number of questions included. Consequently, this was an
interactive process that drew on the expertise of educational researchers and practicing classroom teachers alike.

The final survey questionnaire included a combination of 15 open-ended and fixed-choice questions that were focused on hearing from teachers about their beliefs, feelings, and their frequency of practice with regard to the teaching of controversial issues (see Appendix A). Among the 15 survey questions, I included three fixed-choice questions that explicitly asked teachers about all three components of their attitude. Teachers were also asked to identify a sample of issues that they considered to be controversial, and were asked to explain why they deemed them controversial (open-ended) – which I interpreted as a further manifestation of their beliefs. Additionally, they were asked to elaborate on the range of factors that informed their attitude toward teaching controversial issues (also open-ended), which resulted in data that responded to all three components of attitude. The surveys did not include explicit attention to teachers’ and students’ identities, but were instead intended to focus specifically on teacher attitude toward teaching controversial issues.

The survey questionnaire was distributed (via electronic survey software) to public school teachers K-12 across Canada, through the assistance of teacher professional associations from across Canada (see appendix E). Some associations included the survey link in an email to their members, others included it in their newsletters, and yet others posted information about the study and the survey link on their websites. Each public school teacher K-12 who had been informed of, and interested in participation, had an equal chance of being included in the sample. In total, 99 teachers from across Canada completed this survey questionnaire. These teachers were teaching in the provinces of British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, as well as Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories. Later in this chapter I elaborate more on why I did not include teachers from New Brunswick, Quebec, Saskatchewan, or Nunavut.

**Survey Questionnaire and Semi-Structured Interviews with Alberta Teachers (Phase 2):**
The second phase of this research study was conducted with Social Studies and Science teachers working across all grade levels in Alberta. Social Studies and Science teachers were purposively sought because review of curriculum policy had revealed that these subject disciplines included the most explicit attention to the teaching of controversial issues. In order to collect data on teacher attitudes, I attended both the Alberta Teachers Association Social Studies and Science Council Annual Conferences in Jasper and Edmonton, respectively, in the fall of 2010.
Approximately 200 teachers attended each of the conferences, and I had the opportunity to speak to all conference delegates at a podium to introduce my study, and distribute the short survey. I collected 50 hard copy surveys from Social Studies teachers and 53 from Science teachers (approximately 1 in 4 response rate), resulting in 103 surveys total. These surveys closely resembled the on-line survey administered on-line to teachers in other Canadian provinces and territories. In addition to the questions posed on the electronic survey, however, Alberta teachers were also asked questions about their perception of school and board support for teaching controversial issues and about Bill 44.

In addition to the surveys, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 teachers about their attitudes toward teaching controversial issues and how their multiple identities and those of their students intersected with these. In part, this study was conducted using sequential sampling (Kemper, Stringfield, & Teddlie, 2003; Teddlie & Yu, 2007), in that information from the survey sample was used to help draw the interview sample (this was not the sole recruitment method for interview participants, however). Additionally, both conference organizers gave me the opportunity to speak to the conference delegates at the plenary breakfast welcome and keynote presentations where I informed teachers about the purpose of the study, and invited them to indicate on their surveys, or to approach me over the weekend, if they were interested in being interviewed. I explained to teachers that while the survey was directed to everyone, as I was interested in learning about the range of attitudes towards teaching controversial issues, for the interviews I was interested in speaking only with those teachers who felt comfortable teaching controversial issues, and who did so regularly in their classroom instructional practice. I also had the opportunity to personally introduce myself to a number of teachers at the opening evening receptions of each of the council conferences. During these receptions, several teachers agreed to be interviewed over the course of the weekend and we arranged times immediately so as not to interfere with their conference workshop attendance. At each of the 3-day council conferences I interviewed 7 teachers (14 teachers in total). Following the conferences, I reviewed the surveys and contacted those teachers who had expressed interest in being interviewed on their surveys. From these, I conducted another 2 interviews, by telephone. Each interview was audio-recorded, with participants consent. Please see the interview protocol in Appendix D.

The results from the survey were not only used to help select the sample, but also to develop the interview protocol, and inform the analysis for the interviews (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989) because I was seeking enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from the survey with the results from the more in-depth interviews. The semi-structured
interviews thus focused on teachers’ beliefs, feelings, and practices for teaching controversial issues, but also on how teachers’ identities and their students identities intersected with their attitudes. I formulated explicit questions intended to learn about how considerations of identity figured in teachers’ attitudes. I also asked questions that explicitly probed about teaching about Bill 44 and about the Alberta tar sands and the potential tensions between economic and environmental interests that this topic could provoke. I did this because the Alberta tar sands are popularly perceived to arouse a range of controversial issues that implicate conflicts of interests across multiple dimensions of individuals’ identities as Albertans, Canadians, and global citizens; these types of conflicts were one of my primary motivations in selecting Alberta as a case site.

**Curriculum & Policy Review:** To broaden the scope for learning about teacher attitude towards controversial issues in Canadian classrooms, I also reviewed curriculum and policy documents produced by Canadian Ministries of Education that pertain to the topic of controversial issues. Being officially prescribed by curriculum policy, this review provided some context for understanding what both teachers and students are expected to know, and be able to do in relation to controversial issues and related considerations (e.g. identity, pluralism, globalization, democratic citizenship). This also aided in contextualizing teachers’ attitudes toward controversial issues, including the teaching practices they described. I regarded this information principally as context, and not as data. For this reason, with the exception of Alberta (see chapter 1), I do not elaborate on Canadian curriculum policy in this dissertation study.

**3.2.3 Data Analysis**

Data resulting from the multiple data collection methods was analyzed sequentially, beginning with the survey data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Because the survey data in this study was intended as context, explicit merging of the two data sets (survey and interview) occurred at the level of discussion only (Bryman, 2006; Tashakorri and Teddlie, 1998). In chapter 9, I discuss some of consistencies and incongruities between the survey responses and interview transcripts.

Survey data pertaining to participant demographic data and their responses to fixed choice questions was analyzed using statistical software (SPSS) for determining frequency and cross tabulation between variables. Analysis of the open-ended survey responses was guided
principally by the conceptual framework, mainly teacher attitude. Open-ended questions included 3 questions focused on: 1) what issues teachers considered to be controversial, 2) what criteria teachers believed made issues controversial, and 3) what factors informed teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues. My analysis of these questions principally involved my distinguishing between teachers’ beliefs, feelings, and practices for teaching controversial issues, and secondarily it involved identifying if and how teachers spoke about identity in relation to these. I manually recorded all teachers’ responses to these and categorized them to determine the complete range of issues, criteria, and considerations spanning teachers’ responses. The survey findings are reported in chapter 4.

Interview data was analyzed and coded using the research questions, the survey data, and the conceptual framework as guiding indicators. I began by applying the three component model of attitude. After having transcribed each of the 16 interviews, I reviewed each interview transcript and, using a color coding scheme, I identified statements that articulated beliefs (purple), feelings (blue), and practices (red). I also identified statements that invoked identity (yellow). Significantly, colors were frequently overlapping across all 4 of these conceptual foci. Using this model, I engaged in a process of coding and re-coding, using the constant comparative analysis method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Lincoln and Guba, 1985) to reduce data both within and across interviews. For example, for each teacher/transcript, I organized teachers’ beliefs, feelings, and practices with specific categorical headings at the bottom of the transcript and included the data to support them (e.g. Issues teacher believe are controversial, Believes that teaching controversial issues is a responsibility; Feels uncomfortable teaching creationism because does not believe in God; uses structured controversy model etc.). First, I conducted this process for each of the 16 transcripts. Then, I reviewed the range of beliefs, feelings, and practices as a whole, and re-formulated categories of beliefs, feelings, and practices in accordance with those that were similar, attempting to capture the specific aspect that teachers’ attitudes had in common. This involved several cycles of data reduction. Finally, data were reduced to 28 categories that spanned the three components of attitude (beliefs, feelings, and practices). In the samples of data that I included to support each, I had also noted where identity intersected them all (i.e. I maintained the yellow highlighted text). At this stage, I had finalized the full range of beliefs, feelings, and practices, and I created further sub-categories within each of these to reflect the diverse range of ways that teachers articulated these. Subsequently, I organized these into three principal headers for each component of attitude in ways that attended
to how teachers’ own and their students’ identities intersected their attitudes. I report these findings as 3 individual chapters: teachers' beliefs (chapter 5), teachers' feelings (chapter 6), and teachers' practices (chapter 7) respectively.

**Figure 2.0 Interview Data Analysis**

![Diagram showing Teacher & Student Identities, Beliefs, Behavioral Dispositions, and Feelings]

My discussion of this data in chapter 8 was guided principally by the 3 categorical indicators of critical democratic global citizenship education (CDGCE) that I delineated as the outcome of my theoretical framework. I also employed a level of critical discourse and dialectical analysis at this stage of the research process.

This multi-method approach produced a comprehensive picture of the range of teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues in Canadian classrooms, and how these intersected with identity.

### 3.2.4 Teacher Participants: Demographic Data

**Survey Participants**

Of the 202 teacher participants who completed surveys for this study, 131 teachers identified as female and 72 as male. Teaching is still a female dominated profession in Canada, with men only representing approximately 30% of the full time educator workforce nationally – a percentage which is steadily decreasing (Statistics Canada, Education Indicators in Canada 2010). Although unintended, the gender distribution in this survey came very close to coinciding with the national average.
The majority of survey participants were intermediate/secondary teachers (64%). Junior/intermediate (36 teachers) and Primary/Junior (35 teachers) each represented 17% of the participants. Participants included 91 teachers who taught the social sciences (45%), 68 teachers who taught sciences (33%), 26 teachers who taught both (13%), and 17 teachers (from the sample outside of Alberta) whose primary assignments were in English language arts, math, French, technology education, music, and languages (9%). Half of the survey teacher participants had been teaching for less than 10 years, a quarter of them had been teaching between 11-20 years, and 22% had been teaching for more than 20 years. 67% of the teachers were teaching in cities (ranging from small cities to large urban centers). A further 16% were teaching in small towns, and 14% were teaching in rural areas.

Alberta teachers represented half of the survey respondents. Of the 103 teachers, 64 were female and 39 were male. The majority of these teachers also taught at the intermediate/senior level (76%). Just 6% of teachers in the Alberta survey sample taught at the primary/junior level, and 17% taught at the junior/intermediate level. Nearly half of these Alberta teachers were teaching in metropolitan urban centres (48%), while 15% were teaching in rural areas, 20% in small towns, and 15% in small cities. While 14% of the Alberta survey respondents had been teaching for more than 25 years, a quarter of the teachers had been teaching less than 5 years. 40% had been teaching between 6-15 years, and 22 had been teaching between 16-25 years.

Teacher Interviewees

Unlike the surveys, teacher interviewees included more male than female teachers. While in the survey more female teachers had participated than male teachers, of the 16 teachers that I interviewed, only 4 were female. The teacher interviewees included 9 secondary teachers (this high number may be explained in part because I had recruited interviewees at subject-specialist conferences), 2 junior/intermediate teachers, and 1 primary/junior teacher. Interviewees also included 1 former elementary school principal and 3 former secondary teachers, all of whom were still working in education, but currently in positions of curriculum development with the Department of Education or teaching in pre-service education at Universities or Colleges in Alberta. While many of the interviewees had taught in both rural and urban contexts, only 2 were currently teaching in rural schools (1 junior teacher and 1 secondary teacher).
I assigned teachers pseudonyms, and in order to protect teachers’ anonymity, I have not identified specific information with regard to their current or former sources of employment (school boards, universities, colleges). What follows is an index of teacher interviewees:

Stan: Male, Secondary, Social Science Teacher (20 + years teaching)
Ron: Male, Secondary, Social Science Teacher (30 + years teaching)
Linda: Female, Secondary, Social Science Teacher (former), employed by Professional Teacher Association and a university in Alberta (Currently) (30 + years teaching)
Betty: Female, Primary teacher and Principal (former), currently employed by an Alberta College (30 + years teaching)
Mary: Female, Secondary, Social Science teacher (35 + years teaching)
Gary: Male, Secondary, Social Science Teacher, Seconded to Department of Education (15 + years teaching)
Mark: Male, Secondary, Social Science Teacher (10 + years teaching)
Charlie: Male, Secondary Social Science Teacher (former), currently employed in a pre-service teacher education program at a university in Alberta (25 + years teaching)
Richard: Male, Secondary, Social Science Teacher (Rural) (25 + years teaching)
Lan: Female, Secondary, Science Teacher (3 years teaching)
Sean: Male, Junior High, Science Teacher (Rural) (5 + years teaching)
Doug: Male, Secondary, Science Teacher (15 + years teaching)
Jim: Male, Science teacher and textbook writer (former), Senior Administrator at a university in Alberta (35 + years teaching)
Mick: Male, Secondary, Science Teacher (25 + years teaching)
Nicolas: Male, Elementary (Science and Social Science) Teacher (10 + years teaching)
Simon: Male, Junior High, Science Teacher (10 + years teaching)

These pseudonyms are used throughout the dissertation.

3.2.5 Weighting
In this study I give significantly more weight to the interview data than I do to the survey findings. The survey findings were intended, foremost, to provide some breadth and context to the research focus rather than enable generalizations for understanding the attitudes of Canadian teachers toward teaching controversial issues. As a result, only one of the four data chapters reports the survey findings, and I wrote this chapter in the form of an executive summary of the findings. The interview findings, in contrast, respond to the research focus and questions in-depth, and these, in turn, are reported in three chapters in this dissertation. I not only weighed the interviews more heavily in terms of the extent that I gave these findings greater attention and representation, but also in terms of the extent that conducting interviews as a research method aligns with critical theory as a research paradigm (Guba, 1990; 17), or interpretive framework, within which I locate myself as an educational researcher committed to social criticism and the empowerment of individuals, and within which I also locate this work. All research is interpretive and guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011); it is guided by the truths we seek and believe as researchers (Bernal, 2002; Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Pallas, 2001). The interpretive framework of critical theory aims to ask questions of common answers within particularized contexts rather than to answer questions toward universalized presumptions (Shor, 1993), and it asserts an epistemology that is transactional, and a methodology that is both dialogic and dialectical (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). Speaking with Alberta teachers and engaging with them in person, in contrast to relating only to Canadian teachers’ responses to the survey questions (through an instrumental rationality approach), was vitally important to me; I value relationship, dialogue, and teacher voice, and believe these to hold conditions for transformative possibility and interruption of dominant discourses of schooling.

3.2.6 Method Limitations and Strengths

Certainly, the methodological parameters were not without limitation. For one, I regret that I was not able to survey teachers in all Canadian provinces and territories. This was important to me in light of the unique provincial and territorial contexts that inform teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues, including what issues they believe to be controversial and why. Despite my persistent efforts, I did not get any responses from professional associations in Quebec, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, or Nunavut. I was particularly interested in including the perspectives of Quebec teachers in this study, because of the study’s focus on multiple civic identity conflicts experienced by teachers and taught as
learning material to students. I had the electronic survey translated into French and included links to both versions in my correspondence, yet still, I heard no response. I also regret not asking all teachers (not only interviewees) whether they positioned themselves on issues with students, because this was a question that interviewees expressed strong beliefs and I would have liked to have a sense of where Canadian teachers’ stood on this topic more broadly. Finally, in retrospect, I recognize some limitations in the survey phrasing. In the fixed-choice question concerning teachers’ beliefs and comfort levels about teaching controversial issues, I framed these options as “exposing” students to controversial issues, which I now recognize implies a level of danger that I did not intend. I would now change that phrasing to teaching. Likewise, I regret framing survey question #9 so specifically to controversial issues that teachers’ taught or have taught. Instead, I would like to have heard more generally what issues teachers believed were controversial (whether they taught them or not) because this would have facilitated deeper analysis of what issues they were not teaching in school (in light of the findings concerning infrequency of practice).

I am also aware of some of the limitations of the interviews – foremost, the issue of gender representation. While teaching is primarily a female dominated profession in Canada, only 4 of the teachers that I interviewed were women. This was largely due to circumstance. Over the course of three days at each of the conferences, I recruited teachers and conducted the interviews, which did not give me as much opportunity to be more purposive in my sampling. Time was also a limitation to the extent that I was not able to speak with teachers at length because they were being interviewed by me in between their attendance at conference workshops. I would have preferred to hear more about their personal biographies and been able to include that information here, but regretfully, time was short. Finally, I acknowledge that classroom observations, and the inclusion of students voices, would have contributed significantly to this study. Unfortunately, this was not feasible within the time frame I was working within and/or resources that I had access to. Neither was a detailed curriculum policy analysis, as I had originally planned.

At the same time, there were several methodological strengths that significantly enhanced the integrity of this study. The multiple methods used in this study meant that findings from the survey provoked new questions and highlighted areas that I wanted to probe further in the interviews. While I was not striving for generalizability, reading the survey findings against the interview transcripts meant not only that I could determine the range of the types of issues that Canadian teachers consider to be controversial, but I could also get a sense of which issues were
more and less named within and across provinces and territories. Additionally, my decision to give greater methodological weight to the interview findings aligned with my epistemological priorities and their regard for teacher voice and dialogue. Further, the process of data analysis that I enacted, in terms of the back-and-forth between theory and practice, was not only significant in impacting the data analysis and discussion through the new questions that were generated, but this too aligned with my theoretical commitment to praxis. What I heard from teachers impacted how I read theory, which then impacted how I read the transcripts, and the questions I asked of them (I elaborate more on this process shortly). Throughout the data analysis and discussion stages of this inquiry, I remained very close to the transcripts, as it was important to me that teachers’ voices be prioritized. My commitment to praxis and possibility is also affirmed in chapter 9, where I delineate specific recommendations that follow from the study findings. Finally, my decision to attend these two conferences was a valuable opportunity for me to develop rapport with teacher participants, and to hear them engage in discussion on this research topic, which proved very fruitful and evermore affirmed my interest and commitment to the study focus.

3.2.7 Critical Theory & Multiple-Method Research

Perhaps one of the most significant, and challenging, considerations for the work involved in designing a research study is thoughtfully engaging the relationship between the theoretical framework and the research methods (i.e. methodology). In my dissertation study, this work involved my thoughtfully engaging the relationship (reconciliations and tensions) between critical theory and the study design, including my decision to employ a multiple-method research approach involving the use of surveys.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argue that the field of qualitative research is defined by a series of tensions, contradictions, and hesitations. This tension works back and forth between 1) the broad doubting postmodern sensibility, and 2) an increasingly conservative, neo-liberal global environment. Indeed, the methodological choices that I made in designing this dissertation study are indicators of my own epistemological beliefs about what can be known and how it can be known.

In designing a multiple-method study that included the use of surveys (e.g. fixed choice questions, frequency analysis, cross-tabulation of data), I did experience some tension in that this decision reinforced the positivist paradigm and dominant discourses of empiricism, which over-
prioritize measurement, correlation, and the over-simplification and reduction of human beings and their complex identities to numerical values. I have outlined some of the limitations that I associate with this method already (pretences of neutrality in the construction of survey questions). Nevertheless, the survey data, including the fixed-choice questions, were important to me, despite my overall tendency toward a qualitative and constructivist orientation to knowledge, teaching, and research – and despite my concern about my complicity in reproducing dominant discourses of positivism. I am reflexively aware that this decision is related to my enculturation and education (i.e. exposure to the belief that *numbers and their relationship to other numbers matter*). I also recognize that this decision is an indicator of the extent of my enculturation into academia and educational research. Without pretending that the survey I administered to teachers across Canada is indeed national in character, there was an impulse in me that nevertheless was interested in some level of breadth because I believed that teachers’ attitudes toward controversial issues may look different in diverse regions of the country. Yet, it was not feasible to interview teachers across the country, or to administer a purely open-ended survey. Thus, surveying teachers from across the country enabled me to attend to difference within the group I named *Canadian Teachers*. I also included this breadth at the level of Canadian teachers because I do believe that while it is impossible to pinpoint a singular and unified Canadian identity, narratives of Canadian identity do influence citizens’, including teachers’, attitudes towards controversy and conflict (as the findings from this study further confirm). For these various reasons, I prioritized Canadian identity as a key concept in this dissertation study.

In designing this study, however, I was most interested in asserting the value of teacher voice and hearing from teachers themselves about their attitudes towards teaching controversial issues by creating opportunities for them to apply their own language, elaborate on responses, and engage with me discursively in interviews. For this reason, I was careful to include open-data questions on the survey, and I gave disproportionate weight to the teacher interviews over the teacher survey, including my decision to probe about identity only in the interviews, and regard the survey data primarily as context (without pretences of depth or generalizability).

Indeed, there are no specific or definitive social scientific methods of criticism. Critical social theorists do however emphasize a number of priorities that I was careful to attend to in designing this study. For one, it was important to me to link theory to the immediacy of lived realities, what Lyotard (1989) named "les petits-recits" (p. xxiv) (small or personal accounts, narratives, or stories) rather than grand narratives (e.g., Clifford & Friesen, 1993; Connelly &
Clandinin, 1988). It was thus important to me to interview teachers in order to hear from them about the immediacy of their lived realities of teaching controversial issues in Alberta.

Additionally, critical theory asserts that meaning is unstable due to the rapid transformation in social structures. As a result, research that aligns itself with critical theory is research-centered on local manifestations rather than broad generalizations. A second methodological reconciliation with critical theory, in turn, was my decision to investigate teacher attitudes toward controversial issues in a *particularized* context (more particular than Canada, although still less local than Edmonton) and my assertion that *place matters*. This facilitated my capacity to account for specific contextual considerations (e.g. the effects of the passing of Bill 44, the Alberta tar sands, conservative government, high populations of First Nations Peoples, mass intra-Canadian migration and international immigration etc.) that informed Alberta teachers’ attitudes. Certainly, although likely with some overlap, these considerations would look different across Canada.

The explicit attention I paid to probing teachers about their and their students’ identities in the interview protocol is a further methodological reconciliation with critical theory. In chapter 2, I elaborated the argument made by Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989), reminding us why paying attention to teachers’ and students’ identities is vital for critical pedagogy. She did not limit the scope of her comments to teachers and students, but addressed the implications for critical educational research as well:

> When educational researchers writing about critical pedagogy fail to examine the implications of the gendered, raced, and classed teacher and student for the theory of critical pedagogy, they reproduce, by default, the category of generic ‘critical teacher’ … a discursive category predicated on the current mythical norm: namely, young, white, Christian, middle class, heterosexual, able bodied, thin, rational, man. … Gender, race, class and other differences become only variations on or additions to the generic human – “underneath, we are all the same” (Alcoff, 1988; p. 420). But voices of difference solicited by critical pedagogy are not additions to that norm but oppositional challenges that require a dismantling of the mythical norm and its uses as well as alternatives to it (1989; p. 310).

Ellsworth’s argument leads to my next point concerning the aims and implications of this dissertation research. Another consideration of critical theory in relation to my methodological decision-making concerns its prioritization of the relationships between critique and possibility, and between theory and praxis. Rather than claiming objectivity, most practically-oriented critical theorists have always insisted that their form of social inquiry takes a dual perspective (Bohman, 1991; Habermas 1996) in that it is both explanatory and normative, adequate both as *empirical descriptions* of the social context and as *practical proposals* for social change. Critical theory must therefore combine explanation and critique of current social reality with the
articulation of practical goals for the future. In my discussion of the research findings in chapter 8, I critique dominant discourses of schooling and teaching that reproduce neutrality and universalism by identifying discursive tensions and contradictions and discussing these against social relations to which they are linked. My purposeful aim in conducting this study, however, was not to judge teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues but, rather, to learn about teachers’ attitudes towards teaching controversial issues in Canadian classrooms, and to learn how teachers’ and students’ multiple identities figure in teachers’ attitudes by investigating a single provincial case. The broader aim was to critically assess the implications of these findings for the critical democratic global citizenship education (CDGCE) of Canadian students with the goal toward naming how discourses that reify education as neutral — and that reify Universalist orientations to global citizenship education — are being both reproduced and interrupted in schools. In my discussion (chapter 8), I consequently not only focus on reproduction but I also underscore what interruptions looked like in this study. In the concluding chapter of this dissertation, based on what I learned from participating teachers, I delineate practical proposals for social transformation (Horkheimer, 1982) as an assertion of my belief in teacher and student agency toward transformative ends and in the possibility of schools to function as hopeful discursive and reflexive sites for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization, and as an assertion of my commitment to participating in praxis toward that end.

Critical theorists have asserted that practice and theory should be interdependent and should influence each other (i.e. praxis). While theory must inform practice, practice must also have a chance to inform theory. Theory is not a neutral instrument for passively disclosing reality, but the lens through which agents actively analyze their world and propose alternative ways to shape and re-shape it. My own experience with this process work involved my framing research questions, designing a study and collecting and analyzing data. And then, it involved revisiting and re-articulating additional questions and the theoretical parameters in light of teachers’ responses and the themes that I identified. My findings stayed. What I learned from teachers then shaped how I read and engaged with critical theory. In discussing the research findings in chapter 8, I take up and respond to the additional questions provoked by my re-engagement with the theory based on what I heard from teachers, with the aim of articulating implications that may, in turn, inform practice. This process has been central to my understanding of the meaning of the dialectic and of the interdependent relationship between theory and praxis.

A final aspect of my methodological approach that reconciles with premises and practices
of critical theories is my application of elements of reflexive methodology (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Reflexive methodology involves paying attention to how one thinks about thinking (Maranhao, 1991) and involves constant assessment of the relationship between knowledge and ‘the ways of doing knowledge’ (Calas and Smircich, 1993). According to their formulation of reflexive methodology, Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) argue that empirical research in a reflexive mode starts from a sceptical approach to the notion of replicating reality and is concerned with furnishing opportunities for understanding rather than establishing truths. They emphasize the significance of interpretation, in particular, in the research process, and they underscore the importance of reflexive awareness on the part of researchers of the theoretical assumptions, operating at all levels of the design and conduct of research, including the language employed in the research process. They assert that reflexive methodology means that attention is turned inwards towards the person of the researcher, toward intellectual and cultural traditions, as well as toward the problematic nature of language and narrative. The centre of gravity, they argue, shifts from the handling of empirical material and moves towards a consideration of the perceptual, cognitive, theoretical, linguistic, political, and cultural circumstances that form the backdrop to, as well as impregnate, the researchers’ interpretations of empirical data. It is difficult, they concede, for researchers to clarify the taken-for-granted assumptions and blind spots in their own social culture and language. The main thrust of a reflexive approach, however, is to try. In its emphasis on paying attention to how one thinks about thinking (i.e. meta-cognition), a reflexive methodological approach reconciles with critical theories emphasis on critical reflexive engagement with discourse and the relationship between power and knowledge production. Critical reflexivity matters for critical educational research practices as much as it matters for critical teaching and learning. What is at stake in both is the interruption, rather than reproduction, of hegemonic discourses of neutrality and universalism.

Next, in the four proceeding chapters, I report the research findings. I begin with the survey findings on teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues in Canadian classrooms, and then report the findings from the interviews that I conducted in Alberta. Henceforth, I abbreviate controversial issues as CI.
Chapter 4
Survey Findings:
Teachers’ Attitudes towards Teaching Controversial Issues

4.0 Introduction to the Chapter

In this chapter I report the survey findings from both the online surveys administered to teachers across Canada and the print surveys administered in Alberta. In the second part of the chapter, I zero in on the survey findings from the more particular case of Alberta. Together, these findings elucidate an expansive range of issues and considerations that inform the findings from the more in-depth interviews that I conducted with 16 Alberta teachers, which I report in chapters 5-7.

The survey findings were extensive and certainly could have formed the basis of their own study. However, because these findings were intended primarily as a contextual backdrop for the more specific dissertation focus on how teachers’ attitudes towards teaching controversial issues intersect with their own and their students’ identities in Alberta, I have written up the survey findings in this chapter in the form of an executive summary only. Reporting them in depth here would distract from the more purposeful focus of this study on the intersections between teaching controversial issues and identity.

I begin with an overview of the demographic data of all survey participants. Next, I report the range of issues that teachers considered to be controversial, followed by the range of criteria that they believed made particular issues controversial. I then report the findings on teachers’ beliefs, feelings, and frequency of practice, and conclude by reporting the range of factors that informed their attitude toward teaching CI.

4.1 Overview of Demographic Data of all Survey Participants

In total, 202 teachers from across Canada responded to the survey. From these, 103 teachers were teachers in the Province of Alberta, and 99 teachers were teachers from the provinces of Nova Scotia (7), Prince Edward Island (14), Newfoundland (1), Ontario (10), Manitoba (17), British Columbia (18), and from Yukon (31) and Northwest Territories (1). The majority of the total 202 participants who completed the survey were female (64%), social science teachers (55%), teaching at the high school level (64%), and in urban communities
Approximately half of the teachers surveyed had been teaching for less than ten years (and half between 11-40 years).

4.2 Categories of Issues Teachers Named ‘Controversial’

Rather than impose a definition of a controversial issue on teachers, or ask them to identify a range of issues they considered controversial from a pre-determined set of possibilities, I was interested in hearing from them which issues they considered to be controversial. For this reason, I posed this question in an open-ended format and teachers could write as much as they liked in response. The majority (67%) of all 202 teachers responded to this question. I grouped the entire range of issues into 36 common categories of issues. Some of these categories are related or overlap (e.g. Sexuality and Homosexuality; Religious Issues and Evolution; Global Issues and Terrorism, Environment etc.). I made a new category, however, when teachers frequently distinguished one specific dimension of a broader category of issues (e.g. many teachers named specific issues that are global in scope, but only a few stated ‘global issues’ generally). I graphed the range of issues that Canadian teachers considered to be controversial excluding Alberta teachers because they were disproportionately represented in the survey sample (I report the issues that Alberta teachers considered to be controversial later in this chapter). The following table graphs this range.

Table 1.0 Range of Categories of Issues Teachers named Controversial (by number of teachers)
4.3 The Range of Criteria Teachers identified for what makes an Issue Controversial

The survey included an open-ended question asking teachers to articulate what, in their view, made an issue controversial. Only 38% of teachers (78/202) responded to this question, although most teachers cited several criteria. I clustered teachers’ responses into several categories. The most frequently named criteria were those related to ideological conflict (competing and polarizing views and beliefs), followed by the criteria most commonly named by teachers: parents’ views.

Table 2.0 Range of Criteria Teachers identified for what makes an Issue Controversial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excluded from Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear / Xenophobia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical and Current Relevance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unresolved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discomfort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex and not easily understood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generate Emotion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for Extreme Views</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Views</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict - Perspectives, Values, Beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Beliefs, Feelings, and Reports on Frequency of Practice

The survey included 3 questions that were targeted specifically at learning about each component of teachers’ attitudes. These were closed-ended questions, which enabled me to conduct frequency analysis and cross-tabulation of teachers’ responses against one another, as well as against some of the demographic data that was collected on the surveys. The cross-tabulation of teachers’ attitudes against the demographic data (gender, number of years teaching, size of community, discipline taught, and grade level taught) is not intended to suggest that these findings are representational of gender identity groups or teaching level. Instead, I include these here to inform the findings, with the view that some of this data might raise questions that could
provoke further educational research. I review the findings for each component of teachers’ attitudes toward teaching CI, in turn, beginning with teachers’ beliefs.

**Teachers’ Beliefs about Teaching CI**

Teachers were presented with 5 statements related to beliefs about teaching CI, and they were instructed to check all statements that reconciled with their beliefs. These statements included:

- I strongly believe that students should not be exposed to CI in school
- I believe that students should not be exposed to CI in school, except when these are included in the approved programs of study and/or learning resources
- I believe that students should be exposed to some CI in school, but I believe that their exposure should be regulated and monitored
- I believe that CI are an important component of public education
- I am impartial concerning the question of teaching CI in school

All survey participants responded to this question. Overall, there was only slight variation in teachers’ responses, with the majority of them (81%) reporting that they believed that CI were “an important component of public education.” Proportionally, more male teachers, more high school teachers, and more teachers with fewer than 10 years teaching experience believed this. Although teachers were instructed that they could check as many statements as applied to them, very few did. Only 2 teachers believed that students “should not be exposed to CI in school except when they are included in the program of study and/or learning resources.” Fifty seven teachers, or 28% of the teachers surveyed, believed that students should be exposed to CI in school, but they believed that “student exposure should be regulated and monitored.” Two teachers reported that they were impartial, and no teachers reported that they believed that “students should not be exposed to CI in school.”

**Teachers’ Comfort Level (Feelings) Teaching CI**

Teachers were asked to identify how comfortable they felt teaching CI and were provided with 4 options and were asked to choose one. These included: not at all comfortable, relatively comfortable, comfortable, and very comfortable. There was more variation in teachers’ responses to this question compared to the question on beliefs. The highest percentage of teachers indicated that they were “very comfortable” (39%), followed by 27% who felt “comfortable,” 26% who felt “relatively comfortable,” and 4% who responded that they were not at all comfortable.
Teachers’ Behavioural Dispositions toward Teaching CI: Frequency of Practice

In order to get a sense of the practice or behavioural disposition/conative component of Canadian teachers’ attitudes toward teaching CI in school, the survey included a question asking them to indicate how often they taught CI. Teachers were provided with 5 options and were asked to choose one. These included: never, not very often (1-2 times/year), relatively often, often (Monthly), and very often (Weekly/Daily). The highest percentage of teachers (30% or 61 teachers) indicated that they taught controversial issues “not very often (1-2 times/year).” Next, 26% of teachers reported that they taught CI only “relatively often,” 20% taught them “very often,” 17% “often,” and 4% reported that they never taught CI.

4.5 Factors that Informed Teachers’ Attitudes toward Teaching CI

Teachers were also asked to identify factors that impacted their attitude toward teaching CI. I made this an open-ended question so as not to lead teachers and so that I could hear them articulate these factors in their own words. This question generated significant response in terms of the number of teachers who chose to respond to it (173/202 or 85%) as well as in terms of the amount that teachers wrote. Nearly all teachers who responded to this question listed several factors. I categorized teachers’ responses into 14 themes.

Table 3.0 Factors that Informed Teachers’ Attitudes towards Teaching CI (number of Teachers)
4.6 Survey Findings: Isolating Alberta Teachers’ Responses

Here, I isolate Alberta teachers’ responses to the open-ended and fixed-choice questions. The Alberta survey findings also included data from 3 additional open-ended questions that I report herein. These questions centered on: 1) whether their school/school board had a policy on the teaching of CI (teachers were invited to elaborate on their interpretations of those policies), 2) whether they felt supported by their school to teach CI (teachers were invited to elaborate on what indicators contributed to those feelings), and 3) whether they were aware of the passing of Bill 44 (teachers were invited to elaborate on their attitude toward it).

Categories of Issues Alberta Teachers Named ‘Controversial’

The following table represents the entire range of categories of issues that participating teachers in Alberta considered to be controversial, graphed in descending order by the number of times they were named.

Table 4.0 Range of Categories of Issues Alberta Teachers named Controversial (by number of teachers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Issues</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolution</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Issues</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biocentrism</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexuality</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War and Conflict</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Issues</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital P, Aliens</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Politics</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Issues</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Issues</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globalization</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East Conflicts</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug / Alcohol Use</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Issues</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics &amp; Morality (General)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Indian System</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Censorship</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Holocaust</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Issues</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The range of criteria of what makes an issue controversial (Alberta Teacher Participants)

The survey included an open-ended question asking teachers to articulate what, “in their view,” made an issue “controversial.” Only 22 of the 103 Alberta teachers responded to this question, and all were high school teachers. I categorized Alberta teachers’ responses to this question into the following range:
Alberta Teachers’ Beliefs about Teaching CI

There was only a small amount of variation in teachers’ responses to this question, with the majority of Alberta teachers (86%) reporting believing that CI were an important component of public education. These teachers were more often high school (64%) social science teachers (64%). Whereas 94% of all male teachers surveyed believed this, slightly fewer female teachers did (84%). Although teachers were instructed that they could check as many statements as applied to them, very few did. Only 1 teacher believed that students should not be exposed to CI in school except when they are included in the program of study and/or learning resources, and 27% believed that student exposure should be regulated and monitored. Two teachers were impartial, and none believed that “students should not be exposed to CI in school.”

Alberta Teachers’ Comfort Level (Feelings) Teaching CI

The highest percentage of the Alberta teachers surveyed indicated that they were “very comfortable” teaching CI (44%). The overwhelming majority of these teachers were male, high school, social science, teachers with less than 10 years teaching experience. Male teachers were 16% more likely to feel “very comfortable” teaching CI than female teachers. A further 30% of Alberta teachers reported feeling “comfortable” and 26% “relatively comfortable” teaching CI. No teachers surveyed in Alberta were impartial about their comfort level, and none reported that they felt “not at all comfortable.”
Alberta Teachers’ Behavioural Dispositions toward Teaching CI – Reports on Frequency of Practice

The highest percentage of teachers (30% or 61 teachers) indicated that they taught CI “not very often (1-2 times/year).” Next, 25% of teachers reported that they taught CI “very often.” These teachers again, were overwhelmingly male, social science, high school teachers with less than 10 years teaching experience. A further 26% of teachers reported that they taught CI “relatively often” and 18% “often.” Finally, 3 science teachers reported that they “never” taught CI, despite believing that these were an important component of public education. These teachers nevertheless felt “relatively” and even “very” comfortable teaching CI.

Alberta Teachers’ Impressions of School/Board Policies & Support for Teaching CI

Roughly 20% of the teachers surveyed in Alberta reported that their schools had a policy on the teaching of CI (contrasted with 51% who reported that their schools did not have a policy, and 29% who were unsure). Nearly a third (29%) of Alberta respondents indicated that their boards had a policy, and only 15% reported that they did not. The remainder of teachers indicated that they either were not certain, or they chose not to answer. Teachers’ interpretations of their school/board policies were centered on concerns with teaching issues related to sex education and religion. Teachers were under the impression that these policies focused primarily on the need to inform parents. Very few teachers indicated that the policies addressed pedagogical direction (content and/or strategies or resources etc.). Exceptions were a few teachers who were teaching in Catholic schools, who explained that the policies communicated that their teaching “needs to reflect Catholic views,” that teachers “need to be careful teaching about evolution in biology class,” and cautioning that teachers “could not fund organizations that support abortion.” Further exceptions were two teachers who felt that policies encouraged teachers to respect differences and to only discuss issues if they were related to the curriculum. Mainly, however, these focused on notifying parents in advance, and receiving their consent. I cross-tabulated this data with teachers’ beliefs, comfort levels, and frequency of practice. I found that when teachers were under the impression that there were no policies on CI, although their feelings and beliefs were not significantly impacted, they were more likely to teach CI more often.

The majority (73%) of the Alberta teachers’ surveyed reported that they felt supported by their school to teach CI. Only 6 teachers reported that they did not feel supported to teach CI, 7 teachers were unsure, and 11 teachers did not respond to this question. When I cross-tabulated
these findings against teachers’ beliefs, comfort level, and frequency of practice, I found that of those teachers in Alberta who reported that they felt supported by their schools, 49% felt “very comfortable” teaching CI, 87% believed CI were an important component of students’ education, and 30% reported that they taught CI “very often.” Of those teachers in Alberta who reported that they did not feel supported by their school to teach CI, 67% nevertheless believed that CI were an important component of public education, all felt at least “relatively comfortable” (with only 17% feeling “very comfortable”), and half of these teachers reported that they did not teach CI very often. I also asked teachers to elaborate on what types of indicators in their schools made them feel either supported, or not, to teach CI. Predominantly, teachers who felt supported referred to the implicit and explicit messages being communicated by their school administration, and to indicators in the school climate, more generally.

Factors that Informed Alberta Teachers’ Attitudes toward Teaching CI

I categorized Alberta teachers’ responses to this question into 11 themes, and these are represented in the table below, in ascending order of frequency.

Table 6.0 Factors that Informed Alberta Teachers’ Attitudes toward teaching CI (number of teachers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concern with Reprimand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Composition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Convictions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discomfort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age and Maturity of Students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill 44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alberta Teachers’ awareness of, and attitudes towards, the passing of Bill 44

The last 2 questions on the survey I administered in Alberta pertained to whether teachers were aware of the passing of Bill 44; if yes, they were asked to elaborate (in an open-ended
format) on their impressions of this Bill. While Bill 44 did not explicitly refer to the teaching of CI, it did refer to teaching 3 topics that 93% of Alberta teachers (and the vast majority of teachers across Canada more broadly) considered to be controversial: sexuality, religion, and sexual orientation. For this reason the data that I collected on teachers’ opinions of it is relevant to their attitudes toward CI in school more generally. Some teachers chose to write about how it impacted (or not) their teaching practice, some chose to share their criticisms, and others their support for the Bill, and the impact it had on their teaching. The majority of the teachers were aware of the passing of it (89%), although 7 teachers indicated that they were not aware of it. Teachers’ open-ended responses contained recurring themes, such as their belief that section 11.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act was valid for younger students and support for parents’ rights; some teachers chose to ignore it, some felt that section 11.1 disrespected teacher professionalism and restricted their agency, some were confused by it, others believed that section 11.1 was unrealistic and unnecessary, some believed that it taught dangerous lessons to students as hidden curriculum, and others believed that it undermined student agency and was compromising students’ opportunities for citizenship education by rendering this null curriculum.

4.7 Summary of Survey Findings

- Environmental issues were the most commonly named category of issues that teachers considered controversial

- Other common responses were war and conflict, homosexuality, evolution, religious issues, bioethics, and human rights

- “Parents’ views” were commonly cited as criteria for what makes an issue “controversial”

- The majority of teachers surveyed (81%) believed that CI were an important component of public education. One quarter of them believed that students’ exposure to CI should be regulated and monitored.

- Combined, 66% of teachers surveyed reported that they felt “comfortable” and “very comfortable” teaching CI. The demographic group of Canadian teachers surveyed who most commonly felt “very comfortable” teaching CI were male, high school, social studies
teachers who had been teaching for 10 years or less. 4% of teachers surveyed did not feel at all comfortable teaching CI.

- Despite their comfort level, more teachers reported that they taught CI “not very often” than they did any other frequency category. These teachers were more often female, elementary, and science teachers. The demographic group of Canadian teachers surveyed who reported teaching CI “very often” were high school social science teachers who had been teaching for 10 years and less (proportionally equal across male and female teachers).

- The same percentage of teachers who reported that they felt “not at all comfortable” teaching CI reported that they “never” taught CI. This suggests that, in this case, teachers’ feelings did reconcile with their frequency of practice. In every other category of feelings, however, this was not the case. 66% of teachers reported feeling “comfortable” and “very comfortable,” yet only 37% reported teaching CI “often” or “very often.”

- Although 81% of teachers believed that CI were “an important component of public education,” and 66% of the teachers surveyed reported that they felt at least “comfortable,” if not “very comfortable,” teaching CI, 34% reported that they taught CI “not very often” or “never.” This suggests some disconnect between what teachers believed and felt, on the one hand, versus what they did in classroom practice on the other hand.

- One of the predominant factors influencing teachers’ attitudes towards teaching CI were teachers’ concerns with disapproval and reprimand by parents and administrators, and relatedly, their concern to not cause offense to students in their classrooms. Each of these factors suggests that teachers’ concern with the reactions of others was strong enough for them to choose not to reconcile their feelings and beliefs about the teaching of CI with their classroom practices.

- While in the closed-ended question, teachers reported feeling comfortable, if not very comfortable, teaching CI, the open-ended responses to the factors that impacted teachers attitudes were very often expressed as feelings of concern about various factors – parents’ reactions, students’ personal backgrounds and social capital, their own subject-matter and pedagogical knowledge, and students ages and maturity levels.
• Only 2 teachers reported believing that CI should not be taught in school except when they were in the curriculum program of studies – but 32 teachers identified the curriculum as a factor influencing their attitude. This suggests that although many of them chose not to agree with the statement that they believed CI should only be taught when they are explicit in the curriculum, many did only teach them when they were explicit in the curriculum.

• While 29% of teachers articulated philosophies of education that supported the teaching of CI and they described these as factors impacting their attitude toward teaching CI, the finding that only 20% of teachers taught CI “very often” suggests that teachers’ philosophies informed their beliefs and feelings more so than they did their practices.

• 20% of the teachers surveyed in Alberta reported that their schools had a policy on the teaching of CI, and nearly a third (29%) of Alberta respondents indicated that their boards had a policy. Teachers’ interpretations of their school/board policies most often referred specifically to teaching the topics of sex education and religion, and tended to focus primarily on the need to inform parents in advance of teaching. Very few teachers indicated that the policies focused on teaching pedagogy for teaching CI (content and/or strategies or resources etc.).

• Alberta teachers who reported that their school/boards did not have a policy were more likely to teach CI more often than those whose school/boards did have a policy on teaching CI. Based on their responses to other questions (e.g. criteria, factors, indicators), this may be because teachers interpreted the policies as focusing more on being careful and transparent with students’ parents than on being inclusive of CI and the diversity of perspectives on them for the benefit of students’ education. Similarly, slightly more teachers who reported that their school/boards did not have a policy on teaching CI reported that they believed that CI were an important component of public education than those who believed their school/boards did have such policy. While the presence of a school/board policy correlated with teachers’ teaching CI less often, and correlated less with the belief that CI were an important component of public education, the presence of school/board policies did not have the same effect on teachers’ comfort level teaching CI. Teachers reported that they felt
predominantly comfortable whether there was a policy in place or not (although they taught them less often when there was a policy in place).

- The majority (73%) of the Alberta teachers surveyed reported that they felt supported by their school to teach CI. Of those 6 teachers in Alberta who reported that they did not feel supported by their school to teach CI, half of them reported that they did not teach CI “very often,” and half reported that they felt only “relatively comfortable.” Just as many of these teachers who believed that CI were an important component of public education (67%) also believed that student exposure to CI in school should be regulated and monitored.

- The survey data in Alberta suggests that school support matters in all cases, but when teachers felt that their school was not supportive this seemed to have a stronger impact on practice than when they did feel supported. 50% of the teachers who did not feel supported to teach CI did not teach them very often, in contrast to 22% of teachers who did feel supported (and still did not teach them very often).

- If teachers felt supported by their administration, parents, and communities to teach CI, they were more likely to do it more often. The data from the school support question cross-tabulated with frequency suggests this, in addition to the open-ended data re: factors and what makes an issue controversial.

- Teachers were invited to elaborate on what types of indicators in their school made them feel either supported, or not, to teach CI. Predominantly, teachers who felt supported referred to the implicit and explicit messages by their school administration, and to indicators in the school climate, more generally. Those who did not feel supported named school policies written in student handbooks, and a few also named the passing of Bill 44 (i.e. the content of school policies made teachers feel unsupported).

- The most common theme in the Alberta teachers’ responses to the question of what factors impacted their attitudes towards teaching CI were teachers’ concerns with having the support and approval of parents, their school administrators and districts, as well as their communities. After the attention given to concerns about parents and administration, the most common factor named was classroom composition (who the students were).
Teachers’ reports on the factors that impacted their attitude toward teaching CI suggested that their concern for the reactions of parents, students, communities, and their administration may be so strong as to impact the reconciliation between teachers’ feelings and beliefs about the teaching of CI with their classroom practice. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent the passing of Bill 44 informed this, in light of the fact that although the factors named by Alberta teachers suggest that teachers were primarily concerned with approval and reprimand – this was also the case in the broader survey overall, and only 3 teachers in Alberta actually named the passing of Bill 44 as an influencing factor.

While in the closed-ended question, teachers appeared to feel “comfortable,” if not “very comfortable,” teaching CI, the open-ended questions probing the factors that impact teachers attitudes (predominantly with regard to teaching CI “not very often”) were often expressed as feelings of concern about various factors – parents’ reactions, students’ personal backgrounds and social capital, their own subject-matter and pedagogical knowledge, and students ages and maturity levels.

While Bill 44 does not explicitly refer to the teaching of CI, it does refer to teaching 3 topics that 93% of Alberta teachers named as issues that they considered controversial: sexuality, religion, and sexual orientation. The majority of the Alberta teachers were aware of the passing of Bill 44 (89%), although 7 teachers indicated that they were not. The most common impressions of section 11.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act were that it restricted teacher agency, that it was teaching dangerous lessons to students via a hidden curriculum that legitimized status quo values and beliefs, that it was unnecessary, and that it compromised student agency and limited opportunities for students’ democratic citizenship education.
Chapter 5

Alberta Interviews:
Teachers’ Beliefs about Teaching Controversial Issues & Considerations of Identity

5.0. Introduction to the Chapter

The cognitive component of attitude refers to the expression of persons’ beliefs about an attitude object. In this study, the attitude object, broadly speaking was teaching CI. At the same time, however, related attitude objects also include teachers’ beliefs about CI, beliefs about curriculum and the purpose of schools and education, beliefs about the passing of Bill 44 into legislation, and beliefs about teacher and student identities. These beliefs impact what, how, and when teachers teach about CI. A teacher might express the belief, for example, that younger students are incapable of understanding CI and so I do not teach them about same sex marriage. Through this statement, we learn that this teacher believes that same sex marriage is a controversial issue, that young children’s cognitive abilities to understand counter-normative practices are limited, and we learn how these beliefs impact their teaching practice. In this chapter, I report teacher beliefs pertinent to teaching and learning CI that I heard articulated by teachers during the 16 interviews that I conducted in Alberta.

5.1 Teachers’ Beliefs about Controversial Issues

I begin by reporting on teacher’s conceptualizations of CI. Here, I report on 1) the range of issues that teachers considered controversial, 2) conflations that teachers made between sensitive issues and CI, and 3) teachers’ belief that the determination of an issue as controversial is relative, although with some exception.

Issues that Teachers believed were controversial

I began each interview by asking teachers to name issues that they believed were controversial, although the majority of them interpreted this to mean CI that they taught. I grouped related responses together and created overarching categories. Admittedly, this was challenging because, like the survey data, many of these categories were clearly related and overlapping. Nevertheless, I separated one category from another when a particular theme within a single category was disproportionately common (e.g. teachers frequently named homosexuality, therefore I created this as a new category separate from sexuality).
Table 7.0  Range of Categories of Issues Alberta Interview Participants Named Controversial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Issues Count</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Issues</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexuality</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex and Sexuality</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolution &amp; Creationism</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Political Issues</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War &amp; Conflict</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Issues</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Issues</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Issues</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Issues</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion (Other)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights Issues</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Holocaust</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biotechnology</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism &amp; Discrimination</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Holocaust</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legalization of Marijuana</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence in Sport</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Control</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conceptual Conflations: Sensitive/Controversial

Some teachers used the terms *sensitive* and *controversial* interchangeably. In addition to the Holocaust, examples included suicide, death of loved ones, nudity, and religion. Richard, for example, mentioned a time when he was uncertain about the appropriateness of playing his students a song because it dealt with suicide. Simon also named suicide as a controversial issue when he expressed his frustration with the passing of Bill 44 by questioning “in Shakespeare they committed suicide at the end, should the kids be allowed to opt out of that too?” Relatedly, when talking to me about the kinds of factors that impacted his teaching of CI, Doug spoke about the death of loved ones by relaying an account of a student’s father who had recently passed away, and the murder of a student at the school that his students had witnessed at a party:

A number of our students were present and witnessed it. So for a whole year we had students going through different phases of challenges because of that, and so we had to be aware of that. Now because [death is] a controversial issue for them – we have to be careful even around Halloween. (Doug)

For a few teachers, teaching CI meant *participating in controversy*. These teachers identified intimate relations between teachers and students, for example, as a controversial issue. Betty said: “it’s wrong for a teacher to have sex with a 14 year old student even if it is consensual.” Gary made a similar statement:

There is a framework within which we work. You gotta stay within the limits of that framework and not necessarily step beyond and examine issues such as, is it okay for teachers and students to have intimate relations? You wouldn’t go there with students. (Gary)
Some of the male teachers also suggested that portrayals of nudity and teaching about sex to female students were examples of CI. Richard, for instance, mentioned a time when he had screened Roman Polanski’s film version of Macbeth (1971), and had prefaced one scene that contained nudity by explaining to students that during the historical context of the film, “people didn’t sleep with bed clothes.” This was his response to the “certain reaction” he anticipated some students might have. In a few cases, teachers conflated the occurrence of events like the earthquake in Haiti (Sean), and the Tsunami (Gary) with CI. In other cases, teachers regarded all matters of conflict, dispute, and contest as CI. Betty, for example, stated that in addition to the “big things like abortion and gay rights,” CI also referred to:

Who’s the bully on the playground? It’s about everything that everyone has a different opinion on. Who should be the Prime Minister? It’s not just about the big issues of life, it’s everything that we talk about and the decisions we make. Whenever anybody in a classroom says ‘but that’s not fair!’ – That’s a controversial issue. Why do the grade ones get to do this and the grade 6’s don’t get to do that? That’s a controversial issue. (Betty)

I discuss these conceptual conflations and their potential implications as discourse in chapter 8.

**Teachers believed that the Determination of an Issue as Controversial was Relative, not Innate**

Several teachers believed that the determination of whether an issue was controversial was a relative question and contingent on how people were positioned in relation to an issue. Issues, in other words, were controversial for some people and not for others, depending on vantage point. Gary, for example, named free market capitalism as a controversial issue and then qualified his response by saying “but it depends on context and circumstance.” Gary was hesitant to name specific issues as controversial because he believed this labeling reflected “some sort of value judgment on the issue.” Charlie, similarly, emphasized the importance of point of view and perspective:

Controversial issues…whatever we mean. I think we may want to unpack that term. I think they could be local, global, national in scale, but maybe more importantly for students is controversial in terms of where they live. So we wouldn’t say we can’t define controversial issues but I think we can begin to come to some understandings about it depending on point of view and perspective. (Charlie)

Other teachers spoke about degrees of controversy. Ron, for example, named the Patriot Act and the tensions between freedom and security as controversial, but then followed up his example by stating “but I don’t see these issues as that controversial.” Nicolas also referred to degrees of controversy when he described environmental issues that came up at the elementary level as “not
that controversial” and then equated the extreme version of a controversial issue with “really offensive topics.” Teachers like Mark believed the relative nature of some CI like abortion meant that these issues would be perpetually unresolved because they invoked a clash of rights:

I’ve dealt with abortion as an issue, and I teach that there’s never going to be a winner – that’s my position. There’s always going to be people who disagree with it and there’s always going to be people that think it’s acceptable. I think that’s probably the one that kids have the toughest time with because there are women’s rights issues and foetus rights issues, and life issues. (Mark)

More commonly, teachers’ belief in the relative nature of controversial issues was expressed in the form of their believing that 1) identity interests play a role in determining whether or not an issue is controversial, and 2) teaching in Alberta rendered some issues particularly controversial.

**Teachers believed that Identity Interests play a role in Determining whether or not an Issue is Controversial**

A number of teachers expressed their belief in the relative nature of CI by referring to specific individuals and groups for whom they believed issues were controversial. These responses often included the qualifier “it depends on who you talk to.” Gary, for example, believed that “there are going to be issues that will come up all the time that will always be controversial for somebody.” In a more specific example, Stan believed that Aboriginal land claims issues were particularly controversial for First Nations Peoples and for his First Nations students:

We’ve discussed the Lubicon issue and land claims – it’s part of our grade 10 curriculum and so we deal with that. They received nothing in terms of infrastructure or resources from their traditional land. In our school there is something like 340 Aboriginal students. So I think, maybe for them, their identity, maybe that becomes controversial. (Stan)

Foremost, teachers believed that particular identity-related interests associated with cultural, political, and/or religious groups made the issue of homosexuality controversial for members of these groups. Stan, for example, argued that homosexuality was controversial because of some people’s “moral and religious feelings”:

…I suppose I don’t find [the protection of the rights of homosexuals] particularly controversial but because it’s kind of a moral and religious feeling that some people have with respect to that issue, I suppose that it’s controversial for them…for some people it is a hot button issue. (Stan)

Other teachers, like Mary, believed that Christian fundamentalist and conservative interests, in particular, made homosexuality a controversial issue. Gary, too, for example, said:

For some people, talking openly about sexual orientation and the rights of homosexual people or a homosexual couple to marriage is not controversial – it’s just something that’s discussed like oh
yeah, whatever. But for some, with a certain religious perspective for instance, or traditional conservative ideological perspective, they see that as highly controversial to be talking about such things. So it could be a neutral issue for some people, and for some people a really highly charged controversial issue. (Gary)

Richard, too, believed that the morality and belief systems that students were brought up with raised “particular kinds of sensitivities” that rendered some issues controversial “for them,” again referring to homosexuality. A more specific example was articulated by Mick, who shared this scenario:

You know I’m amazed, at our school we have a gay pride club, and once they came around and they gave out those striped bands and the students get these bands and said ‘oh their nice colors!’ But then some students found out what they’re for and were suddenly horrified. And then it’s ‘my dad says…’ That’s often the reaction of the students that are very fundamentalist – [they have] Christian parents or perhaps Muslim conservative parents. So I think that’s controversial for those reasons. (Mick)

These examples elucidate a range of teachers’ beliefs about the relative nature of CI, their beliefs about particular identity groups (e.g. Christian, Muslim, conservative, parents, students, and teachers), as well teachers’ own beliefs about homosexuality.

Teachers believed that teaching in Alberta Rendered some Issues Particularly Controversial

As I mentioned briefly already, Charlie, for example, stated that some issues were controversial for students because of “where they live.” More specifically, teachers frequently named the following characteristics of Alberta as rendering some issues particularly controversial to teach: the presence of the oil and gas industries as a major source of employment, conservative values and perceived intolerance for diverse beliefs and ways of life, and the passing of Bill 44.

Many teachers believed that Alberta’s relationship to oil and gas industries rendered environmental issues particularly controversial for them as Albertans and as teachers because “everyone in the Province benefits economically from the oil sands” (Ron) and “most Albertan citizens are in the oil industry whether they like to think about it or not” (Sean). Sean believed that Alberta was “very much an oil Province” and he asserted that “because it’s traditionally been that way, there’s a lot of things that the average person can’t do a lot about.” Mary believed the oil sands were “a huge issue” because Red Deer had 7000 oil sands businesses and it supported their economy. Lan, who was generally hesitant to name any issues as controversial, conceded “but the oil sands? Yeah [they are controversial] because we’re talking about putting
Albertans in other jobs.” She believed that the focus on renewable resources in the Physics curriculum was not in and of itself controversial but became controversial because many of the students’ parents worked for oil and gas industries. Stan, similarly, believed that there could be potentially devastating effects if restrictions were placed on oil sands activity because the oil sands were not only a major employer but an employer that paid well, which impacted the health of the Albertan economy more broadly. In light of these considerations, he believed that global warming was a controversial issue for “typical Alberta rednecks.”

Mick also believed that the tar sands and global warming were particularly controversial for Albertans, and he associated this with what he perceived as the politically conservative values of the province. He believed that Alberta’s position on the National Energy Program dating back to the 1970’s was directly related to some of his students’ parents’ reluctance to believe in global warming:

Some [of my students] just don’t believe that CO2 is causing greenhouse gases and I can bet you that their parents are probably more conservative. We have, regrettably, lots of conservatives – this is a very conservative province. It’s a big problem. It all dates back to the National Energy Program in the 1960’s and 70’s – and that’s big. (Mick)

Many of these teachers thus believed that conservatism went hand in hand with Albertan identity, and some believed that this character trait also made issues pertaining to race and discrimination, not only global warming, particularly controversial. In another example, Mick described Albertans as “right-wing, mean-spirited types with ulterior motives,” and Doug viewed discrimination as a controversial issue in Alberta because, like Stan, he believed Alberta had “a lot of redneck people.” He told me he was surprised, for example, that Calgary had elected a Muslim mayor because he believed that Albertans would neither elect a Muslim nor a woman for political office (the latter of which has since now also happened) because of their conservative views. Several science teachers also believed that they needed to be particularly “careful” when teaching about evolution because it conflicted with the religious beliefs of many students and their families, making it more of a controversial issue for them. Relatedly, many teachers believed that Alberta’s adoption of Bill 44 aligned with conservative ideological values that condemn homosexuality as anti-Christian sentiment, which they believed made issues pertaining to sexuality, sexual orientation, and religion particularly controversial for Albertans and Alberta teachers.
Exceptions: Issues that Teachers Believed were neither Relative nor Controversial

Some teachers also believed that there were some exceptions to the relative nature of controversial issues. Mainly, these were issues that invoked morality, science, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. These teachers believed that some issues that frequently get referred to as controversial, such as global warming, creationism, genocide, the rights of immigrants, homosexuals, and First Nations Peoples, were not controversial or “up for debate.” Richard shared this example:

You can argue about matters of immigration policy. That may be controversial, particularly if I have students who are first generation immigrants. But the fact that immigrants landing on Canadian soil have certain rights as defined by the Charter – they are not second class citizens – that is not controversial. Now, whether or not Canada should have the type of immigration policy that it does, is quite heavy with controversy and that might be a subject of debate in class. Do you see the difference? What we do is establish that there are certain things that are right and that are acceptable, and there are certain things that are wrong and are not acceptable. We can have a debate on the best ways to accommodate difference or the best way to address the problems that Aboriginals face in Canada. But I don’t think, for example, the rights of homosexuals can be put into the context of ‘well, on that one hand some people believe this and on the other hand some people believe that’. A right is a right. (Richard)

A few teachers also believed that some issues that implicated science were also exceptions.

Mick, for example, believed that some people incorrectly labeled issues controversial because they did not understand science or the facts. He believed “common sense was becoming less and less common” and he gave several examples of what he meant by this. The reasons why people believe that nuclear waste and nuclear power generation are controversial, according to Mick, is because they believe that all nuclear power generation is the same:

I mean it’s controversial because people think that the minute that you start having nuclear power that you’re going to have a proliferation of weapons and nuclear waste contamination in the water – what a load of rubbish. And people think that burning coal is a good thing. And when you tell them well actually coal powered stations release more radioactive nuclei, they don’t believe you! (Mick)

Mick also believed that the reason why global warming was commonly labelled controversial rather than recognized as a fact was because people did not understand the science behind the tar sands and the implications of the burning of fossil fuels for the planet:

There’s no oil in Fort McMurray - there’s bitumen. They MAKE oil in Fort McMurray – they DO NOT mine oil out of the ground. They get bitumen. Now you can’t do anything with that. So they take it, and they heat it up by burning natural gas. They take a really clean fuel and use it to create a really dirty liquid fuel. Because that’s what our refineries can handle – they can handle liquids. So we burn a really clean fuel that gives off less toxins to create a fuel that gives off more toxins, more carbon, more sulphur and more contaminants. And people don’t see it. (Mick)
Mick stressed the importance of teaching factually and preparing students to “critically assess facts, not emotions.” Jim similarly believed that misunderstanding of the facts rendered the issue of global warming to be mislabelled controversial:

A student will read an article that says that global warming isn’t real. When I [started teaching], most of the information was text-bound, which meant that it was reviewed by scientists. Today, there are people that say global warming is not real as well as some institutes that say it’s not real. But those institutes are not real institutes. They don’t have the scientific credibility, they haven’t published in peer-reviewed journals. (Jim)

The science of global warming was indeed the most common reason why these teachers believed that global warming should not be labeled controversial. Stan believed that “the science has largely been settled on that,” and Richard believed that “global warming has nothing to do with political ideology because it’s an issue of science.” A few teachers spoke similarly about evolution. In this comment, Mick expressed his frustration:

Then there’s evolution – and that’s usually fundamentalists who raise those objections and a rejection of science, that’s why. I mean it’s an incontrovertible fact that the Earth is at least 4.5 billion years old. But it’s like [to them] science is lying. It conflicts with people’s origin stories. They are often religious. Most people who believe in a literal interpretation of genesis have trouble with that. (Mick)

Sometimes this was expressed subtly, such as when Sean casually referred to students’ religious beliefs as “incorrect.” Other times, this was an explicit bone of contention:

I know colleagues who have taught about creationism in a science class in a Catholic school – which in my opinion has no business being there. The science is overwhelming and suggests otherwise…and I know and understand that belief in God, but theology aside there’s a time and place for science in the classroom to be empirical and not be slanted toward that side. The teacher was commended for doing that – for giving that other opinion. But I think that they shouldn’t have been – I think that they should keep that for religion class, not science class. (Sean)

Richard was similarly adamant that he was “not going to go and engage in a debate over evolution” because “it’s science.”

5.2 Teachers’ Beliefs about Teaching Controversial Issues

Teachers frequently affirmed two beliefs about teaching CI. The first, and most common, was their belief that teaching CI was a professional responsibility. The second belief was that Bill 44 had been passed into legislation to cater to parents’ interests over students’ interests, and that it was insignificant to teachers’ own pedagogical practice.
Teachers believed that Teaching CI was a Professional Responsibility

The majority of teachers articulated their belief that teaching CI was a professional responsibility through a broad range of foci. Linda, for example, believed teaching CI was expected of her as a public school teacher. Ron believed that he was responsible for providing a “platform for freedom of expression,” and Mick believed that his professional responsibilities as a teacher were intimately tied to his responsibilities as a citizen:

We’ve got people that are going to be born in a couple of weeks’ time, and if politicians can’t get off their back sides and talk about climate change and power generation, ultimately, some of these kids, a minority of them, are going to become politicians within the next 40-50 years [which is the timeframe within which] these issues will require turn around. It takes years for people to make these decisions, and for those people educated that way to get into power and start making it that way…to become councillors, then provincial politicians, and then federal politicians. It starts with people who work in schools. (Mick)

Most commonly, teachers belief that teaching CI was a professional responsibility was expressed in the form of their believing that 1) CI were a component of the prescribed curriculum, 2) teaching CI was a disciplinary responsibility of science and social studies, and 3) schools have a responsibility to broaden students’ perspectives beyond those they encounter in their homes.

Teachers believed that CI were a Component of the Prescribed Curriculum

All but two teachers believed that CI were included in their curriculum policy, which meant that they were professionally responsible for teaching them. The presence of CI in the curriculum was a primary rationale, or in Sean’s words, the “number one reason,” guiding this teaching practice. Charlie, a veteran secondary social science teacher, for example, described how the curriculum policy informed his teaching practice about controversial dimensions of Canadian identity:

The old program of studies was quite Eurocentric and so what I taught in terms of being Canadian – there was no controversy about it. I knew what a Canadian was because the program told me what it was. [The curriculum stated] there is only one kind of Canadian - individuals who bought in and assimilated, right? Now I would walk into the classroom and that identity in the new program of studies is not prescribed, because one of the questions [it] asks is ‘is there more than one nation in Canada?’ As soon as you ask if there’s more than one nation in Canada, there may be more than one kind of citizen and maybe more than one way we’d identify ourselves as citizens, and that creates controversy. (Charlie)

Linda articulated a similar point when she described the inclusion of CI in the curriculum policy as a safeguard for defending her teaching practice: “it’s actually in the curriculum in writing, so
if anybody wanted to argue with me about “you shouldn’t be doing this or that” I can always go back and say “sorry, this is my job – it’s in the curriculum.” Richard, too, told me:

As part of my contract I am expected to teach the curriculum. So, it’s the nature of what I do and in truth, I think it’s impossible to follow the curriculum and avoid something controversial. I have to teach controversial issues to the extent that its part of the curriculum. It comes with the territory – it’s what I signed on for. (Richard)

Lan believed environmental issues, in particular, were not only in the curriculum, but also on the diploma exams, which meant she was obligated to teach CI:

Because it’s part of the diploma, you can’t not teach them. If you look in Science 10, 20, and even 30 actually – there’s always a unit D that’s about environmental issues. Its right in the program of studies so if I didn’t teach it, then that would be an issue. But because it’s in there, I have to teach it. (Lan)

Lan also explained that the curriculum focus on students’ grasping the notion of “theory of knowledge” meant that teaching topics like wind and solar power meant going beyond an empirical approach, and instead teaching about the contentious issues surrounding these topics. Other teachers saw opportunity in the curricular attention to environmental issues as well. Stan believed that environmental issues were “a big part of the grade 10 curriculum” and he used this as an opportunity to teach students about CI surrounding the Lubicon First Nation’s land claims and their confrontation with big oil in Alberta.

Many other teachers similarly pointed to specific course content themes. Several secondary social studies teachers, including Mary, Charlie, and Ron, for example, all spoke about how the newer social science program of studies was “issues-based,” which for them meant that they “had to” teach CI. Mark used the social studies curricular attention on multiculturalism to teach his students about “immigration issues and shortages of skilled workers in certain areas like the healthcare field,” and several social studies teachers believed that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically, lent itself to CI teaching. Stan used this focus of the curriculum to teach his secondary students about Delwin Vriend (the homosexual teacher in Alberta who was fired for being gay and who raised the human rights complaint with the Alberta human rights commission which led to Bill 44). Gary took up the curricular attention on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as an opportunity to teach about sexual orientation and religious freedom (e.g. wearing turbans in the RCMP). For Richard, curricular attention to the Charter created an opportunity for teaching his grade 9 students about prostitution laws and polygamy in Canada.
In addition to believing that CI were explicit in the curriculum, some teachers also believed that the curriculum was open to interpretation, which they felt enabled their teaching of CI. Richard chose to interpret the curriculum’s attention to teaching tolerance as an opportunity to “go there” in terms of teaching “issues involving gays and lesbians.” He also interpreted the curricular attention to globalization as an opportunity to teach students about controversial environmental issues such as inequitable access to clean water. In another example, Sean explained that the curriculum’s lack of attention to instructional pedagogy, specifically, left room for interpretation:

In the curriculum, there’s not much in there to say, you know, ‘this is the way that you need to teach it’, but instead it says these are the outcomes that you need to achieve. And in my opinion, there are lots of things that are not in the curriculum that are important that students need to learn. There’s a lot of open water. It’s not specific. (Sean)

Gary, who was involved in writing the new program of studies for social studies, explained that the social studies curriculum writing team in fact hoped that teachers would interpret the policy broadly:

It’s prescriptive to some degree – you know, you have to cover these outcomes…but [it is more of a] springboard for the exploration of issues. Yeah, we will cover all of that stuff [in the curriculum]…but as we explore issues. And a lot of the points in the program of studies have, in parentheses, the examples that you need to cover. It will say to take a look at, contemporary examples and so it leaves it wide open to whatever might be going on. The program is open and flexible and allows teachers to go into different directions, and even to take up issues that are of concern to students when they happen. (Gary)

Some of the science teachers also believed that the curriculum was open to interpretation. Mick, for example, creatively interpreted the science curriculum through a wider lens than the one prescribed by the program of studies:

The [CI that I teach] may not be in the curriculum. The thing is that we have to abide by the law and teach the curriculum – but I’ll just give them a wee bit of extra material for free. You know, toeing the line is one thing but you have to explain why we do some things. So I try to make time available to expand on things like [the relationship between] waste and climate change….Some of these things are controversial. We always try to interpret the curriculum openly. We can slip in some of this when we get the time. (Mick)

Jim, who had been writing science textbooks over the course of his long teaching career, believed that textbooks were intended to support teachers in this interpretation work. For this reason, he included one social issue in every chapter of every science textbook he had written and published (used in K-12 schools across Canada over the last 25 years). Richard, on the other hand, believed that many textbooks intentionally excluded CI:
I find that if we stick to the prescribed resource, like the textbook – often the texts that we have do shy away from things that might be considered controversial. I’ll give you an example. The grade 11 social studies textbook deals with nationalism. There is some coverage of East Timor and some current issues. But there is nothing on Israel and Palestine. I remember looking at that and going ‘this is bull, that’s a complete cop out.’ Quite likely the most powerful issue involving nationalism and conflicting national identities and the book entirely skips that. That’s where I think a lot of people designing the resources do try to skip the things that are going to be particularly controversial and that get a lot of strong feelings going. (Richard)

Overall, while most teachers believed that CI were included in the curriculum, some nevertheless also acknowledged the importance of thinking and teaching beyond the policy/text.

Two teachers were exceptions in that they believed that CI were at odds with curricular mandates. Simon believed that teaching CI meant “straying away from teaching curriculum.” Betty, a former elementary school Principal, told me about teachers under her supervision who used to tell her that they did not teach CI because they did not want to get in trouble for teaching outside of the curriculum. Betty explained: “it’s not like I was a curriculum Nazi!” In saying so, she implied that she did not believe CI were mandated in the curriculum either. Instead, she believed that opportunities to teach CI were more likely to arise as teachable moments, telling me “many times they just appear, usually from a question or a statement by a child.”

**Teachers believed that Teaching CI was a Disciplinary Responsibility**

Both science and social studies teachers believed that the nature of their disciplines, and the topics that they covered, frequently involved values-based conflicts. Betty, for example, elaborated:

[Social Studies] is really what life’s about – it’s about our differences and our similarities and how we figure out how to live together in some kind of a harmonious way. And so it’s really engrained in everything we do. There’s always differences of opinion. It’s the core of life really – of social life. It’s all about that: who am I and who am I in relation to everybody else I encounter? That’s social studies, isn’t it? That’s also teaching. So I think if you’re not allowing controversial issues then you’re not doing your job. (Betty)

Richard, similarly, could not conceive of how to teach social studies without teaching CI. According to him, leaving out CI in social studies was “like saying I’m going to wade across one end of the pool to the other end without getting wet.” Gary, too, believed that the purpose of social studies aligned with teaching and learning about CI, including those issues named under section 11.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act:
Social studies...why do we teach social studies? The overarching goal is responsible citizens...active, responsible, citizens...in a democratic society...I mean, of course in social studies we talk about sexuality, sexual orientation, and religion. Maybe sexuality a bit less, but things like rights for homosexual couples, or when it comes to religion – even in grade 1 you’re talking about traditions and celebrations. (Gary)

Because Mark believed that CI were a core aspect of social studies, he felt a responsibility to his students to be aware of issues so that he could respond to student questions:

The fact that [CI] are important in society – as a social studies teacher, I think that I have a responsibility. If a kid asks me ‘hey Mr. J., how come there’s riots over in God knows where, over religious freedom and what not?’ That’s a great question. I think it is my responsibility to respond...The issues are a reality, so to avoid them – particularly in social studies - if you just sweep it under the rug then you do a dis-service to your students. (Mark)

Mary, similarly believed that “her job” as a social science teacher was to get students talking with one another about CI, and she felt that she had “done her job” when she heard students continuing their conversations outside the classroom.

Science teachers also commonly believed that the nature of their discipline aligned with the responsibility to teach controversial issue, mainly through the specific topics that this discipline raised (e.g. evolution, environmental issues, and bioethics). Mick believed that the discipline of science itself was closely connected with educating for citizenship, and so he consequently believed that he was not only responsible for teaching about topics like nuclear energy or natural gas in environmental chemistry, but also for creating opportunities for students to contemplate the implications for their actions as everyday consumers:

Have you ever heard of buy-ology? It’s actually marketing science. You see foodstuff that read ‘made from 100% vegetable oils!’ But wait a minute – if they made it by hydrogenating it – it’s no longer healthy. But the words vegetable oil sounds organic, sounds healthy. Or, potato chips – ‘contains no cholesterol’ – but they never did! So I try to help them translate marketing gobely goop. I just finished teaching a unit on organic chemistry, and there’s a classic problem: would you buy 100 vitamin C tablets extracted from orange juice – or 100 vitamin c tablets prepared in a factory? Well, buy the cheap ones because they’re the same chemical! Vitamin c is vitamin c is vitamin c. Marketers always try to get an emotional response. If it costs more it must be better. So it’s trying to equip students with the knowledge to make sensible decisions... We’re here to model lifelong learning and citizenship. We give them the foundation for making future decisions as responsible citizens. That’s what we do. That’s our job. (Mick)

Mick’s belief in science as citizenship meant he frequently had students challenge the business marketing practices of corporations while learning science.
Teachers believed that they had a professional responsibility to broaden students’ perspectives beyond those engendered at home.

Several teachers believed that teaching CI was one way to enact the responsibility of schools to broaden students’ perspectives. This was related to their concern that, if not in school, students would have limited opportunity to learn about multiple perspectives on issues. Mary, for example, believed that she was responsible for teaching students about CI like sexuality because she because central Alberta was “not exactly noted for being the most liberal minded part of the province” and she believed that there were “large communities in Red Deer that need exposure to [homosexuality].” Mark similarly believed that some students rarely had the opportunity to discuss issues at home and he believed that this placed a particular responsibility on schools and on teachers:

Some kids may not have an open dialogue at home, and I mean it’s not like the kids sit at the lunch tables and discuss them. These aren’t usually things that come up in their day to day conversations. For some of them this will be the only time that they get to engage with controversial issues. I teach world religions and it’s a great opportunity to teach issues that kids have a ton of questions about. A lot of lights go off with kids – a lot of them go ‘wow that was cool. I did not know anything about that.’ (Mark)

A few teachers also believed that it was important to not only introduce students’ to unfamiliar perspectives on issues, but to correct or challenge perspectives that students heard at home that teachers believed were misguided. Nicolas, an elementary teacher, believed he was responsible for teaching students “to think and to question things that family members or friends mistake as human nature.” He told me that this was “especially” important at the elementary level because “when they’re that young, they take [what they hear] with full force, and so when they hear other perspectives they go ‘oh, but I always thought it was this way!’” Some high school teachers also believed that students’ needed to have the perspectives they heard at home challenged. Richard provided this example:

One student’s father has worked in the oil sands, for Syncrude. When we talked about the tailings ponds, [this student] said ‘they are so far back from the river that there is no issue’ [over water contamination on the First Nations reserve]. That’s what his father told him. And I said you know, I’m sure they are but there is a concern too that they seep into the groundwater, through the bottoms. And he understood what I said. So I said there is concern…but you know, I don’t know for certain that’s happening. So I’m putting it out there, but doing it with respect. (Richard)

In sum, teachers believed that teaching CI was a professional responsibility and they expressed this through a variety of specific themes including their alignment with curriculum,
with subject discipline, and with teachers’ philosophies of education about what schools and education are for.

**Some teachers believed that Bill 44 was implemented into legislation to cater to parents’ interests above students’ interests**

Teachers’ beliefs about teaching CI also implicated their beliefs about the passing of Bill 44. Mick, for example, believed that Bill 44 was passed to “appease special interest groups,” namely “right wing parents who are emotionally attached to things like sexuality and evolution,” and he described this as a “fundamentalist approach” that disregarded the “need to provide students with information” so that they could “make decisions on the facts and not on the emotion.” He consequently believed the passing of Bill 44 was “more politically expedient than it was necessary.” Gary similarly believed the Bill prioritized parents’ interests, stating: “it was brought in as a private members bill to cater to a narrow group of people – parents – who don’t want their children exposed to a wide range of views…especially those that might contradict their own…so it’s [viewed as] a way of protecting kids from all the nastiness out there.” Doug, too, expressed a similar view:

> Whenever parents are shutting down a conversation whenever they feel it’s inappropriate, I have a problem with that. As a professional educator I should be setting and the curriculum should be setting, what we’re looking at and what we’re discussing rather than parents. If you have an issue with it, you should then be talking about it with your son or daughter yourself, not trying to shut us down and stop us from discussing it. It gives the opportunity to a lot of hard line religious groups to shut down discussion on evolution. Bill 44 has no place in a modern day society. (Doug)

A few other teachers were under the impression that the passing of Bill 44 was not relevant to them personally because they taught particular grade levels or subjects (the believed that the Bill only applied to a limited number of grades and courses). This was related to the same uncertainty that many teachers on the survey articulated around the meaning and scope of Bill 44. Nicolas, for example, believed the Bill did not affect him because he taught the lower grades, and Sean did not think it applied to him because he taught in a Catholic school.

A third of the teachers, however, believed that the passing of Bill 44 was insignificant to their teaching practice even when they did think it was intended to impact them. Richard, for example, told me he was “business as usual.” Ron joked, saying “fire me, I’m retiring soon!” Stan told me that he chose to ignore section 11.1, and Linda said that it did not affect her. Only one teacher, Charlie, said that he did send letters home to parents since the passing of Bill 44. He
chose to view the passing of this legislation as an opportunity rather than as a hindrance because it propelled him and others interested in these issues to take them up even more. He also believed that very few parents would actually opt their children out:

I’ve talked to many high school teachers who actually are going to take up controversial issues in the classroom because Bill 44 is such a controversy. So I think that’s a real opportunity. I’ll play by the rules, I’ll send a letter home to the parents and say you know ‘your kid does not have to be in the classroom at this time when we take this up’ – but maybe 1 parent out of 100 will say ‘no, I don’t want my kid…’ So there’s actually a real opportunity now, through Bill 44, to take up controversial issues. It’s kind of like it backfired on them. (Charlie)

5.3 Teachers Beliefs about their Multiple Identities and how these Intersected with their Teaching of Controversial Issues

A few teachers believed that their identities as teachers intertwined with their identities as learners, particularly pertaining to teaching and learning with CI. These teachers acknowledged that they did not have all the answers. Stan, for example, regarded a video-conference he arranged with two Holocaust survivors as an opportunity for his own learning, Sean told me that CI were good for him to talk about as well as his students, and Mark, too, conceded that “the thing about controversy” is that he was “not an expert”:

Kids have a ton of questions, and I have a ton of questions, and so when we get guest speakers in, I love just to just blend in with them at the desks, because it’s about dispelling certain, I don’t know, misperceptions about faith, and just learning more about particular faiths…And then we sort of address the terminology, which they don’t get sometimes, and I don’t get sometimes. I mean they aren’t just issues for students they’re issues for us – right? (Mark)

Generally, most teachers spoke about how their identities intersected with teaching CI in the context of expressing how they felt more so than what they believed. As a result, the majority of the data that I report here is focused specifically on teachers’ beliefs about what it meant to them to be Canadian and to be a global citizen, and how these beliefs informed their attitudes toward teaching CI. While many teachers articulated beliefs about Albertans as a collective, they rarely spoke about their own Albertan identities or what they believed it meant to be an Albertan, personally. Instead, teachers articulated two common beliefs about their identities and how these intersected with their teaching of CI that I elaborate on here. Teachers believed that 1) what it means to be Canadian reconciles with, and supports, the teaching of CI, and that 2) global citizenship identity was an unrealistic ideal for them, personally.
Teachers believed that their Canadian identity reconciled with, and supported, teaching CI

Of the various identity locations that I probed about, Canadian identity was the primary identity location that teachers believed enabled their teaching practice. Despite the oft-cited cliché that Canadian identity is defined by its absence of a clearly defined identity, many of the teachers I interviewed articulated common beliefs about what it meant to them to be Canadian, and many believed that these character traits enabled them to teach CI. One of these traits, moreover, was the uncertain dimension of Canadian identity. A few teachers believed this was an opportunity to teach students who they might become as Canadians rather than narrowly focusing on who they think they already are. Gary, for example, described Canadian identity as "always evolving" and "tough to put your finger on." Charlie stated, more elaborately:

I’m not sure what it means to be a Canadian. In the past we had predetermined ideas about what Canadianism is and I think those are shifting. And I think that’s a good thing. It has informed my teaching [of CI] because that connection to identity is an on-going discussion and I don’t think you can nail down that citizenship in terms of Don Cherry-isms…I will never say to my students what a good citizen is or what good Canadianism looks like. I open a space for that discussion. And as a public school teacher – I wish on every public school teacher that they would ask themselves ‘what perspectives of Canadianism can I make my kids aware of today or this year, or this month?’ rather than a predetermined role of what a Canadian is. (Charlie)

In other instances, teachers believed that the traits they aligned with Canadian identity enabled teaching CI because these represented ideals that teachers could trouble as opportunities for student learning (see chapter 7).

Common descriptors that teachers related to their Canadian identities that they believed enabled their teaching of CI included multiculturalism, rights-oriented, freedom, tolerance, not-American, open-mindedness, removed-enough (from big issues and conflict), freedom of expression, and valuing of dialogue and public opinion. Doug believed that being Canadian meant that he had “a certain opportunity and angle to come from” when teaching CI. Several teachers also believed Canada had “legislation” that, as Linda put it, “backs up the principles of dealing with controversy and discourse and discussion.” Mark returned to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms when he spoke about the relationship between his Canadian identity and teaching CI:

I think that’s another great thing about living in a country that has so many great protections of rights, you know. So I mean, as a Canadian, you should feel enabled to have these discussions because you know, there’s probably a quarter of the countries in the world where your research wouldn’t even be permitted. So you know, we need to sort of celebrate that as a group. (Mark)
The 2 most common articulations of teachers’ belief that their Canadian identities enabled their teaching of CI, however, were 1) the belief that Canada is safe, free, and accommodating of diversity and difference of opinion, and 2) the belief that Canada is in a comfortable position to help others and respond to global issues.

Many teachers believed that being Canadian meant being free to express and engage difference of opinion without fear of repercussion. Lan, for example, explained “Canada is so open-minded that it’s okay to talk about these things – we’re not going to get stoned for talking about sexuality and birth control.” Nicolas, similarly, said “teaching in Canada you have this freedom to just talk about things and there’s not going to be a danger or risk… [Instead] we talked about it and you have one opinion and I have another opinion and its fine.” Foremost, teachers believed that being Canadian meant valuing diversity, and this enabled their capacity to teach with and for multiple perspectives. Gary, for example, believed that the “key concept” behind being Canadian was “diversity” and always has been:

Diversity of First Nations before the Europeans came...and then you have the French and the British, and diversity amongst the inhabitants of what becomes Canada. And then you have waves of immigration from various parts of the world and then you’ve got you know, diversity, diversity, diversity. Diversity in ways that people live from region to region to region across the country. So if I take diversity as sort of a characteristic of a country and what it means to be a resident in this country, I think that allows us to explore that diversity and say that hey, when we do have issues, yes there are going to be diverse and divergent opinions on the issues that arise. (Gary)

Ron believed that Canada’s attitude toward diversity meant that “reconciling contending loyalties” was easier here than “if you lived in the suburbs of Paris or in a Muslim country,” because, as Betty put it “we’re very multicultural.” Richard told me “there’s no cookie cutter or melting pot here” because “basic to Canadian identity is the idea about respect for peoples’ freedoms and for tolerance, and openness to draw on many cultural expressions and experiences.” Charlie was similarly proud of Canada’s attitude toward diversity, telling me that Canadians “consider other perspectives and acknowledge that there may be people who feel differently than we do.” He continued, “rather than show them my hand and say ‘you’re wrong!’ I can lower the hand and listen to your perspective and your point of view, and we may not agree, but I think we should be quite good at that as Canadians.”

Many teachers also stressed that Canadians were more tolerant and accepting of diversity than Americans, and they believed this was a defining characteristic of Canadian identity. These teachers spoke with conviction about what they believed were core differences between American identity and Canadian identity that had implications for the teaching of CI. Teachers
like Mark and Ron raised this theme by talking about “insular” versus “outward” looking behaviours of each nation in relation to the rest of the world, believing that Canadians differed from Americans because they did not view themselves in conflict with Others whose views were different from their own, both within and beyond Canada. In Ron’s words:

My Canadian identity enables me [to teach CI] because we can’t help looking at American actions, right? A lot of it is ‘there’s them and there’s us’ - ‘the Americans versus the rest of the world’. Canadians – who are we in all this? I think it’s important for the kids that their not perceived as American. It’s the first thing you do when you travel right? It’s make sure they know I’m not an American. There is a difference in American culture. The movie star couple Susan Sarandon and her husband were basically banned from their kids school because they’re very left wing and against the war in Iraq and very activist. So the teachers were telling the kids ‘no, we prefer your parents not show up.’ I can’t imagine that ever happening here in Canada. You know, like the war – we talk about it and its great – but down there, as a student, would you dare say ‘I’m against the war’? It’s much different here than in the US. I don’t think were as black and white about issues as Americans. (Ron)

Jim believed that Canadians valued sharing and collective responsibility more than Americans (who he viewed as more selfish and focused on individual interests). He cited the Canadian public health care system as an indicator of this, and spoke at length about the implications for teaching CI:

Canadians hold certain views towards things like health care. If you went down to the States right now, the right wing element believes that you don’t share resources with those below you because it diminishes your resources. It’s a very different philosophy in Canada. A Canadian identity is one that believes in sharing and shared responsibility in making sure that everyone’s life is as good as possible. We have a reputation. The Canadian identity is sort of a predisposition to be a little kinder and to look at issues, I think, much more liberally. For instance, in France they’re debating whether to change retirement age from 62 to 65 and people are rioting in the streets. That’s not Canada. Canadians tend to find a middle ground, and that has to do with our ability to collaborate and reach consensus and so I think that is interwoven within Canadian identity. I think sometimes you can’t reach consensus, but [you can] understand why others hold different views, appreciating different views... So I think [teaching C.I.] is very Canadian. It is this tolerance of understanding, this sensitivity to the fact that others will not have the same opinion, but it’s important to understand their opinion, to be open to them – that’s Canadian. (Jim)

When Doug contrasted American identity against Canadian identity, he did it in the context of talking about racism. Doug believed that racism was “in-bred” in Americans, unlike Canadians. In other moments of the interview, however, Doug himself expressed feeling “quite shocked” that Calgary had recently elected a Muslim mayor, and he told me that “race was a non-issue” in the context of arguing that his one black student should become more like “everyone else.”
report more about this in chapter 7 in relation to teacher practices, and discuss it at length in chapter 8.

One third of teacher interviewees believed that many of the values they associated with Canadian identity aligned with global citizenship, which further enabled them to teach CI. Mark, for example, believed that Canada was well positioned to enact global citizenship because of the "privileges and rights that we have in Canada allows us the opportunity to examine and explore all of the cultures." Teachers held many beliefs about Canada’s position in the world, including the belief that Canada was in a comfortable position to help others and to respond to global issues as a consequence of the resources it has and the geo-political position it occupies. Sometimes teachers also referred to Canada’s comfortable distance from global issues as a characteristic that facilitated their capacity to help. Lan, for example, believed "the whole global citizen thing" was nice because it meant that she could "push the view that we're Canada, so we have the resources to help." Ron similarly believed that Canada's resources uniquely positioned it to enact global citizenship, and he commented on some of the tensions this provoked for students:

> I think [Canada] looks at things pretty globally – like even the oil sands is a global issue, right? We discuss: how does this affect our relations with third world countries? Like water, for example, the next war will probably be over water because there’s people who want it and if we don’t share it, there’s going to be issues. So you have to look at the global issue. Are we supposed to share it? Some kids will say ‘no, keep it, it’s ours.’ So we talk about what it means to be global. Sometimes it means ‘well in certain areas, but not this’ or ‘yeah, global is great, I get all the cheap bananas.’ (Ron)

Sean believed the comfortable distance that Canada has to some global issues meant it could enact leadership on these issues. He believed that Canadians were "fortunate to not have to deal with the really big issues that are going on in the rest of the world" such as "huge population increases in China and India." He continued "we have space here that we can live in, in houses that are big, and we have vehicles…so I think we as Canadians are leaders in the world as far as developing an open forum for these issues."

**Teachers believed that global citizenship identity was an unrealistic ideal for them personally**

Despite teachers’ views about Canada being well-positioned to respond to global issues, and despite their believing that globalized conditions invoked particular global civic responsibilities for the Canadian government, when I asked them about their own global citizenship identity the majority of the teachers told me that they did not believe they were global citizens. In this way, they believed that their identities as Canadians were disconnected from the
actions of the Canadian government. The reasons teachers did not believe they were global citizens followed from their beliefs about what it meant to be a global citizen. While some teachers' interpretations of global citizenship were relatively general, like Lan who conceptualized it as meaning: “thinking about the world as a whole,” most were more specific. Many teachers believed that global citizenship necessitated travel and humanitarian work abroad, and they believed that it required absolute reconciliation between knowledge, values, and behaviour. Because most of them either had not had the opportunity to travel abroad, or could not reconcile their consumer behaviours with their awareness of issues and their values, global citizenship was not an identity they associated with themselves. I elaborate on each of these points more, in a moment.

Charlie's interpretation of global citizen and his reasons for being reluctant to identify as a global citizen differed from the others in that he believed the meaning of global citizenship had shifted from a focus on social justice to a focus on globalization, and this made him nervous. For this reason, he told me that he “needed to be honest,” he did not like the term global citizenship:

I always thought in terms of global citizenship that if you consider yourself a global citizen, then you would have to be a proponent of social justice – it’s a hand in hand kind of thing. I’m not sure that’s true anymore. I think the framework or the understandings of global citizen has changed to globalized citizen. It is just a liberal concept in terms of a way of knowing about the world… a way of massaging our collective western liberal guilt about past injustices. (Charlie)

One of the most common beliefs that teachers held about global citizenship was that it was an identity expressed through travelling abroad to do humanitarian work with Others. Stan, for example, took a moment to consider his global citizenship identity and concluded “well, I’ve travelled to many places in the world, so I suppose in that way I am a global citizen.” Mark believed that teaching about immigration and about "folks that are coming from other parts of the world" gave his students "a better perspective on what it means to be a global citizen." Sean, relatedly, explained that he guessed he was a global citizen, but he struggled because having never travelled; he found it “difficult to empathize with people in Haiti, China, or even the United States.”

When I interviewed many of the social science teachers, they had just listened to a conference keynote speech by Alexander Trudeau about his experience travelling to several African countries to shoot documentary films about conflict. Some of them referred to him as an example of an ideal global citizen. When I asked Linda about her global citizenship identity, for example, she replied:
No, I don’t think I am. I was looking at Trudeau this morning right. I think he is the global citizen. Do I come close to doing the kinds of things he does? No. I certainly don’t think that I can claim to identify solidly in that camp because I know that I haven’t done as much as I could have, that’s for sure. I haven’t done the extensive kind of travelling in areas of the world that really would challenge…I mean I know about those things, I teach about those things but it’s certainly not the ultimate, cause I’ve never done those things in those countries like he has. So I mean, a true global citizen would be more inclined to do some of that – you know, at least trying to be a traveler. (Linda)

Charlie also mentioned the speech by Trudeau we had heard that morning, and he similarly contrasted the filmmaking work that Trudeau was doing in Darfur against his own work as a teacher:

I think that Alexander Trudeau is probably very powerful talking about issues one-on-one [with the people in his films]. But I’m not sure how powerful I am, here, within my classroom, talking about changing the world in terms of social justice if there’s no meat behind the words – if those words are hollow. I’m afraid the words are hollow. (Charlie)

These two veteran social science teachers believed that global citizenship was an identity that could only be enacted, or could more authentically be enacted, outside of one’s own country. This had implications for their beliefs about their identities as teachers in the sense that they did not regard themselves as being in a position to enact global citizenship or to educate for global citizenship unless they were able to draw on their own experiences travelling and working overseas. This was similar to Jim, who associated his global citizenship identity with work he had recently done with teachers on redeveloping science education in Iraq and Mexico. Jim spoke about global citizenship as engendering “responsibility to others” from a charity-oriented approach:

I think there’s a responsibility to share with those who are less fortunate. It may be that I’ve got good genes that allowed me to go and get a PhD and learn, and have good health to work hard, and so there isn’t reluctance in the sharing or in the responsibility to others. It is that global responsibility. It is that sharing of knowledge, sharing of expertise, sometimes sharing of resources…but it’s that predisposition to even do those things. It’s global citizenship. So when I go to Mexico, I work with the ministry. We’re not there to tell them how to do it [science education], but there’s a responsibility that when they ask for our help we provide it. (Jim)

Additional examples of teachers' associations of global citizenship with travel arose in how teachers described the global citizenship identities and experiences of some of their students. In the context of talking about the meaning of global citizenship, for example, Mary told me that many of her students were interested in travelling and volunteering abroad, and that
many of them were already global because their parents frequently travelled as a result of their employment in the oil industry:

[The students] are so interested in travelling the world and not just on these high priced shopping tours offered by many institutions but they want to get out there. I’m absolutely astonished at how many kids are working [overseas] for the year as missionaries or as you know, just muscle in places. So they’re pretty global. And their parents too – especially [those who work] in the oil industry – they’ve been working in Asia; they’ve been working in Eastern Europe. They themselves may not have travelled as much as their parents but they’re parents are certainly well travelled. (Mary)

Mary considered herself “a global rug rat” because she was raised by a father who worked for the United Nations, which meant living abroad. Both she and Ron considered many of their students to be global because their families were from countries like Bosnia and Croatia. In her words: “I have the most international of all the classes…Bosnians and Croats going at each other you know, and expressing their opinions dynamically and the [other] kids just love it and are wide eyed and curious about it - they want to be global citizens too.” Nicholas, relatedly, believed that global citizenship meant “understanding different cultures, perspectives, and peoples from different places.” He spoke to me about his own experience living in Canada which was a country that he was not born and raised in, and how this informed his ability to account for multiple perspectives: “…having been born and grown up in a different country, I value my backgrounds perspective but I also value people that are here and where they come from.” Nicolas explained that his own experience with people who made assumptions about his identity based on his physical features meant that he was mindful not to "fall into that trap of stereotyping" when teaching about "different cultures and perspectives."

The most common response given by teachers as to why they did not consider themselves to be global citizens was because they believed that global citizenship meant absolute reconciliation between awareness and knowledge of issues, values, and behaviour. Many teachers confessed that while they were aware of global issues and while they valued social and environmental justice, their actions frequently did not align with their awareness and values. For this reason, they believed that they did not deserve to think of themselves or be called a global citizen, because they believed that global citizenship meant all or nothing, and they did not live up to that ideal. Primarily, teachers believed global citizenship was unrealizable for them personally as a consequence of their consumer lifestyles, specifically. Many teachers spoke about their purchasing decisions as the most significant obstacle standing between them and global citizenship status, and many viewed consumer goods as indicators of the global in their lives and
as the primary factor implicating individuals' identities as global citizens. Simon, for example, confessed that his decisions, and "especially purchasing decisions," affected others around the world. Describing what global citizenship meant to him, Richard challenged me to walk around my kitchen and tell him how many products were made "in this country," to go on my computer and look at where my news was coming from and at which news I was most interested in, to look at my books and see who authored them, and to look at the food in my kitchen.

For many teachers, consumer goods were consistent reminders that they were not global citizens. Stan made a distinction between what he knew was "the right thing to do" and what he actually did: "whether I truly act in a global fashion, I doubt that I do. I believe in fair trade for example, but do I buy fair trade bananas or fair trade coffee? The answer is no. I don’t buy fair trade chocolate, but I know it’s the right thing to do.” Gary described global citizenship as something which he "aspired to or may be workings towards," but he confessed this was "progressing slowly because to truly be a global citizen, I would have to alter my lifestyle to be more respectful of the other 7 billion people in the world.” While Stan regarded his perceived hypocrisy as choices, Gary and Sean believed that their hyper consumer lifestyles were imposed upon them and were disconnected from their own agency. Sean, for example, stated:

In some ways, I’m forced to do certain things that I know are wrong. I buy products from China, but I don’t like the idea that China is mass producing everything for me to buy. I’d prefer to have locally grown food. I don’t understand why we as a country need to export all of our resources away. You know, as far as technology goes, much of the bulk of technology isn’t being developed here anymore, it’s outsourced elsewhere, and you know, it’s frustrating for me as a Canadian. So I like to think that I’m aware of what’s going on but I think that I’m hindered by the fact that I think that I can’t really do a whole lot about it as one person, or even as a member of an organization. The power that I have is very limited. I tell the students ‘at an early age I was led to believe that this was okay – and I have tried my best in my life to try to reduce or eliminate or not consume as much as some others, but it’s very difficult in a must-have society.’ Our Canadian culture and North American culture is very much consumer driven, there’s lots of propaganda saying we need to go out and buy, buy, buy. (Sean)

Gary made a similar comment about the perceived imposition of consumer values onto his identity, which he contrasted against his student’s potential to enact global citizenship:

Part of social studies, as a social studies teacher, is to build those global connections with students and help them see themselves as global citizens. Cause I’m coming from a generation that wasn’t that concerned with resource use or impacts on environment and other parts of the world and its only sort of within the last 20 years or so – or 30 years, that there’s been growing awareness of our impacts, our sort of global resource footprint or ecological footprint or whatever. We’re already sort of locked into this lifestyle where as if I had known that 25 years ago, I wouldn’t
Both Sean and Gary thus implied that changes in their own consumer behaviours were beyond change, “locked in” and an inevitable outcome of growing up in a North American consumer culture. These teachers were in their late 30’s and early 40’s.

By far, the most common example given by teachers of how their consumer lifestyles obstructed their global citizen status was their relationship to their cars and driving. Most teachers were aware that driving had negative global environmental impacts, and they believed that the frequency with which they relied on their cars compromised their global citizenship identity. Charlie, for example, believed that global citizenship meant social justice and an end to consumerism, but recognized how his actions told another story:

That’s what I see global citizenship as about…let’s stop being consumers. And you know what? I drove [to Jasper] alone from Edmonton in my car and I’m going back alone in my car tomorrow. Tell me how authentic I am about social justice. So you want to talk about global citizenship – let’s put it in terms of global citizenship of our actions, do we actually walk that talk? Do we believe we are global citizens or are we just kind of saying it to ourselves – kind of lying to ourselves? (Charlie)

Mick was also aware of some disconnects between his values and his reliance on his car:

I don’t know about my identity as a global citizen. But I do think about the world and about the future. And I read lots of books about what kind of legacy we may be leaving. I feel guilty. I feel conflicted. And here’s why: I love the outdoors. I love environmental issues. But I drive all over the place to go skiing and mountain biking and hiking. But I can’t live without that. I drive many tens of thousands of kilometers a year. I’ve had my car for a year and 2 months and I’ve put on 60,000 klm. So I’m conflicted because as far as being a global citizen – that’s not a very good contribution. (Mick)

The expression *defensive driving* took on new meaning for me during these interviews as I listened to the majority of teacher interviewees explain to me why they needed their cars. In speaking about his struggles to identify as a global citizen, for example, Sean confessed that he drove a Ford Tundra truck, but quickly explained to me why: "it's necessary where I live, with the environment as unpredictable as it is - snow, rain, and dirt roads...so a car is not suitable."

Doug told me that one of his cars was a 73 Dodge charger "with a big engine." He confessed that "yes, it pollutes more in some ways" but then followed this up by telling me that "in other ways I'm not making a new car, I'm reusing." Doug also thought it was unfair that people placed so much emphasis on needing to cut down personal carbon use by pointing their fingers at car drivers, when these same people spent so much money on new clothing. He believed that the
pollution created through the processing and travel of clothing was "just as much as driving a car."

Some teachers believed that tensions across consumer decision-making and global citizenship were also relevant to students, while nevertheless holding out hope for the possibility of students’ enactment of global citizenship. Ron, for example, relayed how his students bought $300 blue jeans "made by some 12 year old in Bangladesh in a sweatshop." In response, Ron talked with them about what they could do to change those working conditions and to help. He told me that many of his students, however, tell him "no way, I just want the blue jeans." Simon believed that his students were aware of "the oil sands debate," but he did not believe their involvement in it, including their purchasing decisions, were age appropriate for the junior high level: "they're still not at that stage in life with it, but when they do become older and suddenly have to decide whether they're going to buy this car or that car, hopefully they're prepared for it."

Charlie elaborated slightly more about a potential pedagogical response to similar tensions after he heard Alexander Trudeau's speak about the relationship between consumer society and global injustice. He articulated a series of questions that he believed were important for his students to consider:

Perhaps what we need to ask students is, rather than leave it at an academic level, is ‘what role does consumerism play in our life?’ or ‘what is the relationship between consumerism and environmental degradation in society?’ Or we can make it a little more controversial and say ‘are my actions as a consumer or my actions as a purchaser, or my actions as a participant in a free market society – do they cause someone pain – someone else, somewhere else in the world? (Charlie)

In sum, while teachers believed that global citizenship identity was an unrealistic ideal for them personally as individuals as a consequence of their inexperience overseas and of their consumer lifestyles, some suggested that they nevertheless educated for global citizenship because they believed that, unlike them, students, like Canada (as a country), might still fulfill these ideals.

5.4 Teachers beliefs about their Students’ Multiple Identities and how these intersected with their Teaching of Controversial Issues

Findings pertaining to teachers’ beliefs about their students’ multiple identities and how they intersected with their teaching of CI implicated considerations not only concerning who teachers believed their students were, but also who they believed their students might become. The three most common beliefs I heard teachers articulate about their students' identities were: 1)
believing that the proximity and distance between students’ identities and CI were both obstacles and enablers of teaching CI, 2) believing that different categories of students engaged better and worse with CI material in school, and 3) believing that students did not have political identities or opinions yet, did not often experience intra-identity conflict, and frequently uncritically adopted teachers’ and parents’ views and beliefs as their own. I report each separately, and elaborate in more detail on the diverse range of ways these beliefs were articulated.

**Teachers believed that the Proximity and distance between Students' Identities and CI were Obstacles and Enablers for their Teaching**

For some teachers, the closer an issue was to students’ identities and personal experiences, the more they believed that students found the issues relevant and were interested in talking about them and their personal connections to them. Other teachers believed that there was such a thing as an issue being “too close” to students’ identities and experiences (e.g. death), often leading teachers to choose to not broach these issues, or to modify their lessons. Still other times teachers believed that when students were not "close enough" to CI, they were not as engaged in learning about them because there was too much distance between them and the issues to care about them. Others, still, believed that this kind of “safe” distance between students and the issues enabled students to discuss the issues more dispassionately and less emotionally—which many teachers’ believed was a positive thing.

Charlie believed that when CI were close to students' identities, these were “door openers for students to take up what matters to them.” Ron described something similar when he told me about a time when some of his students seized an opportunity to teach their peers about perspectives on conflicts in the Middle East from their experiences:

> [When teaching about the Middle East] kids will stand up and present their perspective on the West Bank, or in Lebanon the rocket attack on Gaza, and they’re great at getting up there and saying ‘here’s my point of view’ or ‘this is why we feel picked on’ or ‘this is why to us, Hamas isn’t a terrorist group.’ The Middle East is always a good one, you get a lot of good stuff and the kids are great and say ‘no, no – this is why we believe this.’ And then you can do things with – anyone else you know, ask the others ‘what did anyone else get out of this discussion?’ They’ll say ‘well I didn’t know about that’ or ‘I didn’t realize…’ (Ron)

Teachers also believed that students were interested in talking about issues that implicated their Canadian identities. Mark described a unit he had recently finished with his students on the topic of immigration issues and multiculturalism in Canada. He believed that students’ interest and
engagement in these issues stemmed from their feeling that these were *their* issues, in light of their Canadian identity:

> When you talk about immigration issues and things... the kids are really engaged in that – because they feel that they sort of belong...to the point that they can get themselves into that debate. And the whole significance of multiculturalism – does it work, is it effective, do we need to modify it a little bit? But it also allows them to realize that some of the folks that are coming from other parts of the world – you know, you’ve got to ask yourselves, you know, they took some serious risks to get here – so you know, as Canadian kids, they look at that and go ‘geez, the worst thing that happened to me this week was...’ you know, like their battery died on their phone or something. (Mark)

Richard told me about a time when one of his First Nations students shared how they were personally connected to residential schooling in order to provide their peers with an alternative perspective on this issue:

> About 20% of the students are First Nations and you know one issue that has come up sometimes in grade 9 and 10 is the residential school system. One of the assignments in the textbook quotes people who went through it, and there are a couple of pages describing their experience, including former teachers and students of the system. And I’ve had one student say ‘you know what, my grandmother went through it and was in one of those schools and she said it wasn’t such a bad place.’ (Richard)

Foremost, however, the main proximate identity location that teachers believed students were keen to talk about was their identities as Albertans in the context of learning about issues related to war and the environment. Ron noticed that students were more interested in discussing Canada’s involvement in Afghanistan when soldiers from Edmonton’s military base were killed in that conflict:

> In Edmonton of course we have Edmonton Garrison – so some of the fellas that are killed [in Afghanistan] are from Edmonton, so then there’s things we talk about that hits home like that. Now the kids kind of go ‘well, geez I never thought about [Canada’s involvement in Afghanistan], but now it’s more personal.’ So they want to talk about that. (Ron)

Several teachers also believed students’ identities as Albertans enabled them in their teaching about oil sands development and renewable energy because students understood that these issues were *their* issues and so were keen to discuss them. Sean, for example, told me that his students were engaged in talking about open pit mining and the 50 square kilometers of eco-system devastation in his northern community because this was a "huge issue" that was "right in our backyard." Lan, too, thought students’ Albertan identities helped them be engaged in environmental issues in class because the issues were "so close to home":
I think it helps us if anything, being in Alberta and that issue being so close to home. Like, being so close to all of this oil, it helps [the students] discuss these issues because they’re more aware of the other resources. We’re definitely on the forefront of renewable resources. So, because we’ve got the technology here, we’re not just talking about things that we could never show the kids. We can actually get companies to come in and show us renewable resources. (Lan)

Simon, similarly, told me that he "loved" teaching about the oil sands because the students "live these controversial issues as Albertans" and he consequently believed they were more "animated when thinking and talking about it."

Some teachers also believed that when students’ identities were not close enough to CI, they were less interested and engaged. Richard, for example, explained that his school was at a distance from oil sands activity, and he believed that his students were “not close enough” to the issue of oil sands development to be interested or invested to the extent that they might speak from, and across, their multiple identity interests in relation to this issue. These teachers believed that physical distance between students and CI was a hindrance because they believed that students necessitated personal connection with issues to the extent that they could see and experience their effects and understand what is at stake in order to be interested in learning about them and caring about them. Gary, for example, stated:

When you’re talking about the Alberta oil sands and the rate at which they should be developed and so on…well, some kids, because they’re far removed from it, are like ‘whatever, I don’t care – I just need gas at a reasonable price at the gas pump.’ But for others, if they live in the community and they’re impacted by it, you know, and they’ve got mutant fish, and everybody in their family has some sort of lymphoma…well, then they’re going to have more of a highly reactive response to that issue. (Gary)

Within Alberta, too, the issue of tar sands development was one that teachers believed was closer for some students than others, depending on where they lived in the Province.

Other times, teachers believed that physical distance between students’ identities (and experiences) and CI enabled their teaching practice because they believed this kept students at a safe enough distance from the immediate implications of issues in order to be able to discuss them from a more rational, and less passionate or emotional, perspective. Ron, for example, stated:

[I teach] the oil sands, yeah. You know I don’t get any sort of vehemently ‘happy oil sands kids’. If you were in Fort McMurray, you probably would right, because there are staunch supporters of the oil sands. But when you’re removed from it, they tend to look at it more dispassionately. (Ron)
In another example, Ron explained that when teaching about the Middle East, "the Muslim kids and Jewish kids deal with it very well because we're not in the Middle East, we're here." Mary also believed that distance enabled her teaching of CI, and this was evident to the extent that she strategically used the political spectrum from the social studies curriculum when teaching CI in order to create distance and "diffuse the emotion."

**Teachers believed that Different Categories of Student Identities engaged better and worse with CI**

Teachers’ common belief that distinct categories of students engaged better and worse with CI was expressed through a variety of binary oppositions and associated assumptions. Teachers frequently contrasted female versus male students, urban versus rural students, applied and liberal arts students versus academic and IB students, religious versus non-religious students, First Nations versus non First Nations students, and younger versus older students. Many teachers believed that teaching CI to one particular category of students over another was easier, more fun, more challenging, more relevant, more appropriate, and more successful. These assumptions, in turn, impacted the types of opportunities for learning they created for students based on their beliefs about how these types of students engaged CI. When referring to younger or applied students, for example, teachers often described student’s engagement with CI as arguing. This was in contrast to when they described older or academic students and referred to students’ engagement as discussion or debate. The assumptions that they made about students’ identities relative to their engagement with CI were both manifestations of teachers’ beliefs about students’ past experiences and about their future potential.

Teachers’ beliefs about students’ academic levels frequently intersected with their attitudes towards teaching CI. Mark, for example, believed that students at his Liberal Arts school were more accepting of same sex marriage than students might be at other schools, describing it as a “non-thing” for them: “it’s funny because I’m at a Liberal Arts school and even though it’s a big issue, it’s not to them…most of them just look at it as a kind of non-thing…what they find interesting is why other people find it controversial because they don’t understand.” Mary and Lan both believed that CI garnered more interest and positive engagement from the applied students. Mary, for example, believed that applied students were “more open, accepting, and more respectful of each other” and she speculated whether this was because they were “a much more diverse group” or if it was because they were “not focused academically as powerfully as the academic students” who she described as “focused, career
oriented, and the crème de la crème.” Nevertheless, she described them as “a cool group to work with.” Lan also enjoyed teaching CI to “the lower kids”:

The science 14 students – the lower kids, LOVE it because they get to argue. [The focus on global citizenship] even helps all levels of students because the IB students actually need to do this for their program but the 14 & 24 lower level students also like getting involved cause they’re like ‘oh, a celebrity!’ Once they saw the movie with Stephen Lewis, they were like ‘I can’t believe that’s happening in this world, that’s so unfair’ – and then it gets them thinking about it as well. (Lan)

Other teachers believed that students’ religious identities impacted their engagement with CI in school in better and worse ways. Ron, for example, stated:

The Muslim kids are great – they’ll say ‘look, I don’t want to kill you, I don’t want to kill your kids’ and they always relate it to the specifics of Palestine and Israel, not the Muslim-Christian, West-East issue. What I have an issue with is the Israel and the West Bank issue.’ So that’s it for them. Great. The other kids didn’t see that problem – and most of them just think about the Muslims that crashed into the trade Centre, right? (Ron)

Whereas Ron believed that students’ religious identities were a resource for teaching CI, Richard believed that students who had strong religious identities were not as challenging or interesting to teach as the students who were not.

And you know what the real problem is? It’s that the nature of the discussion is more likely to set off or irritate students who are not religious. I’m not motivated to challenge the students who are particularly religious; it’s more the other students – those who may not have any particularly religious perspective. (Richard)

Teachers also held particular beliefs about students’ gender identities and their engagement with CI. Mary, for example, believed that male students were more vocal in articulating their opinions and tended to dominate discussion: “oft times [female students’ opinions on issues] don’t come out in class, but they’ll come by after school...partially because of the heavy male domination in the class.” In the context of talking about students’ engagement with controversial environmental issues, Sean told me he believed that female students were more sympathetic and empathetic and “generally more caring than male students who don’t really have that.” He also offered his opinion about why that might be:

My opinion is that it stems from their fathers and their grandfathers working in the industry…[Male students] see it, they see the money that’s being made [and they think] ‘its part of our natural way of doing things here,’ that’s what they’re led to believe and it maybe slants their opinion a bit. (Sean)

Richard believed that female students were more likely to take offense when he taught issues related to sexuality, and so he “treads more carefully.” Richard also articulated his beliefs about
First Nations’ students and their engagement with CI. He believed that First Nations students were less politicized than other students, and were less likely to articulate their opinions on issues. He spoke at length about this:

Very seldom have I encountered First Nations students in my classes speaking up with a powerful voice on some of these issues like residential schools, or oil sands. Very very rarely, which surprises me sometimes. I mean I want things to be a little bit fired up. I want them to say ‘that really sucks’ you know. But I don’t find that happens very often. I don’t think that they are politicized, as a group – or pardon me, as a demographic. They don’t often see themselves in that light - as having that kind of cultural or ethnic identity. An awful lot of them I think try to make an effort to…I hate to use the word assimilate, but I think to become more and more integrated within the greater student body. And I can tell you that it’s not because of a matter of shame or lack of pride or anything like that. We find that those students who tend to be more successful who are Aboriginal tend to be the ones who are more likely to mingle with non-Aboriginal students. And they just tend to feel more confident within the school. Does that make sense? Often if were talking about issues involving certain treaty rights, discrimination, or issues like the residential school system, I’ll tend to get non-Aboriginal students fired up on some of these things and more interested [than the Aboriginal students]. So at the very least, [CI] don’t seem to engage [Aboriginal students] as much as you might expect. (Richard)

Finally, and perhaps least surprisingly, several teachers believed that students’ ages impacted their engagement with CI in better and worse ways. Nicolas believed that his young students were “still bright eyed and bushy tailed” and because of this, he “let them throw out their thoughts” on issues. He contrasted this with what he believed it would be like teaching CI in high school where “the conversation would be much more heated.” Simon believed that “junior high is still a little too early because [students] are more excited about just arguing as opposed to debating.” He then expressed interest in teaching CI at a high school level, and “especially with AP students” because he believed that they were “more in the mind-frame to do it.” Sean also believed that “these are really big issues at a junior high level” and so “maybe not as appropriate as compared to a senior high level.” Richard, finally, drew similar contrasts between younger and older students, and believed that at the high school level (which he taught); students were “more sophisticated and accepting” (although he retracted ‘accepting’ almost immediately). He added that he found students around grade 6 or 7 “a lot harder to work with, because it’s a level of maturity.”

**Teachers believed that students did not have political identities or opinions yet and frequently adopted their parents’ and teachers’ views as their own**

Several teachers’ believed that students’ did not have political identities or opinions yet, and instead believed that students were “future citizens” (Simon) or citizens in-training (Mick).
Mick stressed the relationship between consumer behaviour and civic participation, but he nevertheless seemed to only attribute this only to adults. In addition to these individual examples, there were a number of ways that teachers articulated their beliefs about students’ political identities and agency. These included: a) believing that students’ actions were primarily informed by values of consumption and convenience because they were self-interested and because the scope of the identity interests that they considered relevant to them was narrow b) believing that some students experienced intra-identity conflicts, but they either did not know how to articulate them or they worked through these on their own, and c) believing that students were more likely to tell teachers what they wanted to hear and to uncritically accept their parents’ and teachers’ values and beliefs as their own than to form or articulate their own views.

Several teachers believed that the scope of identity interests that students considered was narrow in that they tended to focus more on their personal interests as individuals and as consumers than on linking these with their identities as Albertans, Canadians, or global citizens. With the tar sands issue, for example, teachers believed that while proximity might make the issue more interesting to students, it was not close enough for students to consider altering their own behaviour or becoming actively involved in their communities on taking a position on this issue or advocating for it. This seemed also to be related to teachers’ impressions that children and students were not as quick to view issues as controversial to the same extent as adults. Lan, for example, believed that students frequently did not think of issues like the oil sands as controversial because they saw it in the media all the time, and Richard believed that students did not take the oil sands issue “that personally.” Ron believed that students did not worry as much about CI as adults, stating: “I find the kids don’t worry as much about controversy as we do. I mean, either they’re not aware of it or it’s not controversial. It’s like ‘well I’m this, and he’s that…and we’re good.”” As I reported already, Ron also believed that students were more likely to respond issues like sharing Canada’s water by saying “keep it, it’s ours” and to the issue of child labour by saying “I just want the blue jeans.” According to Mick, students’ attitudes about non-engagement with these issues were the result of their “not seeing what’s going on and not seeing that they’re going to inherit our problems.” Gary elaborated more on students’ attitudes toward controversial and global issues and was the most explicit in articulating his belief that students’ identity interests were narrow:

Students think more about their identities in terms of society and their role as consumers more so than a national identity or a regional identity. [More their identity as] the role player, like the role they play in society I think, as consumers, as somebody with interests in a certain field like music. You know, it’s high school; you’ve got the nerds and the jocks and whatever – the traditional
types of social sorting that go on. I think that’s more where their identity is at in the high school
phase. They tend to not think about roles beyond the school setting itself… (Gary)

Several teachers did not believe that their students experienced intra-identity conflicts (e.g.
across multiple dimensions of their cultural, religious, sexual, gender, geographic, civic
identities), and those who did frequently believed that students were nevertheless not conscious
of these, did not know how to talk about these conflicts, or they believed that students worked
through these on their own time outside of school. Teachers were less likely to view school or
the classroom as places for students to think and talk about and work through these types of
conflicts. While my explicit asking them about students’ intra-identity conflicts garnered little
response, throughout the interviews many teachers gave examples of identity-related conflicts
that they believed their students wrestled with.

Mark believed that intra-identity conflicts were something that his students should have been
experiencing based on disconnections he perceived between their views about the oil sands and
their heavy reliance on their own cars (i.e. fossil fuels):

They’re curious and they want to know why [the oil sands is] so controversial. They might not get
it – they might not understand why the kid from Fort McMurray is like ‘what’s the problem with
the oil sands? There’s no problem with it…everybody I know works for them.’ The kids that I
teach just don’t understand why the tar sands are allowed to pollute according to the way that it’s
been reported continuously… they see it as this massive evil. But at the same time, you know, as
I was joking last night – these are the same kids that get to school on fossil fuel – so you know,
there is sort of a conflict of interest for some of them. (Mark)

Mary and Gary also both believed that students experienced confusion about their identities as
Albertans and as environmental citizens. Mary believed that her students wanted to be wealthy
and they also wanted to be environmentally responsible:

The kids express a great deal of confusion because they want to be wealthy, and I don’t blame
them, and they also want to be environmentally responsible. And you know, like when James
Cameron was up here last week, it was quite explosive. And the kids are very much of mixed
minds. That was a big one. I think sometimes kids don’t want to express perhaps their uncertainty
about certain issues. (Mary)

Gary was also cognizant of students' confusion pertaining to their consumer identities and their
membership in school environmental clubs, stating "at the school you know it’s ‘I’m a member
of project green la la la’ - and then they realize that they use a lot of energy and its gotta come
from somewhere, and then they realize ‘well, I’m a consumer too.’" Gary gave several examples
of the types of identity conflicts that he believed students experienced. He told me that he had an
"appreciation for how difficult it [was] for a lot of the students to be walking in two worlds - at
home in a traditional setting and at school where it’s more free and liberal." His pedagogical
response was to “listen and validate” students' experiences when they shared the struggles they were experiencing with him. When it came to teaching about intra-identity conflict generally, however, and not in relation to his students’ specific identities, Gary gave this example of his pedagogical response:

When you’re looking at an issue, one of the things that we do as we break it down is look at how various aspects of the issue affect the student and his or her own individual identity as a person, and impacts on their collective identity as a member of a group. Let’s say they’re a Francophone, and were in Alberta, and were talking about globalization and the predominance of let’s say English in North America – well that will impact their identity as a francophone in a minority setting right? Or a member of a particular faith group – like a Sikh for instance, and we talk about a collective identity and yeah – you’ve got an individual identity but also this collective identity because they’ve got the bracelet and the turban and what not – and so when we talk about globalization, there are positive and negative aspects to that and one of the positive aspects to that is that you know they’ll say ‘well, yeah, you know, Bollywood is getting more widely known and there’s more integration of and cross-cultural understanding going on in the world, because once upon a time everybody was like in their own little cultural pocket and people were fearful and didn’t understand and were like ‘people are foreign and strange’ and now with the advent of modern technology, communication and transportation – it’s a boundary-less world and so that has provided a couple of things. First of all, if you’re an immigrant, it’s probably challenging for your group identity but also with all of these modern technologies, there’s also possibilities to do some cultural promotion and connect to people that share those same cultural origins or whatever. (Gary)

Ron, too, believed that some students experienced intra-identity conflict but in this case with regard to their identities as Canadians and as pacifists:

Some could care less, but some of them will say ‘well, I’m pretty pacifist, and suddenly [Canadians are] warmongers – and I don’t like that very much.’ Some of them have a conflict about what Canada is supposed to be as opposed to where they are personally. Yeah, so they’re thinking about it a bit. I get the impression that they’ve kind of reconciled those conflicts….within their own families or within themselves. Maybe being in Alberta or Canada, it’s easier reconciling that than if you lived in the suburbs of Paris, you know, or in a Muslim community somewhere. (Ron)

Mick, finally, acknowledged that some students likely experienced some conflict around their religious identities and homosexual identities, lamenting "I mean goodness gracious, what about a poor Muslim kid that happens to be gay or transgendered? They must have a hard time." While in each of these cases teachers appeared to be aware of these types of conflicts and some expressed concern about them, few spoke about their professional responsibilities, or teaching practices, for responding to these.

Elementary and secondary teachers held different beliefs about their students’ interest and capacity to form and articulate opinions on issues. While on one level many of the teachers
believed that older students engaged better with CI, it was the two elementary teachers that believed their students were eager to form and share their own opinions on issues, whereas secondary teachers frequently believed that their students did not have opinions on issues, and if they did, they believed their students were in the habit of adopting their parents views and/or regurgitating positions on issues that they thought teachers wanted them to have. Betty, for example, believed that young children "really crave expressing their opinions" and she believed that they were "absolutely blown away and thrilled when someone asked them their opinion on an issue." In contrast, Linda believed that unless she was "really careful" her secondary students would "think they had to say the same thing." Lan, similarly, described her secondary students as "teacher pleasers" who "will think exactly like you so that they get 100," and Doug believed that his secondary students "often" took his position. Mick, too, believed that his secondary students "give the kinds of answers they expect [him] to want" such as when they answer questions on evolution "even when it's clear they just don't believe it." Charlie told me that for "the longest time" in his career he played the role of devil's advocate and did not take a stand on CI with students because he believed that his secondary students would react with "you're telling me you're an environmentalist and NDP and so I'm just going to feed that back to you."

Some teachers believed that students uncritically adopted their parents' views on issues in a similar vein, and the ways that teachers expressed this frequently simultaneously communicated their beliefs about parents. Some believed that parents had a troubling influence on students’ values and beliefs, seemingly regarding these as something parents transmitted to, more so than taught, their children. Mick believed that his students' views on the tar sands, for example, were the result of their uncritically accepting their parents views and beliefs: “You can see with some kids that they just don’t believe that CO2 is causing greenhouse gases and I can bet you that their parents are probably more conservative. And I don’t avoid CI because of parents – because that’s where some of the problem comes from!” Jim believed his students reluctance to learn about "the theory of evolution" was a direct result of their "parents [who held] religious beliefs" and who "did not understand what a theory is or understand the nature of science." Doug, finally, believed that students "vocalize their parent’s political perspectives verbatim...whether the father is NDP or republican."

In sum, many beliefs that teachers articulated about students' identities communicated their beliefs about student agency and the implications for their teaching practice, which I discuss further in chapter 8.
Chapter 6
Alberta Interviews:
Teachers’ Feelings about Teaching Controversial Issues & Considerations of Identity

6.0 Introduction to the Chapter

The affective component of attitude refers to the expression of persons’ feelings about an attitude object. In this study, the attitude object is teaching CI. When investigating teachers’ attitudes toward teaching CI through the affective lens, the attitude objects also include feelings evoked by teachers’ own, and their students’ identities in relation to the material. These feelings impact how and when CI are taught, and by whom. A teacher in a Catholic school may feel reticent about teaching evolution, for example, because she may feel concerned that some parents will become upset. Her feelings of concern could be connected to her belief that parents’ views and interests matter, but it could also be the case that the same feelings of concern override her belief in the importance of teaching students about evolution. It is evident from this latter explanation that emotions and cognitive processes often work hand in hand. In this chapter, I report teacher feelings pertinent to teaching and learning CI that I heard expressed by teachers during the 16 interviews that I conducted in Alberta.

6.1 Teachers’ Feelings about Teaching Controversial Issues

When talking about teaching CI, teachers expressed feelings that I grouped into three categories: 1) they felt comfortable, confident, and autonomous 2) they felt concerned about parents’ reactions more so than about those of their school administration and 3) they felt insulted, disrespected, restricted, concerned, and confused by the passing of Bill 44.

Teachers felt comfortable, confident, and autonomous when teaching CI

All of the 16 teachers interviewed reported teaching CI very often. This, and the ease with which they spoke about teaching CI, suggests that they felt comfortable with it (although they also described specific circumstances when they felt less comfortable, which I report later in this chapter with the findings relevant to identity). Some teachers felt not only comfortable, but also confident in their teaching practice. Betty, the elementary school teacher and former principal, for example, regarded confidence as a key enabler of teaching CI. She recollected her early teaching experience:
I never felt hindered…I never operated based on the fact that I could get in trouble. I loved it when things came up. I’m kind of one of those people who break the rules and then apologize. So for me, I was never worried. I think I have a confidence as a teacher. I liked when there was that dissonance. You have to be confident if you want to have those discussions. If you’re a weak teacher, things can get right out of control and then you’d really have problems. I mean kids use words like ‘gay’ or ‘faggot’, they throw them out randomly and if you’re a teacher who isn’t confident to deal with that [you’re missing an opportunity] (Betty)

Teachers’ feelings of confidence also intersected with their feelings of autonomy. Several teachers found solace behind the closed doors of their classrooms, where they felt free to enact pedagogy that reflected their own interests, priorities, and teaching styles. When asked about ATA and their role in his decision-making, Mark downplayed concern about teaching CI and added: “They are not in my classroom.” Betty felt similarly unworried: “I just shut the door and teach the class.” Stan, who felt “a great deal of freedom” and autonomy, attributed his feelings to the nature of public school teaching:

I think that being in a public school gives me a great deal of freedom. One of the things that I think the people who have not taught forever don’t appreciate is the level of autonomy that you have as a teacher. I don’t think there are many jobs in the world that give you the level of autonomy that you have in your classroom with your students. What you do is your own business. And there aren’t people coming in and watching you teach…so I think that you can talk about a great deal of controversial issues without any fear. (Stan)

As these examples illustrate, teachers’ feelings of confidence, comfort level, and autonomy were closely interwoven—although teachers’ experience may also have played a role; with the exception of Mark, all of the teachers had been teaching for over 25 years.

Teachers felt more concern over parents’ reactions than those of their school administration

Teachers did not feel a great deal of concern about their principals’ reactions to their teaching of CI. None of the interviewees described instances of administration having an issue with what or how they were teaching. Linda did not fear the reaction of her school administrators because they made her feel that they respected her professionalism and decision-making capacities. Betty, who had worked as principal at an elementary school for many years, argued that teachers were mistaken in believing that school administration was not on their side. She added that they often felt uncomfortable and uncertain about teaching CI, and used the above misbelief as a “cop out”; what they actually feared, in her view, was the teaching of CI itself. In the following example, however, she described feeling “deflated” at something one of her teachers had said in class:
My example is of a teacher who I hold in very high esteem. She was an excellent teacher, passionate, hard-working. And one day I got a phone call from a dad who was very calm, not one of those crazy parents that we have all dealt with, but who was really upset because his grade 2 daughter had come home and her teacher had told them that Ralph Klein, who was the Premier at the time, hated children and families. I could understand why the teacher thought that, but the father told me that she had told her class that. And [the teacher told me] ‘yeah! I told them that because it’s true’. I mean, I’m not a Ralph Klein fan, but to say something like he hated families and children was way beyond anything I even believed. And so we had to have a long conversation about the difference between her beliefs and what she could tell children. And she eventually agreed that she had overstepped her bounds. I asked her to phone the parent and she did. I ended my conversation with her by saying ‘you can believe that, you just can’t say that.’

(Betty)

Betty’s reference to “those crazy parents” was indicative of a sentiment shared by many teachers in my study. These are some additional comments that Betty expressed about her concerns with parents:

[As a teacher] I worried more about parents [than school administration]. I had more grief with parents than with colleagues or my professional association or with principals. Parents have a lot of clout. They can make your life miserable. Kids go home and tell their story and it’s usually distorted. Often something would happen in a classroom and I would think ‘oh boy, if somebody goes home and says this it could come back this way…’ (Betty)

Although several teachers said they did not worry about parents’ reactions because, as Ron put it, he made sure to emphasize to students that they were merely “exploring” issues so that “students can make up their own mind,” teachers’ comments suggested that they were indeed concerned with parents’ reactions. Their concern was not necessarily a reflection of any specific incidents that had occurred; rather, they were careful to avoid any potential clashes with parents. Sean, for example, stated that it was important that he teach CI in a professional manner, and “not really drive the point home all the time” because he was concerned that parents would come back to him and say “you’re wrong and you shouldn’t be teaching this.” Simon felt “comfortable provided that [he] had support in case a parent became upset,” and Doug felt the “need to be careful” when teaching CI so as not to upset parents:

Not that I’m afraid of parent backlash, but the fact that this is the family situation and so whatever I say, for example, if it’s the oil and gas thing, it has to be valid facts and it has to treat them fairly and with respect….I do have to think about ‘is this a controversial issue that’s important enough for us to discuss and that I should be able to discuss – or is there one thing that I might say that they’ll say I shouldn’t have walked into that?’ If a parent feels that it’s inappropriate and that it’s a topic that shouldn’t be dealt with in school, they can say ‘teach the curriculum.’ So you have to be careful. For example I can see a parent or some parents feeling that prostitution is not something that they want their children talking about because they’re minors. (Doug)
Whether parents would agree that a given topic was reflected in the curriculum was a question many teachers pondered when planning their lessons. Jim, for example, stated that parents have a right to say to teachers: “prove to me how this is curriculum.” Later in this chapter I report additional data pertaining to teachers’ concerns with parents when I report teachers’ feelings about students’ multiple identities (e.g. as sons and daughters of tar sands workers).

**Teachers felt insulted, restricted, disrespected, concerned, and confused by the passing of Bill 44**

Teachers expressed many feelings about the Bill 44. Some teachers felt that their professional integrity was being compromised, which in turn led to their feeling disrespected. Others felt restricted in terms of their own agency in making pedagogical decisions, and confused about the bill—what it really meant, and which actors in the school system it implicated. Others still felt concerned that some teachers would use the bill as an excuse to avoid teaching CI. Linda and Charlie are exceptions in that they felt even more determined to teach CI because of the passing of Bill 44 into human rights legislation. Linda told me that the passing of Bill 44 “lit the fire in her belly” and affirmed her commitment to teaching CI.

The passing of the Bill 44 had an impact on teachers’ sense of agency and their professional integrity. Nicolas, for example, felt “censored” and “limited” in terms of how many perspectives he was able to present to his students. Teachers also expressed their frustration with society’s perceptions of teachers, and the negative expectations people had about teachers’ practices and motivations for teaching CI, and with misconceptions of teachers as ‘dispensers’ of mandated curriculum text. Richard felt mistrusted:

> It’s insulting. We always try to be respectful of other peoples’ ideas, feelings and values. We don’t go out there and deliberately do things that are going to be offensive to the value systems of students. It irritates me because it gives me this idea that I’ve got this authority looking over my shoulder. (Richard)

Some teachers felt confused about the scope and implementation of Bill 44, including the parameters of the bill, what the bill exactly applied to, and to whom. Some asked me questions about which topics, grade levels, and subject areas were included in section 11.1, and about whether or not it had actually been implemented. Whereas Sean was unsure of what the Bill 44 was about, Stan wondered whether it referred only to sexuality. Richard and Doug were equally confused; they were under the impression that Alberta Education had “backed off” on implementing the bill, and challenged me to check my facts.
A few teachers felt concerned that some teachers would use the Bill 44 as an excuse not to teach CI. Jim and Linda, for example, worried that the bill would provide them with an out in the form of “it could get me in trouble” (Jim) or “I can’t teach this because Bill 44 says I can’t” (Linda). Teachers also felt concerned that section 11.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act was compromising students’ education both through the implicit lessons that the bill communicated, and through the types of learning opportunities that students would be deprived of (which aligns with concerns expressed by Alberta survey respondents). Simon, for instance, worried that the bill would cause teachers to “opt out of an important conversation,” which in his view disadvantaged students because this resulted in “a lack of sharing.” Sean was similarly concerned that the passing of Bill 44 might mean that students lost the opportunity to “not necessarily hear the truth as I say it, but at least be exposed to the issue from the best that I can teach it.”

6.2 Teachers’ Feelings about their Multiple Identities and how these intersected with their Teaching of Controversial Issues

It was more common for teachers to speak about the relationship between their attitudes toward teaching CI and their multiple identities by talking about their feelings than their beliefs. I consequently report 7 overarching feelings that teachers commonly expressed about teaching CI that referred to multiple dimensions of their identities.

Teachers felt vulnerable and uncertain in their professional identities

While, as I reported earlier, some teachers were comfortable, confident, and autonomous in their teaching of CI, others expressed feeling vulnerable and uncertain in their professional identities. Simon, for example, felt uncertain about whether he was “allowed” to respond to homophobia in his classroom, and the following excerpt—notice how he avoids using particular terms, like gay, and leaves his sentences drifting—is a further reflection of that uncertainty:

For the moments that you do want to speak about religion or somebody calls someone a name or says ‘those people are like…’ You don’t know where that line is. Are you allowed to defend people that have a certain lifestyle? Are you allowed to even mention…Just because they’re a different religion, you shouldn’t discuss it? (Sigh). I don’t know if I got into the fire how quickly I would get pulled out – I don’t know. (Simon)

While Simon did not fear reprisal from his administration, he questioned whether they would support him should a parent issue a concern over his teaching. Sean, similarly, felt “under the microscope,” adding “you say or do the wrong thing or teach the wrong thing that may not be a societal norm, then it opens you up to big pressure to change your opinion.” Richard compared
how he felt in his identity as a teacher with how he felt in his identity as a soldier in the military: “you didn’t talk about sex or religion in the officer’s mess.” He also added “you better know where you stand and you better know what you’re doing.” Doug was also specific in speaking to his identity as a teacher in the context of feeling vulnerable, and he elaborated at length:

Being a teacher I’m held to a higher standard than a private individual because to a certain degree, I represent the board and the school system. There are people above me that can make decisions and tell me that I’ve made the wrong decision. I would have to say I feel hindered by my identity as a public school teacher because you have to be careful about what you’re saying and which ones you’re saying ‘well, I’ll leave that for someone else to teach.’ You have to be careful talking about an issue dealing with sexuality. Not as much as the gay issue, but maybe other issues dealing with sexuality. Why? Because I’m talking to minors, and also because I’m a male teacher, I have to be careful. Religion is a topic, as you know, that’s very tepid, because its people’s beliefs. And there’s a lot of court cases that have been fought and won based on religious views. And that’s something again that you can understand and appreciate that parents bring their child up – whether rightly or wrongly in your opinion – with a religious view, you have to be careful of that. (Doug)

Betty conceded that as a principal she also felt vulnerable: “Everybody’s afraid to talk about those big things because they’re afraid to get in trouble.” She implicated herself, adding “there’s always factors that make you more cautious or less cautious on certain things…like when I was a principal in a Christian school, I had to be more careful in a school like that because there were certain issues of course in that school that myself and the staff had to be more careful with.” Like Simon, Betty’s instinct was to avoid naming those issues explicitly, though she did mention a time when a same sex couple enrolled their daughter in the Christian school, which left Betty with feelings of confusion about their decision, and concern for how other students would relate to her.

These teachers felt vulnerable and uncertain because they were unsure about how their teaching might be interpreted, and judged, by others within their professional circles and associations. Betty was the only teacher who felt comfortable, confident, autonomous and vulnerable and uncertain, which shows how complexly overlapping these feelings can be. Simon elucidated this complexity when, after having expressed his own feelings of vulnerability about how others might interpret his teaching of CI, he expressed concern over how other teachers approached the teaching of CI:

Some people take advantage of it…it does need to have some regulation. Teachers do need direction so that when they are talking about it in classrooms that they don’t just use the classroom as a sounding board for their own personal opinion because they have a captive
audience. We’ve had some cases where teachers have taught controversial issues that are completely false. (Simon)

It was being under the watchful eye of one another that made teachers like Simon vulnerable, in part at least, much more so than how other people perceived teachers and their motivations.

**Teachers did not feel that they had strong religious, political, and/or cultural identities and some felt that this enabled them to teach CI**

Many teachers felt that they had no political or cultural identities, and, similar to “null” religious identities (see chapter 5), they perceived this absence as enabling for teaching CI, in that they did not feel personally implicated in the value and ideological conflicts brought up in class. When asked about the relationship between these various identities and their attitudes toward teaching CI, many teachers not only struggled with the question but did not perceive this relationship to be relevant at all. That their identities (or null identities) did however intersect with their attitudes towards teaching CI, and how, was evident from the responses they gave to interview questions more broadly. Betty, for example, expressed concern over the ways that identity affiliations of any kind create obstacles for inter-personal relationships and living together because they limit identification with Other:

There’s so much anger. I’m feeling an increase in anger in society. And actually it goes back into this funny story about sports. There’s a fellow that I work with and he’s an obsessive Saskatchewan fan and he tells me that he hates the Edmonton Eskimos. He hates everything about them. I said ‘I can totally understand why you love your football team but I don’t understand how you can hate another team.’ There’s this anger, I see it in driving, I see it everywhere. And I think it comes from where you see you are - whether you see yourself as a Saskatchewan Roughrider fan and you hate everybody else, or if you see yourself as an Edmontonian and you hate everybody else, or if you see yourself as an Albertan and you hate Ontario...you know? For me, say I only saw myself as a white female Canadian Edmontonian – how many people I would exclude from having value. I think it’s about evolving to see yourself in a bigger way rather than a smaller way. Like I’m very white and middle class and that hinders my capacity to think more broadly. We’re all hindered because we have...like, I am female, I am advanced middle age, I’m heterosexual, you know? I try always to think beyond that, but I am who I am. My goal in life is to be able to view things from every perspective – but like, I am who I am. I’ve lived in Alberta all my life and I’ve been a female my whole life. That hinders me more than anything because that’s who I am. (Betty)

Betty thus felt frustrated by her identities because she felt they prevented her from being able to understand all perspectives on issues.

There was a high degree of overlap in teachers’ responses about the intersections of their political identities and their attitude toward teaching CI. Simon, Lan, and Mick told me that they
did not have political identities. Mick described himself as “pretty neutral.” Lan responded: “That doesn’t apply to me – I have no idea about anything that happens in politics. I’m like ‘I have to vote this year?’” Simon felt unsure about how his absence of a political identity intersected with his teaching of CI because he “could see how that would either hinder or help because if I’m conservative and really in support of say the oil sands, then I’d have a bias.” He worked through this for a moment and concluded: “I think that [a strong political identity] might hinder.” Nicolas began by telling me that he did not feel he had a political identity, though he then changed his mind and explained that it was “not very strong.”

Other teachers felt that their political identities were not very strong in that they were consistently changing and “always evolving and not a static thing” (Gary). Depending on circumstances and issues at stake, their political persuasions moved across all points of the political spectrum. Betty, for example, felt her political identity “changes daily” and that she “hops around”:

There are people that think I’m a raging Conservative and other people think I’m a raving Liberal. I’m a fence sitter. People think fence sitters are bad – but it just means they can’t decide. In my life I have voted for every political party in Canada and in Alberta at any given time. I don’t have a strong political persuasion. (Betty)

Richard “disliked extreme ideological positions,” and felt that his political identity as a “moderate” enabled his teaching of CI. Like Betty, he had “voted all over the political spectrum – Liberal, NDP, and PC – at different times for different reasons.” Ron expressed similar sentiment:

I’ll tell the students I’m a little more Liberal, right? And then we talk about how it changes. I always use the example, you know, when you’re 18 or 19 – of course your big thing is girls, right? You know, you’re chasing girls, and then you get older and you have daughters and suddenly you have guys in your yard and you’re like ‘stay away from my daughter - I have a gun.’ So I change sometimes…which is great because I’ll say, you know, sometimes I’m a Liberal and sometimes a Conservative – you don’t have to be one or the other…it just depends on the topic. (Ron)

Some teachers also spoke about their political identities by using the language of the Social Studies curriculum. Like Lan, Simon, Gary, Betty, and Richard, the majority of them also interpreted political identity at the level of capital “P” politics. Stan, for example, stated:

I would be a modern liberal as our new social 30 curriculum would describe it. I believe in social justice, I believe in governments doing more to help the downtrodden, I think that as a society we
could do a better job than what we are. I tell my kids that I think [my political identity] varies depending on age and circumstance. (Stan)

Charlie was an exception in that he felt committed “to the left on many issues,” and felt that this identity enabled him “in this climate” to get students’ reactions “[because] many students are not to the left.”

Regardless of whether teachers felt they had religious identities or not, no teachers felt that a religious identity enabled one for teaching CI. Several teachers felt no religious affiliation. Mary, for example, told me "that doesn't even play into it." Ron, similarly, said "it doesn't exist so it's not an issue either way, it doesn't matter...we're in school and we deal with these issues and great - now I'll go home." Stan, too, replied: "because I don't have a religious affiliation, I feel that enables me to teach CI." Though Richard self-identified as an atheist, he explained that he was "very familiar with religion.” Gary chose to group religious and cultural identity together in his response: "I think the absence of a strong cultural or religious identity enables the exploration of CI...you see, I don't have a religious background or identity, or cultural...I'm sort of just a bland British homogenized whatever." Nor did teachers seem to view their non-religious or (perceived) non-cultural identities as dimensions of their identities.

Charlie was once again an exception, in that he felt there was an important difference between spirituality and religion. While he could not speak to the latter and chose to "reject the term," he did feel that his spiritual identity impacted his attitude toward teaching CI, because he felt that “spirituality is where we live.” Other exceptions were the teachers who had religious identities. Doug, for example, identified as a Lutheran, which he conceded sometimes intersected uneasily with his identity as a science teacher, although he believed "he could be both at the same time." He also elaborated on how this impacted his teachings about the theory of evolution because it meant that he paid special attention to teaching students about the meaning of “theory”:

I’ll say ‘I can be a science teacher and a Christian at the same time.’ And that’s why I’ll say ‘it’s a theory of evolution, here’s the facts, you can decide for yourself. If you have a different religious view, that’s fine too. Or if you want to take your religious view and take the theory of evolution and make a new theory – great’. (Doug)

Sean also identified as a Christian, and felt that his Catholic identity hindered him to some extent in his teaching of CI. He began by speaking about his own religious identity and how it
translated more as morality than faith, but then shifted the focus of the question to students’ religious identities.

I’m Catholic but I’m not heavily involved with the Catholic Church. There’s some things that I disagree with, and other things that I do agree with. And so I do what I can for my family, to make sure that we have a good moral and religious upbringing, and do my best. But I’m not devout. And there’s people that are, and that’s their own thing. And so as far as a religious point of view, with some of these issues it can hinder open discussion. For whatever reason, a kid may feel pressured because of their faith to make a decision that is maybe incorrect or, uh, not well thought out. So, yeah, at times I think it can hinder. (Sean)

Lan also felt that her Catholic identity "definitely" hindered her teaching of CI because of the Church's framing of moral issues as "black/white and yes/no." At the same time though, she felt that "the Catholic thing" was "a good platform to start from‖ because she could begin with the church’s perspective on issues before introducing other perspectives.

Very few teachers felt they had a cultural identity. Some, like Simon, Mary, and Ron wrote it off as irrelevant by giving me short answers including “neither,” "doesn't exist" and "doesn't play into it." Some responded by speaking only to religious identity. Mick did not seem to understand what I was asking and so made jokes: "cultural identity? Well, I'm sort of British you know. I see things in black and white. You know how sometimes people from Holland or Europe are sometimes very blunt? I am sometimes a bit blunt.” Some teachers, however, felt differently about cultural identity. Richard, who self-identified as “English-Canadian,” explained to me that he used his cultural identity as an opportunity to explain to students that “we are all immigrants to Canada, unless we are First Nations.” Nicolas spoke very directly about his cultural identity:

Having been born and grown up in a different country, I value my backgrounds perspective but I also value people that are here and where they come from. So I think that helps. A lot of times when you look at people from abroad, let’s say – they take a very stereotypical view of them. So even for myself, you know, when people look at me they think ‘oh, Spanish or Mexican’ so all of a sudden they have an image of what my background is and it’s not - it’s very different. So when I talk about different cultures or different perspectives, I don’t want to fall into that trap of stereotyping them either. So I think just having that awareness, it is a little bit of a conflict because a lot of people have that overarching stereotype of different people or different places. (Nicolas)

Nicolas felt enabled by his cultural identity because he was mindful not to make similar assumptions about others’ cultural identities. He nevertheless chose not to describe his cultural identity to me, nor was I under the impression that he spoke about this with students.

Teachers felt that their gender identity impacted their teaching of CI
Female teachers frequently felt enabled by their gender identity, stating that students and parents were less likely to view them as threatening and more likely as nurturing. Mary, in particular, felt strongly that her gender identity, in congruence with her age, often made her feel invisible in society, but that enabled her teaching practice of CI:

I sometimes wonder if, being the old lady on staff gives you a certain sort of…like, kids are not threatened by me, parents are not threatened by me. It’s a social position which is kind of invisible and unthreatening. There is nothing in society that acknowledges women of our age – we’ve become invisible and we didn’t sort of notice when that happened. And there’s a certain deference you’re accorded, which is a social thing. I think there’s a comfort level that kids recognize. And for lots of kids, they don’t have a woman of my age in their life, and you have no idea how many times I adopt the role of grandmother for them. And it gives me a certain moral authority, which perhaps younger teachers, or male teachers…you know? I think when you combine age and gender, especially with women, it’s completely different. If it’s truly controversial, when you express your opinion, kids either perhaps view it with a bit more respect – as an age thing – or they blow it off as ‘little old lady…so doesn’t matter’. I really do feel that [my identity as a female] enables me in this way. Cause there’s a lot of boys – and a lot of these young guys don’t have a woman in their life. And there’s a kind of nurturing element in it – which is absolutely…it’s really helpful. (Mary)

Lan, a novice teacher in her twenties, also felt that her gender identity enabled her teaching of CI. In addition to the comfort level she felt it afforded her to teach issues related to sexuality, Lan also felt her gender identity, combined with her identity as a scientist and teacher, allowed her to act as a role model to her female students interested in pursuing careers in science and math:

I think [my gender identity] totally enables me. Because I’m very ‘girls – go – rah, rah, rah’. I think because you’re a girl you can talk about a lot more intimate things like sexuality and birth control, to some of the girls in class. And because even girls in science, which I’m sure years ago was controversial, but isn’t now, so I think of it as like being a role model. (Lan)

Lan also attributed her interest in "female empowerment" to her own experience with global citizenship education as a student in K-12:

I went through the same school system with this same idea of empowerment and what can you do and global citizenship, and how to tackle the issues. So that’s why I’m very like ‘female empowerment’. Girls can’t do physics? Oh yeah, watch me go teach physics! Girls can’t do a doctorate? Oh yeah, watch me go do a statistics one!’ So things like that, like our education K-12 really help us build the foundation and build morals and views and values. And then when you grow up – like now – like when you’re a little older, it helps. It gives you a basis for everything you do. (Lan)

Some of the male teachers also felt their gender identity intersected with their teaching of CI, though for different reasons. Sean, for instance, felt enabled because he felt that being male meant being "opinionated":

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My gender identity enables me because I’m very opinionated at times and I’m very much an a-type personality, so I will say what I feel a lot of the time, without [thinking about] the consequences. I personally do not have a problem with that. (Sean)

Mick felt enabled too because he felt that as a male, he was more respected by "male Muslim students," although outside of that he did not feel that it had much effect:

I think [my gender identity] may have an effect on the male Muslim students, but I don’t think it has much of an effect [overall]. We have a lot of young Muslim males in Edmonton, and sometimes they have a rough time accepting… female teachers. They give them a rough time. But we have a male teacher who has a dogmatic way about him and they’re okay with that. Because they need father figures – they have trouble dealing with mothers. They tend to get their own way (with their mothers), and when they’re dealing with a female teacher, they don’t. (Mick)

Some male teachers also felt hindered by their gender identities because of the discomfort they felt teaching issues related to sexuality to female students. Richard, for example, felt so uncomfortable that he asked the school nurse to come in to teach these issues for him:

Teaching CALM, a course in Alberta on *Career and Life Management*, is a little different. That’s one where you do get into themes of sexuality and that involves contraception and protection from STD’s – all that. In that case, I’ve just thought – you know what? There’s a public health nurse there. Let’s just cut to the chase. I asked her to come in and she said ‘absolutely – I’d love to.’ Okay great. And then afterwards to the students I said ‘how’d that go?’ and they said ‘that was awesome. She didn’t beat around the bush, she didn’t bullshit us. She laid it out straight’. Whereas I might have been humming and hawing. She didn’t use any euphemisms – nothing. There are times when I can speak about issues of sexuality…but there is a certain propriety that I feel that I need to observe. And part of it is the knowledge that I don’t want to cause any of my female students to take offense. There can be a certain discomfort, teaching sex ed in CALM. I’ve never had to do it and it’s a huge sense of ‘phew - dodged that bullet.’ (Richard)

Doug, similarly, felt he needed to be careful teaching about issues related to sexuality because of his identity as a male teacher, and he too adjusted his pedagogy accordingly:

You have to be careful talking about an issue dealing with sexuality. I think my gender does inhibit me, because being a male I have to be aware of the fact that I do have female students in my class and you don’t hear as much about female teachers getting in trouble for being female. And that’s why I leave my door open. But when I assist students I allow them to come to me and I tend to stay at the front desk. And I tend to keep the temperature down in my room because a lot of young ladies want to go really skimpily dressed. When they come in my room they want to put a sweater on. I don’t want them to misinterpret when I look at them like ‘oh, he’s seeing my breasts.’ And a lot of young ladies nowadays, they want to wear these really low cut blouses and your eyes get drawn to them because every thirty seconds they’re putting their hand here and pulling their shirt up. I have to be aware of being a male teacher – I don’t want some young lady misperceiving and then bringing that about. So not only do I have to be aware of my physical presence – where I go, what I say, what I do – but then I also need to think of other issues, like is it an issue that a young lady may take offense to because she’s a minor and a female and I’m an adult who is a male. So I have to be very aware of – especially if it’s a sexual issue – where to go with it and how far to go and where to stop. (Doug)
Doug underscored how his beliefs about a particular category of students (i.e. female) intersected with his feelings of discomfort tied to his own gender identity, and how these intersected with his pedagogy for teaching CI.

**Teachers felt enabled by their Albertan Identities to teach CI**

While some teachers believed that teaching environmental issues in Alberta made these issues particularly controversial, several teachers felt that their Albertan identities also enabled their teaching of them because they were "so close to all of this oil" (Lan). Simon, for example, felt that his Albertan identity "definitely adds to it because we live these CI." And for Lan it meant that she could access companies doing work in renewable resources, and invite them in to speak to students. Stan felt enabled because he felt that the education system in Alberta was designed to accommodate difference:

> Alberta is well known for having – well as a district of choice…you know we have a variety of charter schools now in Alberta that cater to a wide variety of interests. Even within Edmonton public, we have a school for the Jewish community; we have a school for the Muslim community. (Stan)

Many teachers, and their students, often had first-hand experience with these issues through the communities within which they lived, and knowledge of competing stakeholder interests involved in environmental issues. Charlie, for example, felt that the conflicts that the issue of oil sands development brought up were significant opportunities for teaching and learning:

> I love it. I think [Albertan identity] really enables Alberta teachers to take up controversial issues. I love James Cameron being here, I love Mr. Stelmach’s response to Mr. Cameron being here. I love the oil companies’ refusal to believe that there’s anything more than the profit motive, I love Greenpeace where they push people to start thinking about other things. So I think there’s a real opportunity for Alberta teachers to take up the oil sands as a controversial issue and introduce that concept of the tar sands into the classroom. And those are the words I would be using – I would use those trigger words too. Everybody here calls it oil sands cause we’re supposed to call it oil sands. So let’s call it tar sands and then see what happens in the classroom. (Charlie)

Jim, however, expressed some concern with regard to how to teach competing perspectives involved in oil sands issues stating: “You have to be responsible, so what you don’t do is you don’t bring across an opinion that says ‘Esso is a horrible company’…the reality is that we don’t just live in science, we live in a reality that requires jobs for the economy…”. At the same time, he personally felt comfortable teaching controversial environmental issues as an Albertan, and even worked in collaboration with the oil and gas industries on curriculum development for Science:
[We did some work in the] Centre for Oil Sands Innovation. We had projects in different areas in Alberta – some at the Water Institute, some with vaccines in the carbohydrate chemistry lab…so we developed student controversial lessons about the oil sands. [Teaching about the oil sands] has never been an issue. The government paid for us to do that - it was with government money. And they didn’t tell us what we had to come up with - they weren’t interested in pushing us in a particular area. (Jim)

However, not all Albertan teachers felt comfortable teaching about tar sands development and climate change. Mark felt that teaching about global warming was "a tough sell in this province because it seems that people are quite reactionary when anyone says anything negative about the tar sands.” Though he was concerned about the harm they caused, Mark appreciated the economic benefits:

Ultimately in Alberta it always has an economic argument – and it’s legitimate. The wealth of this province is heavily the result of fossil fuels. So for us to sit there and say ‘yes, it’s damaging to the environment and therefore it’s a potential issue’? Because billions of dollars are generated every day income for citizens and for the province of Alberta, and for the country of Canada – money speaks louder than ducks ultimately, or anything else that was damaged. So I try to give as much to show the kids the multifaceted nature of this... (Mark)

Nicolas felt similarly uncomfortable in this role because his wife worked for an oil and gas corporation:

I think with the topic of the tar sands and climate change, I think I’m more aware of how I teach it because my wife works for the oil and gas industries. More than anything, I think being in Alberta and dealing with that topic just makes me more aware of the sensitivity that adults might have. (Nicolas)

The impact of employment (mostly students’ parents’) on whether, and how, teachers taught CI was a common concern for teachers, and I report more on this later in this chapter.

**Teachers felt enabled by their Canadian identities to teach CI**

As reported in chapter 5, most of the teachers I interviewed believed that their Canadian identities, and those of their students,’ enabled their teaching of CI. Teachers equated Canadian-ness with freedom of expression, and openness to divergent views without fear of repercussion. In their elaborations of what Canadian identity meant to them, Lan, Nicolas, Doug, Mark, and Ron talked about the absence of fear they felt and feelings of ease that they experienced when teaching CI. Others including Betty, Mary, Stan, and Linda felt "lucky" and privileged that their Canadian identities aligned with values of mutual respect, tolerance, and diversity (see chapter 5).
Teachers felt that global citizenship identity stirred feelings of guilt, not agency

I already reported that the majority of the teachers believed that global citizenship was an unrealizable ideal for them because it required travel abroad and absolute reconciliation between awareness, values, and behaviour. Many teachers confessed that while they held values that they associated with global citizenship – like social and environmental justice – their actions often did not align with their values. For this reason, they did not view themselves as deserving of being called a global citizen. Teachers gave numerous examples of situations in which their behaviour and values were incongruous. As a result of this conflict the primary feelings they expressed about global citizenship identity were feelings of guilt—mainly related to their consumer behaviour and overreliance on cars (see chapter 5). Charlie felt guilty and unsettled, and often wondered whether he actually “walked the talk.” Mick felt guilty about having to rely on his car to go skiing and Gary about contributing to urban sprawl. Guilt, for some teachers, also led to feelings of helplessness and even hopelessness. Gary, for instance, who recently bought a house in the suburbs, felt helpless because he was "sort of locked into this lifestyle" now. Likewise, Sean echoed those feelings of helplessness because he felt "hindered by the fact that I can't do a whole lot as one person because the power I have is limited" and by the fact that "from an early age I was led to believe [consuming] was okay... [and now am] forced to do certain things that I know are wrong" (see chapter 5). His feelings about global citizenship identity also manifest when he explained that he struggled to identify as a global citizen because he "found it difficult to empathize with the people of Haiti."

Betty expressed her feelings about global citizenship identity by talking about guilt as well, but she also talked about feeling depressed:

I mean I would love to see myself as a global inclusive citizen – that would be nirvana, wouldn’t it be? I know that’s altruistic and impossible, but that’s the journey I want to be on. And I guess as a teacher that’s the journey I want children to be on. It’s a struggle, it is. I’ve been quite depressed for the last couple of weeks. It’s all about that...That would be the ultimate to me- if you asked me who I was and I would be honestly able to say ‘a citizen of the earth.’ It would be the ultimate if I could accept without judgment... But how hard that would be, because judgment comes in so much in what I do – judging myself, others, kids, parents, etc. The more I want to not judge, the more I judge. (Betty)

Betty’s belief that global citizenship meant "acceptance without judgment" caused her to feel endlessly failing.

Teachers felt some discomfort and tension reconciling dimensions of their personal and professional identities when teaching some CI
Though Stan did not support the passing of Bill 44 from teachers’ perspective, as a father he empathized with parents who were concerned about their children's moral and political development. Gary spoke about the tensions that some teachers experienced across their personal and professional identities by comparing teachers to police officers, and he spoke of some of the challenges involved when individual and public identities intersect:

It’s sort of like a police officer. If you’re wearing a uniform as a police officer and it’s got that badge with the crown on it, basically it says ‘hi, I’m arresting you as an agent of the crown. I’ve got nothing personal against you; I’m just doing my job here.’ But if I come as a police officer with religious symbols and let’s say my religious group is presently in a conflict with your religious group, it’s like it could…like if I go into a Hindu home as a Sikh or a Muslim home to arrest somebody [and I'm] wearing a Sikh turban, there might be some conflict that arises there out of those different identities. Whereas with a sort of neutral uniformed individual, the crown still says I’m here to meet you as a rep from the crown and not as a believer in Sikhism. As a teacher in the classroom, it’s just like ‘Hi, I’m here doing my job.’ And the uniform of a social studies teacher is just sort of relaxed, casual, Eddie Bauer sort of catalogue wear…so I’m neutral I guess. (Gary)

More commonly, however, the tensions that teachers felt across their personal and professional identities were expressed in three ways: 1) teachers felt some discomfort contributing to biased curriculum and participating in professional development offered by the oil and gas industries, 2) teachers felt some concern for how dimensions of their own identities intersected uneasily with students’ identities, and 3) teachers felt some discomfort teaching perspectives that they themselves did not agree with.

A few teachers felt uncomfortable reconciling their personal values with their participation in professional and curriculum development. Linda, for example, developed curriculum materials for an external foundation advocating for universal health care. She felt uncomfortable in this position because, although she believed in public health care, she also believed in the inclusion of multiple perspectives, which she was discouraged from incorporating into the curriculum resource:

It’s really challenging doing this work because it’s for people who are pro Medicare – and I felt that I couldn’t only give one side – the view that Medicare is great. [I believe that] you have to explore the issue of public versus private in health care, and we have to look at multiple perspectives. But at the same time, this resource is supposed to be a resource promoting Medicare, right? So you want people to truly explore the concepts, but the bottom line is there is definitely a bias in the resource, and it was hard for me to reconcile that. Even though I agree with [Medicare], it was hard to reconcile that this was supposed to be for a social studies unit that respects multiple perspectives. (Linda)
Mick felt some discomfort and tension because he had accessed professional development offered by the oil and gas industries while being very concerned about the threat of global warming:

Do you have ‘Inside education’? It’s a non-governmental organization, but they get money, a bit from the government, and they get quite a lot of money from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. And they provide “free PD.” I mean fantastic PD – trips to Fort McMurray! You get to tour the innards of a carbon capture plant. You can see lots of things. But the thing is that they’ll say ‘oh well, there already is some hydro carbon in the river anyway’ because it’s right beside the tar sands and they’ll say that’s always been there. But oh no, no, no - they’re lying. So you get turned into a bit of a corporate tool. So you have to be aware when you get that kind of PD that you don’t transmit it to your students. I know it’s wrong and so I tell them. I try to think that [the oil companies] don’t affect me at all. You know I feel a bit guilty that I took advantage of this free PD but you know I’m not an easily swayed consumer. And why did I do it? Well, our government isn’t giving our school boards enough money for us to afford the opportunity to do professional development. (Mick)

In these cases, teachers felt uncomfortable and guilty contributing to, and inadvertently supporting, biased curricula targeted at teachers and students in K-12 schools.

Some teachers were concerned with how their own identities at times uneasily intersected with their students’ identities in ways that made them uncomfortable. Both non-Christians, Richard and Betty, for example, felt uncomfortable teaching about evolution and homosexuality in Catholic schools. Likewise Stan, who was of German descent, spoke at length about the discomfort that he sometimes felt teaching Jewish students about the Holocaust:

We have a very small Jewish community in Edmonton. Even though my dad was 16 you know when the war was over – just the mere fact that I’m of German descent makes it a little bit more uncomfortable for me to teach about the Holocaust when I’m talking to Jewish kids. So, in terms of my identity with their identity, for sure there’s...that comes up as an issue. I do tell them that I’m of German descent. I tell them you now that I think it’s interesting that even though my dad was not responsible for the atrocities committed by the Nazi’s and I sure wasn’t… I was born in Canada, and I certainly wasn’t responsible, but the mere fact that I’m of German descent gives me this cringe of guilt because when I talk about the Holocaust, and especially with Jewish kids, and I explain ‘you know this is one of those legacies of racism and discrimination – that you’re responsible for the actions of your forefathers – or at least , some people may feel that they are responsible for the actions of their forefathers – even if they are not directly responsible’…it’s not comfortable. (Stan)

Other examples of tensions involved teachers' and students’ gender identities, which I have already reported.
Teachers felt some discomfort teaching perspectives that they themselves did not agree with

Simon felt that it was sometimes challenging defending students' views on issues when they differed from his, but he nevertheless believed this to be his responsibility:

It’s challenging because as a teacher I need to be open to other peoples’ opinions. For instance a student will have opinion C and that might be really against my opinions, but as a teacher I need to teach everyone to respect that and I need to defend that person just as much as I defend everyone else. (Simon)

Mark, who was an atheist, felt some tension and insecurity around teaching creationist perspectives: "I guess the thing that is problematic about controversy is that I’m not an expert – and so some parents might think ‘well, how can that guy possibly talk about creationism when he doesn’t believe in it?’" Stan also struggled with teaching CI that implicated views he did not espouse, including Canada's involvement in Afghanistan:

I started to think ‘what might there be that I might not be so comfortable about?’ One of them for me is that I think of myself as a pacifist, and Edmonton is now home to a pretty substantial military base and we’re having a Remembrance Day ceremony to honour the veterans. The issues involving Canada’s involvement in Afghanistan and knowing that there’s kids in my class that have had parents overseas – I have to be a lot more sensitive to that – and that one always causes me some level of discomfort…. I do [raise it in class]. Although maybe I do try to shy away from that just a little bit – maybe more than I otherwise would. And I think just because with that issue alone – there’s parents of kids who are or have been in a war torn area….” (Stan)

Stan’s feelings caused him to alter his teaching and withhold his own views about war.

6.3 Teachers’ Feelings about their Students’ Multiple Identities and how these intersected with their Teaching of Controversial Issues

Teachers were concerned that various aspects of their students’ identities (cultural, gender, religious, geographical) intersected uneasily with teaching CI. This was evident in three ways: 1) teachers felt concerned that the proximity of students’ identities to some CI might generate emotional and extreme responses, 2) teachers expressed some concern over how their students’ cultural and religious identities intersected with CI, and how they might experience reconciling their at-home values with those normalized in Canadian society and schools, and 3) teachers felt that they needed to be careful teaching about the Alberta tar sands because they were cognizant of students’ parents’ sources of employment. For each, I report the diverse range of ways that teachers expressed these feelings.

Teachers felt concerned that the proximity of students’ identities to some CI might generate emotional and extreme responses
As seen earlier, teachers believed that students’ proximity to CI was both an obstacle and advantage for teaching CI. In line with this belief was teachers’ concern that, when implicated in CI (directly or not), students might express emotional and/or extreme responses. Apart from Richard, Sean, and Charlie, teachers did not regard students’ expression of emotion as a positive learning outcome, and consequently were inclined to "diffuse the emotion" (Betty). Many of these examples are not specific to particular dimensions of students' identities so much as they refer to a general potential for students' personal, religious, and/or cultural convictions, affiliations, and/or experiences to result in passionate or emotional responses to CI. Gary gave an example of teaching about abortion to demonstrate the kind of thing he believed you do not want to do as a teacher:

If I were to come up on the first day and say ‘abortion should be made freely and widely available to anyone who wants to have an abortion’ that’s going to have very highly charged visceral responses from students on both sides. I don’t want to call it extreme response but just that highly…emotional response. (Gary).

Teachers described the types of pedagogical strategies that they used for responding to students’ emotions in the classroom. Mary, for example, explained she intentionally used a "very clinical" strategy drawing on the political spectrum delineated in the curriculum when teaching CI because she felt concerned that students would otherwise become too emotional about issues. She explained that "you have to be that way because some students are so passionate and in some ways this diffuses the emotion, which is a good thing because then they can maintain that distance academically." Ron's strategy, similarly, was to preface his teaching about CI by telling the students that while "some people get emotional about things, we’re just here to explore." Mick emphasized the importance of "critically assessing the facts," and provided his students with opportunities to do this "so that they, as students, and later as parents, can decide on the facts and not on the emotion." Mick believed that "far too much is governed by emotion," and his concern was with "giving them enough information so that they no longer make the decision emotionally, but logically instead." Doug responded to his concern about students' emotional expression in the classroom by "scanning" the students' faces to see whether anyone was becoming emotionally upset, in which case he would "slide into another topic":

When you have a class of 35 people, when you bring up a topic, there could be someone who is deeply affected by the topic. Even if you present it in a nice way and try to make it rational, there could be someone who is affected, and so you have to really be careful because you don’t want anyone to feel bad. So that’s why if a controversial issue does come up, I'm scanning the crowd
for a reaction to see if there is somebody more affected. For example, I had a young lady in my class whose stepfather was killed in a car accident. So now whenever the topic of death comes up, I’m automatically looking over at her gauging her visible response. And if I see a visible response that’s not a positive one, then we’re sliding onto another topic—because I don’t want her to feel bad. And I don’t want it to bring back memories of the situation that she’s going through. (Doug)

Doug’s comment illustrates the conflation between sensitive- and controversial issues, which threaded several teachers’ comments about emotion. Some teachers interpreted the proximity of students’ identities to CI in the literal geographical sense (as I reported in chapter 5) which resulted in their being hyper-aware and sensitive toward teaching CI that hit “closer to home.” An example of the latter involved teaching students, whose parents were in the military, about Canadian troops in Afghanistan, as well as teaching students, whose backyards and drinking water were impacted, about the environmental impacts on ecosystems.

**Teachers expressed some concern over how their students’ cultural and religious identities intersected with CI**

Students’ religious identities were frequently cited as an area of concern for teachers. Richard, for example, described a case, which had occurred in rural Alberta, of parents whose only option was to send their children to a Catholic school. Likewise, Doug was worried that he might offend students, so much so that it made him feel uneasy teaching about gender equality:

> Even topics let’s say, of how women are treated around the world you have to be careful of. There are girls who are Jehovah’s witnesses and if they believe in that way of life, do you want them to feel belittled because you’re saying that women should be equal? You have to watch who is your target audience so that you can deal with it in a way that respects everyone’s dignity. (Doug)

Some teachers were also concerned about students’ experiences reconciling at-home values with those normalized in Canadian schools and society. Mick, for example, was worried about Muslim students who “happen to be gay” and their potential conflicts with at-home values. Gary also spoke about the “two worlds” he saw students’ walking in:

> I’ve taught in very different multicultural contexts…like in a school of 2000 kids most of whom are of Asian origins…So you can hear Korean and Chinese and Hindi and Punjabi all being spoken in the hallways. And I have an appreciation for how difficult it is for a lot of the students to be sort of walking in 2 worlds – at home in a traditional setting and the parents really wanting their children to be respecting their cultural and religious values, and then they come into a school where it’s much more free and liberal and so they have this sort of dual identity…or sort of a confused identity a lot of them…I bet it’s really tough to be in 2 worlds and you know, you’ve got this sort of modern western consumer society out there in the broad sense, and then your own community…cultural community…and you’ve got different ways of being. It must be quite a challenge. (Gary)
While teachers valued the teaching of multiple perspectives, whether they regarded having multiple identities as advantageous was less clear. Some teachers suggested that they were less comfortable with diverse identities in their classrooms. Likewise, comments made by Richard and Doug suggested that they felt more comfortable when non-white students integrated with white students in their classrooms and schools. Doug, for example, began arguing for more diversity, but then made an argument for assimilation:

Take a look for example at how many comedy shows that are about a black comedy family. All of the people on the show are black except maybe one token white guy. And it’s not just shows that are old. Modern day shows are like that too. And to me, that’s wrong because that just promotes this racial segregation. If you’re going to make a comedy show have Black, White, Oriental, Mexican, Spanish descent or Hispanic intermix – in the show. Make it a joint show. But they don’t, you see a black family. I don’t know if you heard of the Fresh Prince of Bel Air – all black people...The school that I teach in, were mostly white. So the coloured people that are there for the most part are integrated. Like in my one class I’ve got one black boy. Okay, like you are the one black boy in the class. So if you don’t integrate and talk with the others, then you’re not going to be integrated. Then you’re not going to have anyone to talk to. And it’s the same for others. (Doug)

Richard similarly alluded to feeling less comfortable around diverse identities in classroom. He argued that Aboriginal students who mingle more with non-Aboriginal students tend to be more successful. While he believed that this increased their confidence within the school, the effect also seemed to be that this made him feel more comfortable teaching CI that implicated First Nations Peoples, because "they often don't see themselves as having that identity."

**Teachers felt some discomfort teaching about the Alberta tar sands because they were cognizant of parents’ sources of employment and did not want to cause offense**

Earlier in this chapter I reported that, generally, teachers did not feel discomfort or conflict in their identities as Albertans teaching about controversial environmental issues. Nevertheless, this was not the case when it came to teaching about global warming and the Alberta tar sands. As several teachers put it: "We're all connected somehow to someone who works for the tar sands." In particular, teachers felt concerned teaching these issues to students whose parents were employed by the oil and gas industries, and their feelings were mostly related to their concerns about reprisal from parents. "We're a carbon intense province," Mick told me, "and that's how many of our kids parents make a living, they work in the oil business or they work to service the oil business." Nicolas expressed this as an internal struggle:

A lot of the students’ parents work for the oil and gas industries. I don’t necessarily want them to go home and say ‘you’re work is dumb because it's killing our environment’ but I don’t want them to do the opposite either. I don’t want them to go home and say ‘keep on doing what you’re doing - this is great’ right? (Nicolas)
Sean was explicit with students that he was "not trying to point fingers at them or their fathers" but instead he was concerned with "making them aware of what's going on, so that they think about it and think about why we have such a need to do this." Doug also spoke at length about similar tensions that he felt:

You have to be cognizant of the nature of the place you’re in. Within my classes, there are students, whose families are supported by the oil and gas industry. Some of them have parents who run oil and gas companies. So I have to be cognizant of that. Not that I’m afraid of parent backlash, but the fact that this might be the family situation… For example if it’s the oil and gas thing, it has to be valid facts and it has to treat them fairly and with respect…We need to look at ‘what is the issue?’ and try to define it and make that the focus. That’s the sort of thing you need to look at because that way those students don’t feel – I mean they may feel against their parents’ jobs – but they could go back to their parents and say ‘oh yeah, Mr. K is saying that were doing such a rotten thing’. I have to be sure that I’m not making value judgments but that I’m putting facts out, I’m explaining what the issue is, why people are unhappy – and try to keep it more factual based rather than making a value judgment on it. (Doug)

Gary was worried that diverging views on oil sands can create conflict between students whose parents represented differing stakeholder interests:

In some areas [of Alberta], where there is farming and water use versus oil and gas exploration and water use - where water becomes scarce, you get these conflicts and communities can be ripped apart… they were friends, they were parents of kids on the same soccer team or hockey team, and now they don’t talk to each other because they’re on different sides of the issue. So these issues can be that divisive. (Gary)

Richard similarly felt hesitant to bring up students’ parents’ sources of employment, though his pedagogical response differed somewhat from the others:

Issues involving global warming I think are extremely pertinent and I will lead right into it. I tend to because a lot of the students’ parents are employed in the oil industry. I mean I don’t want to say something that they may find….offensive, in terms of what their parents do. [But] Alberta is going through a massive transformation and massive growth. And I think that I have to be cognizant of that when issues involving anything from the demographics in our community to the environment [come up]. I have to be aware of that. (Richard)

Rather than only feeling concerned, parents’ employment in the oil industries also motivated Richard to enact opportunities for his students' to learn. He taught about global warming, in other words, because students' parents were employed in these industries.
Chapter 7
 Alberta Interviews:
 Teachers’ Behavioural Dispositions and Instructional Practices for Teaching Controversial Issues & Considerations of Identity

7.0 Introduction to the Chapter

The conative component of attitude refers to behavioural dispositions and actions toward an attitude object. In this study, the attitude object is teaching controversial issues. At the same time, however, when investigating teachers’ attitudes toward teaching CI through the conative lens, the attitude objects also include reflexive practices pertaining to teacher and student identities. Behavioural dispositions will impact what, how, who, and when teachers teach about CI. For instance, a teacher may comment: “When there is a story in the news about Canadian immigration policy in the morning, I raise it in class with students by having them research the issue in question.” The conative component of attitude also refers to the predisposition to act towards the attitude object in a certain way, including behavioural inclinations. For example, “I do not teach CI very often.” Finally, it refers to behavioural intentions and commitments, or what people say they plan to do, or would do, under particular circumstances. A teacher might say, for instance: “If my principal was concerned about what I was teaching, I would invite her to come into my class to observe me.” In this chapter, I report teacher practices pertinent to teaching and learning CI following from the 16 interviews that I conducted in Alberta.

7.1 Teachers’ Instructional Practices for Teaching Controversial Issues

Whereas the focus of the practice or “conative” component of teachers’ attitudes on the survey was limited to questions concerning frequency of practice, the attention to teacher practice in the interview data, in contrast, invited teachers to describe: 1) the learning outcomes they were interested in when teaching CI, and 2) the instructional practices they employed. In many ways, the data concerning learning outcomes pertains primarily to teachers' beliefs (i.e. their beliefs about what learning outcomes are important following from engagement with CI). I asked them about these because I was interested in hearing from teachers not only what they did but why. I wanted to hear from them what it was that they wanted their students (in their engagement with CI) to learn. This is why I report both foci within this chapter so that they can be read alongside each other. Following my report of the learning outcomes that were more
commonly and less frequently identified as important by teachers, I report, in depth, on 7 categories of instructional practices that teachers employed in their teaching of CI.

**Learning outcomes that were more commonly and less frequently identified by teachers as important**

The following graphic organizer reports a variety of learning outcomes that range from commonly believed to be important, not at all important, to less frequently believed to be important. Following this, I describe each learning outcome and the ways that teachers described these outcomes.

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<tr>
<th>Learning outcomes more commonly identified by teachers as important</th>
<th>Learning outcomes that teachers identified as &quot;not important&quot;</th>
<th>Learning outcomes infrequently identified by teachers as important (as few as 1 teacher)</th>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Application of Academic Reasoning: Ability to articulate, defend, and support views on issues through the provision of evidence and respect for &quot;facts&quot;</td>
<td>▪ Consensus and Answers / Solutions, Resolution</td>
<td>▪ Evidence of Affect and Emotion</td>
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<td>▪ Development of awareness of CI and multiple perspectives involved</td>
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<td>▪ Demonstration of mutual respect</td>
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<td>▪ Demonstration of ability to think critically and make informed decisions</td>
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There were five learning outcomes that were more commonly identified as being important to teachers when teaching CI and I report on each, in turn.

1. **Teachers were interested in students’ application of academic reasoning, including their ability to articulate, defend, and support views on issues through the provision of evidence and respect for "facts"**

Teachers frequently spoke about the importance of students learning to provide evidence to support their views and articulate reasoned positions on CI. In particular, several teachers distinguished between reason and emotion, and between facts and opinions. Many teachers believed that it was not enough for students to demonstrate their capacity to form or articulate opinions on issues without also providing sufficient evidence and reasoned arguments to support
them. Teachers often spoke about this learning goal with references to the disciplines of Law and Science. Gary, for example, shared with me an analogy that he found useful for thinking about the importance of learning to reason, one that he also used with students:

Students have to come to that realization that yeah, they might feel strongly about something but you have to go a step further and back it up. I often use with them, when they're stating a position on an issue, or you know, addressing an issue, I say it's like being a lawyer in a courtroom – a lawyer for the defense. And they've all seen courtroom situations on TV. So you're defending someone who has been accused of a crime – is it sufficient to simply just go in and say 'judge you gotta find my client not guilty. That's my position'. And the judge says 'Fine! Good enough for me – let's call it a day!' No, it’s not enough. [So I ask them] ‘what do you have to do?’ Well, you have to provide some reasons…okay, reason number 1: he couldn’t have committed that crime because he was at work that day. Does the judge say ‘okay, that’s a good reason…we're done’? No. [Once you've stated] your position and reasons, then you have to….‘what do you have to do?’ ‘Provide evidence!’ ‘To show what?’ ‘Well, if you’re claiming that he was at work that day, you have to show records, you have to find witnesses’. You have to do the same thing to back up your position on an issue. Present your position. Present reasons…valid reasons why that position is a valid position, and then provide factual, actual evidence to support the reason that supports the position. And then [students] go ‘ohhh, okay, now I get it!’ That’s a metaphor that I have found works. (Gary)

Richard, Mary, and Mark placed similar emphasis on the provision of evidence and making a case as an important learning goal. Richard, for example, was interested in students’ capacity to learn to “weigh the evidence,” and this was something that he looked for when assessing students’ work. Mary believed that the primary struggle that students should experience when engaging with CI was not conflict across competing positions on issues, but the capacity to successfully “defend their opinions” through their performance of reasoned argument, while Mark positioned himself at the judge's bench when he spoke about his use of the structured controversy model, which he liked because it required students to “prove” their case to him:

Structured controversy is good because it really makes kids formulate an argument. And it isn’t just an opinion then, because that’s not good enough. Prove it to me. You can’t just say that you’re a good arguer. You can’t just say ‘because’ all the time – that’s not an argument. Or ‘you suck’ – that’s not going to work. So it makes them consider their positions in more detail so they take ownership. (Mark)

Other teachers appealed more to science than to Law to talk about the importance of supporting positions on issues with facts. Mick, as I have reported, prioritized students’ articulations of facts and evidence and logic in numerous examples throughout our interview together. In this example, Mick uses the case of water bottles to support his argument that “when you can make logical arguments with the facts, you come out to a logical conclusion”:
Michael Shermer runs something in the Scientific American called ‘The Skeptical Inquirer.’ He wrote a book ‘why do people believe in wacky things?’ [He asks]: why do people believe in white power? Or why do people not believe in the Holocaust? Or why do people believe that getting chilly causes colds? And so on. And he points out how silly they are. If you’re able to make logical arguments with the facts – you come out to a logical conclusion. That’s all it takes. It’s quite the credo I guess. So for example, were talking about bottled water [in class]. I say that bottled water is anti-environmental because [list many reasons]… I also point out the economics: you’re paying a buck fifty for water when the only difference between the water in that bottle and the water from the tap is a matter of aesthetics. Then I point out to them how bottled water is made. That water is pretty much unprotected, whereas chlorinated water is pretty much protected. That’s what I mean by a logical argument. Buying bottled water is a waste of money and logically it’s not a smart thing to do. And it’s got a high carbon footprint. (Mick)

Teachers thus often appealed to disciplinary frameworks across the social and physical sciences that presumed and underscored paradigms of reason and empiricism. Some teachers were particularly interested in teaching students how to articulate, express, and defend their opinions. This was especially true for Science teachers. Simon, who as seen in chapter 5 believed that students were "future citizens," argued that for this reason they need to “learn to develop opinions in the safe space of the classroom”:

So I would really explain and prep the kids so that they understand that I’m not teaching them something, it’s them learning about forming their own opinions. [The important question is] ‘what’s your opinion”? And then at the end of that, its ‘well, what’s your opinion now that you’ve heard everyone else’s opinion or can you state someone else’s opinion?” (Simon)

Nicolas similarly told me that he wanted to “just give them perspectives” so that students could learn “to think and to voice their own opinions.” Sean, too, believed that CI challenged students “to have an opinion about things that matter,” and he saw it important for students to be able to answer “high order cognitive questions in order to express their opinion.” Doug believed that having “the opportunity to fairly express their opinion…and to allow others to express their opinion” was a “valuable thing for students to learn.”

In other words, teachers sometimes pitted reason against opinion; at other times they used these terms interchangeably. While many of the Social Science teachers were principally concerned with students capacity to support their opinions with reasons (because they believed that opinions were not enough), many of the Science teachers wanted their students learn to support their opinions and arguments with facts. Similarly, they wanted their students to learn to develop and listen to others’ opinions.
Teachers’ focus on facts, reason, and evidence were also frequently in dichotomy with emotion. Mick’s focus was on teaching students how to make decisions and “super logical arguments” based “on facts and not on the emotion.” Doug similarly believed that focusing on “the facts” surrounding the tailings ponds, for example, instead of on “value judgments” was a useful strategy against complaints from parents who worked for oil and gas industries:

For example, if were looking at tailings ponds. What are the facts about tailings ponds? What is happening? How many tailings ponds are there? How many tailings ponds have we seen problems with? How many tailings ponds are being dealt with properly? Or at least properly according to the provincial standard? That’s the sort of thing you need to look at…putting facts out - explaining what the issue is, why people are unhappy – and try to keep it more factual based rather than making a value judgments about it. (Doug)

2. Teachers were interested in students developing an awareness of CI and the multiple perspectives involved

Several teachers stressed the importance of developing students’ awareness of CI. They found it critical that students learn about the existence of particular CI. While some teachers emphasized the importance of critical engagement with those issues and perspectives, the principal focus was on awareness. Ron, for example, stated:

I think it’s just being aware of what’s going on in the world and how it’s going to affect you and how you can affect it. We just have to make you aware of them so hopefully you’ll think about them. (Ron)

Sean, similarly, believed that awareness was the big learning goal, “to get the kids to think about what’s going on.” Simon and Lan, too, wanted their students to “be aware of issues” including “aware of other resources so close to all of this oil.” In addition to developing students’ awareness of CI teachers stressed the importance of learning to account for multiple perspectives on issues.

Teachers articulated a range of intentions surrounding these opportunities for learning. One of Nicolas and Doug's learning goals, for example, was for students to learn not to oversimplify extreme positions on issues without accounting for the many in-between spaces that contribute to making some issues controversial:

I don’t think we were looking to say ‘oh, industry is bad and we should protect all the wetlands’ or ‘industry is good so just wipe out all the wetlands because it’s just space’ right? More than anything I wanted them to understand that there’s different perspectives and there’s different
players… I just want my students to understand different perspectives of people coming from different places. (Nicolas)

I don’t want them later on to hear some dumb idea and just think ‘okay, that sounds good’ without thinking through it. Whereas if they’ve already thought through some of those controversial issues, they might say ‘well, you know what – there could be more than one side to this, I better think about it’ rather than just jumping on some bandwagon because it sounded good at the time without realizing that, you know what, there’s 16 different sides to the issue. (Doug)

Jim wanted his students to learn that every individual’s perspective is influenced by a diversity of perspectives. In chapter 5 I reported Jim’s comment that “students have to recognize that people make decisions based on lots of things – one of which is science, the other of which are religious beliefs and cultural beliefs…and a decision is based on an integration of belief systems.” He elaborated further:

One of the things that students have to recognize is that Science is a way of looking at the world and that it’s moderated by things like economics, and economics have impacts on jobs and peoples’ lives and all sorts of things. And then there’s the interaction of social and cultural aspects of the consequence of bringing about change and problem-solving…What I’m interested in is how can they go about understanding why different people hold different viewpoints, and [understanding] that those are valid viewpoints. Economic realities, when you are a wage earner, will result in different decision-making than when you’re not a wage earner and living with mom and dad. (Jim)

Charlie was similarly interested in raising awareness, and was principally concerned with developing students’ capacity to listen to multiple perspectives on issues as a further outcome of that goal. Subsequent reports of teachers’ instructional practices for teaching CI will reveal additional nuances about how they spoke about students’ capacity to account for, and engage, multiple perspectives.

3. Teachers were interested in students’ demonstration of mutual respect

Teaching with and for mutual respect was a common theme that threaded through nearly all interviews and some teachers identified students’ capacity to learn to value and practice mutual respect as an explicit learning outcome they looked for. In chapter 5, for example, I reported Mark’s comments that “we’re going to respect everybody that comes into this room [even when] you agree with a thing they say, you will not be disrespectful because they believe what they believe.” Mark was concerned that students might make inappropriate, rude, or offensive comments in response to their learning about religious views that were less familiar to them, and he thus looked for students’ demonstration of mutual respect as an outcome of their engagement.
with guest speakers. Charlie also stressed the importance of learning to practice mutual respect, and regarded teacher modeling as a key enabler toward meeting this goal:

> We have to frame those issues in terms of mutual respect. You may not be liked as a teacher – I don’t think all teachers are liked…but you have to be respected as a teacher. And whatever that means to you…whatever that looks like. I think that there’s a mutual respect going on and I think that before you can be respected, you have to respect those individuals in your classroom. If you can demonstrate – you know, not only speak the peace but demonstrate that respect, you can come to be respected and then I think – hopefully – that creates a climate of mutual respect and that creates a tone in the classroom where you can actually take up the issues…where you can actually speak from the heart. (Charlie)

Mutual respect was also named by several more teachers as a learning goal when teaching controversial issues and is a theme that I report in greater detail later in this chapter when I report on teachers’ pedagogical practice of establishing classroom climate.

4. Teachers were interested in students demonstrating their ability to think critically and make informed decisions

Some teachers identified critical thinking and analysis as learning outcomes that were important to them, without being specific. Linda, for example, described teaching CI as an opportunity for students to learn to think critically. And Mark, too, stated that “those sorts of critical thinking skills are what we’re looking for from kids.” Others elaborated more on what critical thinking looked like to them any why they believed it was an important learning outcome. Teachers like Nicolas and Jim, for example, framed this learning goal in terms of teaching students to question taken-for-granted assumptions, and this was related to teachers’ belief that it was their responsibility to broaden students’ perspectives (e.g. Nicolas believed it was important for students to “question things that family members or friends mistake as human nature”). Nicolas and Jim were hoping that critical engagement with CI would motivate students to question their own values and beliefs. Nicolas, for example, described a time when one of his students experienced tensions across different dimensions of her identity as an Albertan, whose family worked for oil and gas, and as an environmentalist:

> There were 4 groups: the industry group, the environmental group, government, and your average worker. I had this girl who ended up working in the industry side and when they started working on their arguments and their pillars, she realized ‘well, as much as I like industry and I want the economy to work and I want this to go well, I really like the environment and I don’t know if I’m okay with telling industry to go ahead and do all these things because I’m really pro-environment’. So, it was really neat because she started second guessing like…her own identity, right? And where does she side on that line… (Nicolas)
Jim, too, wanted students to learn about CI as a means for them to question their own beliefs and limited perspectives:

They need to critically analyze some of the assumptions they have...There are always some that get stuck on ‘this is what religion tells me’ or ‘this is what science tells me.’ Or one of the dimensions is so dominant that everything else is wrong because of that...They must also acknowledge that there is not just one religious view and there is not just one science view...And for some, if the Pope says [one thing], and [they say] that’s why I believe that, then that’s okay. But if they also reject that on the basis that it’s not consistent with what they think, then that’s okay too. (Jim)

Expanding on his comments concerning the importance of students’ learning to evaluate evidence, as I reported earlier in this chapter, Jim also emphasized the importance of students’ developing of their critical capacities for assessing bias:

[They need] the opportunity to develop skills that allow them to assess bias or to know why peer reviewed journals are important, to know whether the evidence that they’re collecting has any validity. And I think that’s the part that we’re really missing the boat on. We’re still going back to the fact that all evidence is legitimate evidence. Before, the evidence that students got was the evidence that we presented. We also had bias, by the way, I’m not suggesting that we didn’t…but at least the stuff in textbooks was reviewed by people who were experts in that field and they could raise questions about accuracy and bias and all those kinds of things. When it appears on the internet, it [could] appear by a group that may be supported by big oil or whatever...[Education] hasn’t progressed with the times. (Jim)

The level of critical analysis that Jim was interested in nevertheless continued to operate within the realm of empiricism. These comments also elucidate some of his beliefs about education and the relationship between expertise and “legitimate evidence.” Richard was more specific when he relayed an example of an assignment he had students do that involved them critically comparing and analyzing two approaches to the topic of nuclear war used in film:

I ask the students to compare 2 films – Dr. Strangelove and Failsafe. One deals with nuclear war as a satire and the other isn’t very funny. Which is the better approach? Really what I’m doing is exercising their ability to analyze and to write effectively. The other thing too is that it’s not only a matter of teaching content. It’s teaching the skills – the skills to research and to actually analyze – to critically analyze. That’s got a lot to do with what we’re doing...You want the students to weigh the evidence critically. (Richard)

In addition to teachers’ interest in fostering students’ critical capacities, many were also interested in developing students’ capacity to make informed decisions. In some cases, the emphasis was more on becoming informed than it was on decision-making, which resonated more with the development of students’ awareness of issues. Richard’s reaction to the student
who shared an alternative perspective on tailings ponds in class (chapter 5), for example, was “I was very impressed; I was like ‘hey, you’re informed – that’s what I want’.”

When teachers spoke about wanting students to learn to make decisions, it was not always clear what they meant. Gary, for example, stated “not necessarily solutions, but just ways of dealing with the issues.” Other teachers used the term “decision-making” interchangeably with “judgment-making” or “making up your own mind.” Returning once again to courtroom vocabulary, Mark believed that he needed to inform students “as much as possible so that they can have a wealth of information before they make an objective judgment.” Ron emphasized the importance of teaching students to “make up their minds,” believing that it was not his responsibility to “make the decision for them.” Mick, at least, seemed to have a clear idea of what that decision should be. He told me that although he did not make the decision for them, he helped “allow them to make the rational decision,” and he “hoped that a lot of them make the right decision.” Lan, similarly, spoke about the relationship between students being informed and their capacity to make “right decisions,” and she did so by recounting an example of having students calculate the amount of wind power created by a wind turbine under a series of potential conditions. This meant “not only do they have to know all the renewable resources available; they have to know which one is more efficient.” "Right decision," in this case, referred to "right answer."

5. **Teachers were interested in students learning to think about taking action**

Several teachers were interested in, and motivated by, students learning to take action as an outcome of their engagement with CI. However, no teachers described specifically what kinds of action they were interested in. Instead, teachers tended to equate action with *taking a position.* What is more, the learning goal often sounded more like wanting students to *think* about taking action. Mark, for example, stated “we don’t let them be Canadian and sit in the middle,” but he was less clear on what an alternative to the neutral position looked like. Lan, similarly, explained that “a lot of times [students] get into science and they’re like: ‘we’re empowered to do something, but what can we do?’” She viewed this as an important foundation for her teaching practice: “we go from there and work off of that empowerment.” I did not hear any examples from Lan, however, pertaining to what types of opportunities for learning (or doing) she created to work off of students’ empowerment. Charlie was also interested in his students thinking about taking action, and he offered a specific example of what this looked like in his teaching practice:
Another way to take them up in a classroom is to ask the question ‘If you could guarantee less environmental impact on the tar sands or oil sands, through one of your actions, a personal action, would you? Would you do that? If you answer yes, why and what might you be willing to give up in order to have less an environmental impact on Alberta, or Canada, or air, or water, or land? And if not, then why not? (Charlie)

In this case, moreover, Charlie’s emphasis was more on refraining from particular actions than it was on proactively responding to this issue.

Mick was in some sense an exception in that he gave several examples of the types of actions he was interested in, although they were more thought exercises than hands-on activities. For Mick, effecting students’ behaviours was a primary motivation for teaching CI, and it was important to him to model the types of behaviours he was interested in seeing. Mick argued that it took years for people in power to make decisions on environmental issues and that it took years “for people educated that way to get into power,” yet he believed that it all started with people who worked in schools. He offered this example:

It starts with people who work in schools. [For example] they have to make purchasing decisions. They can make more environmentally sound choices. I mean you can’t compost a 2x4. So what do you do? You can’t recycle it – it’s got nails in it. Well, you can chop it up and heat it up with a wee bit of oxygen and CO2 and then turn it into fuel for the city dump trucks. So I always open up with the possibilities – all kinds of possibilities. (Mick)

I discuss these tensions across teachers’ articulations of their motivations against their practices in chapter 8.

**Outcomes that were not important for students to learn in their engagement with CI**

Teachers also identified 2 overlapping outcomes that were not important to them. These were: 1) consensus, and 2) answers and/or resolution. This intersected somewhat uneasily with the data pertaining to teachers’ interest in students’ learning to make informed decisions. Nevertheless, while informed decision-making was important to them as a skill, they were not looking for students to make decisions specific to CI they were learning about in class. The extent to which the teachers stated that they were not interested in consensus as a learning outcome confirmed that by informed decision-making they more often meant informed position-taking.

Nicolas, Ron, and Doug all believed that a focus on consensus was missing the point, and indeed stood in the way of the main idea, which for them concerned learning about multiple
perspectives and providing support for arguments and opinions. Ron, for example, told me “consensus is not important, no – the key for us is, can you support it? Have you got evidence?” Nicolas, too, told me that consensus was not something that he was “at all” interested in: “with the wetlands project, for example, there wasn’t any decision-making” because “unfortunately, the way it works out, nobody is right.” His non-interest in consensus or decision-making was impacted by his belief that there was no right perspective on this complex issue. From Charlie’s perspective, consensus was an unrealistic learning goal. He told me that he was “not sure that’s possible or realistic because when you take up CI, you’re not looking for answers.”

Others, like Linda and Mary, understood that consensus was something that might occur, or not. When Linda explained an activity that she conducted with students she started to say “[I tell them] either come to a group consensus on yes or no” but then she retracted this statement and told me that actually she “would hesitate to do that.” Mary was similarly ambivalent about the role of consensus, telling me “if they don’t have consensus, hey, that’s life, and that’s the good part about it.” For Richard, consensus was only important insofar it established classroom rules for engagement, although he did not suggest this was done through a participatory decision-making process that involved students. Instead, these were rules that he imposed:

Consensus on certain principles, on certain values, alright? Values concerning tolerance and respect. And values concerning respect for individual rights and liberties. Those things are important…but you’re not trying to arrive at consensus – you’re not trying to win. (Richard)

Many teachers stated explicitly to me that answers were not what they were looking for. It became evident that many of them did not believe that there were answers to these issues at all (as Nicolas implied above). The only exception to this were issues that teachers believed people mistakenly considered to be controversial, as seen in chapter 5. Mark, for example, taught his students that abortion would always be an issue because there no right answer would ever resolve all people’s conflicting views on this issue.

Lan also spoke about the unavailability of “set answers” to CI, which she believed explains their rare inclusion in textbooks: “it has to be open right? Because I can’t tell them what I think their opinion should be, and I think that’s why [they’re] not in most textbooks…because there’s no set answer.” Despite his strong beliefs about the importance of evaluating evidence, Jim was not interested in answers as much as he was in developing students’ critical skills:
It’s not who comes up with the answer that I’m interested in. What I’m interested in is how can they go about researching the issue…It’s not about your answer. Your answer is not where the assessment occurs – the assessment occurs based on their research, on their ability to identify bias, their ability to interact and problem solve within a group, collaboration, those kinds of things. All too often, when teachers get in trouble [teaching controversial issues], it’s because their viewpoint says ‘this is the answer.’ (Jim)

Avoidance of any conclusive answers was for Jim therefore a pedagogical strategy, which allowed him to stay out of trouble with disagreeing parents. Finally, despite Mick’s attention to the importance of facts and students’ capacity to differentiate between reason and emotion, he also expressed doubt that answers to CI were even possible: “Whether or not there is an answer is, believe it or not, a good question isn’t it?”

**Learning Goals that were less frequently identified by Teachers**

There were four desired learning outcomes described only by a small number of teachers (or 1-3) that were not common among the teachers as a group overall. These included:

1. **Affect and Emotion as a learning outcome**

   In chapter 6, I reported that teachers felt some discomfort when students displayed emotion in the classroom. While a majority of the teachers felt that way, there were a few notable exceptions. Sean, for example, used graphic videos and pictures when introducing CI, in order to shock his students and make them feel something about the issues as a starting point:

   I use the shock and awe tactics…I show them pictures, video, graphs…data doesn’t really do too much at the junior high level, but if they see a picture of the open pit [mines], and pictures of small creatures dead in the tailing ponds – that makes more of a difference I think. It usually opens up the door to saying ‘this is what is going on, how do you feel about this?’ and it generates interest in the class and they talk about it and discuss it with a series of questions that I have related to it. (Sean)

   Richard also described students’ exhibition of emotion and affect in positive terms when he mentioned that there were “lots of damp eyes” during a school visit from a Holocaust survivor who spoke vividly about her experience at Auschwitz. In more depth still, Charlie spoke at length about the importance of students’ “learning to love” as a relevant and valuable learning goal that was important to him following from student’s engagement with CI:

   Perhaps that academic approach, while important, perhaps it doesn’t get to the heart of the matter - speaking from the heart. You know, one of the things we don’t talk about in the classroom is love. I just had a conversation with my students – and I put up on the board this concept of ‘how do we, or how can we…take up learning, citizenship, and love in the classroom?’….I don’t mean love in a sexual manner or anything like that. I mean just the kind of human connection about who we are, about our relationships with one another. And I don’t think we do that. We have to
frame those issues in terms of mutual respect, in terms of creating a space…I’m not sure I would use the term ‘loving space’ but in terms of creating a space that allows those conversations to take place in an honest and heartfelt manner. I mean if you could ever create a climate for kids to say ‘I want to tell you about why we should stop the oil sands production or why we should build more oil sands and keep it going because my dad works up there and provides for us,’ that means taking it from the academic to the heart. (Charlie)

Thus, while the primacy of reason occupied a prominent position in teachers’ desired learning outcomes, some teachers also recognized that creating opportunities for students to feel and be affected by the issues that they were learning was equally important.

2. Evidence of student interest in continuing discussion of issues after class

Mary and Richard both looked for continued discussion of issues after class as an outcome they were interested in. Mary, for example, told me she “liked it when the kids leave the classroom talking about the issues,” and she “when [she] supervised at lunch hour and the kids are still fighting about it in the cafeteria.” She described this as an indicator that she had “done [her] job.” Along the similar lines, Richard told me that he “really like[s] it when the bell rings and the kids leave the room arguing.” Like Mary, in this moment he felt “satisfied because they didn’t come to any consensus and are still thinking – and that’s what [he] really want[s].”

3. Democracy as a learning outcome

Of the 16 teachers that I interviewed, only Gary (who contributed to writing the social studies curriculum) explicitly mentioned preparing students for democratic participation as a learning goal of CI teaching:

You’ll have all kinds of different points of view on issues, so in pluralistic, democratic society we have to equip students with the skills and tools to be able to address issues and come to decisions regarding those issues. Not necessarily solutions but just ways of dealing with the issues. (Gary)

In contrast to Gary, Ron argued that democracy did not have a lot to do with what or why he was teaching CI:

I don’t know if it’s democracy or not democracy. I think it’s just being aware of what’s going on in the world and how it’s going to affect you and how you can affect it. But I don’t think it’s…you know, in the 80’s before the Soviet Union collapsed, you could probably look at it more in terms of democracy. But other than like George Bush [saying] ‘we have to invade these countries to bring democracy’ I don’t think the kids see it as much [that way]... the democracy thing, I don’t know if they feel that. (Ron)
In other words, Ron believed that teaching for participation in democracy was not something that he needed to prepare students for.

4. Discomfort as an opportunity for transformative learning

Although both Charlie and Doug spoke about students’ experiences with discomfort, it was only Charlie who was interested in discomfort as an intentional learning outcome. What is more, he saw it as an opportunity for transformative learning:

I think with controversial issues you want to make people very uncomfortable, that’s one of the first things you might want to do…So we start thinking about ‘let’s stack that way of knowing up against other ways of knowing’ and to start taking those issues up. I think that’s where we start – if we make ourselves uncomfortable, we make our students uncomfortable and that’s where the learning will take place. But that [itself is] controversial. (Charlie)

Doug, on the other hand, thought of discomfort as a by-product of teaching CI, and he suggested that students’ experience of discomfort was something to be taken up outside of the formal classroom learning environment (i.e. extra-curricular).

Sometimes the students aren’t comfortable. And we not just as the teacher but as the adult we have to be able to step back and frame the discussion in a way that respects everyone’s dignity. And if someone is feeling uncomfortable then we need to find a way for them to realize that if you feel uncomfortable then maybe you need to not be here, but also realize that we do need to discuss why. (Doug)

Doug regarded students’ discomfort as an unplanned occurrence (that he needed to personally respond to one-on-one), more so than a feeling that he wanted students to experience and engage as explicit material for learning.

Instructional Practices for Teaching CI

Teachers talked about instructional practices that I organized into 5 categories: 1) Approaches to teaching CI, 2) Practices and Strategies for Discussion, 3) Teaching Resources, 4) Assignments and Assessment, and 5) School and Classroom Climate.

1. Approaches to Teaching CI: Teacher-Centered and Student-Centered Pedagogy

Teachers’ approaches to teaching CI were more or less teacher- and student-centered, and ranged from lecture-based teaching to inquiry-based learning. While some teachers were prone to provide students with facts in order to make informed-decisions (Sean and Mick) and expose them to diverse perspectives (nearly all teachers), others tended to create opportunities for them to inquire into issues that interested them, and research the range of perspectives involved.
Most teachers described the former approach to me with the exception of 2 teachers who enacted some inquiry-based learning. I did not hear any teachers, for example, talk about opportunities for student voice in decision-making, setting the agenda, or choosing topics for study.

Stan and Mick both explicitly acknowledged their use of a teacher-centred approach in somewhat of a confessional tone. When Stan described the videoconference he hosted with 2 Holocaust survivors, he described it primarily as an opportunity for his own learning while referring to students as passive participants whose responsibility it was to listen:

I think that I tend to use quite a teacher-centered approach... I mean too much so...for me, the Holocaust is an area of interest and so I have read a great deal and I think I'm very knowledgeable...Last year I did [a videoconference] with 2 Holocaust survivors from New York. It was an opportunity for me to talk to them and to listen to what these Holocaust survivors wanted to ask me – and the students could listen. (Stan)

That Mick took a teacher-centred approach—during which, by his own admission, he did most of the talking—became evident when he described his role as a fact-dispenser:

I teach factually. I don’t pull any punches. I don’t necessarily know everything about nuclear waste but I tell them what the facts are. And I’m not here to proselytize – I’m just here to show you the facts. Then you have all the information to make decisions. And if you make a different decision, well I can’t do anything about that. But I’ve given you enough information that you ought to make the right decision. It’s like a debate between me and them and I always win, you know what I mean? Here’s where it gets difficult. Because, I usually do most of the discussion. I would love to have more time for discussion, and I invite discussion, but it’s often very quick and I regret that. We need to have way more discussion than we actually have. We have 47 periods to teach a course – we have to cover the curriculum as cohesively as possible, so I try as much as possible to engage students in conversation, but I don’t take a lot of time. Maybe 3-4 minutes [I’ll ask] ‘any questions?’ (Mick)

Like Stan, Mick was aware that he was doing most of the talking, “making the decisions for them,” and leaving little time for discussion which meant little opportunity for students to act as co-authors of their own learning experience. Mick’s interest in the relationship between science and citizenship frequently translated into course topics that were nevertheless relevant to students' everyday lives (namely, their relationship to consumer goods). Mick thus displaced the emphasis from big-picture dichotomous positions on issues that he believed could be oversimplified and misunderstood by media and marketing, and focused instead on the application and relevance of these for everyday decision-making.

While only two teachers were explicit in describing their teaching practice as teacher-centred, the other fourteen were not necessarily all enacting student-centred pedagogy. My interpretation of
the former approach was based on what I heard but also what I did not hear from teachers when they spoke about their teaching practice. Only two teachers alluded to student-centred pedagogy but neither of them did so explicitly. Nicolas described a lesson that he had assigned his elementary students whereby he had provided students with the opportunity to participate in decision-making with regard to their own learning by inviting them to choose topics for study and make decisions with regard to how they approached learning about them. He qualified this assignment as "really up to the students." Here, he also described an example of an inquiry project that he had assigned his young students:

My students this year worked on an inquiry project and the main question was: how does human use of land impact community? We told them that a community could be used very loosely – it could be a natural community, it could be your neighbourhood, it could be an urban community...they could take a perspective of a group of animals and their community. And from there they generate 4 of their own questions where they explore that main topic, that main idea, and it was really open for them to go in any direction. A lot of them ended up choosing looking at how wetlands were affected by the different industries, and a lot of them ended up focusing more on the oil and gas [industries] – so focusing on the oil sands and how the oil sands were taking up all this land that once upon a time would have been a wetland, and what happens to the natural resources that were there and the ecosystems that were once there. It's very much directed by them so we give them the essential question and then they just go from that point on. (Nicolas)

Though Charlie did not describe an example of his student-centred teaching practice, he did allude to it as something that was important to him, and something that was a source of struggle for him. He asked: “Why is it that we fall so quickly to the routines, and ‘our’ ways of knowing as opposed to the students’?” He also believed that it was "too easy," and "comfortable" for teachers to stay behind their desk, and that levelling the student-teacher relationship constituted an important aspect of pedagogy for teaching CI.

2. Practices and Strategies for Discussion of CI

Teachers spoke about teaching with discussion of CI in a variety of ways that were all intertwined with how they talked about teaching with and for multiple perspectives. They described a range of strategies they used for teaching multiple perspectives as prompts to initiate discussion. While teachers frequently used the word discussion, they did so more as a synonym for conversation or talking, than for a structured discourse. Some described their own role in facilitating discussion, and others described their use of more formal activities and formats such as the structured academic controversy model, debate, or the use of value lines, horseshoe
activities, discussion circles, and simulation role-plays. Others still spoke about how they framed CI for discussion as binaries or as tensions, or through intentional use of provocative language.

When I asked teachers to describe what discussion looked like in their classrooms, and what role as teachers they occupied in discussion, my questions yielded little direct or specific response. Sean, for example, responded: “There's questions in the texts that we use - sociological questions dealing with consumerism, environmentalism, and ‘what if’ type questions...so a lot of that work is already done - I just have to facilitate discussion.” Betty spoke at length about the crucial role that teachers play in discussions:

[Teachers] are a part of the discussion because they lead the classroom, but they have to allow the space for the discussion to happen...Every single day there are things that happen, and the teacher is pivotal with what happens with that discussion in the classroom. I would be of the belief that everything is of value to talk about in the classroom – but within reason and within time constraints. My concern would be teachers who abdicate their control of discussion of a controversial issue in the classroom or over-impose their control, because both are wrong. So you can say ‘we don’t talk about that, that’s not the curriculum,’ and that’s the easy route. Or they can just lose control in the classroom and what starts as something small can get right out of hand and kind of crazy and that’s wrong too. So the teachers’ role is really pivotal because they can take that teachable moment, that question that comes up, that comment that’s said and turn it into such a positive learning experience. Or it can become a fiasco. Maybe I need to think of an example of that. Okay, I’ll give you an example. Hunting is a controversial issue because it connects to gun control and the eating of meat. So imagine a child talking about going hunting with their family. Then another child says ‘you hunt! You kill animals and eat them!’ Okay so you’ve got a controversial issue. And it connects to social studies and other areas like Aboriginal tradition. And a teacher would have a stance on that which could be many different things. So what do you do with that? Right away you’ve got 3 perspectives. I think that the teacher, maybe, would start that conversation by saying something like...well, who knows what they would say because a lot of it depends on the status of those 2 children. A teacher might do one of 20 different things when that happens, including shutting it down completely and saying we don’t talk about that, or immediately expanding on their own belief, which I think would be wrong. One stance might be to leave out their perspective and state that there are 2 different valid beliefs or asking, ‘what do the rest of you think? Or you know, opening up a safe space to discuss that. I want them not to take the easy route – because you can always take the easy route – which is to shut down the conversation or tell them what they should think. I want them to allow space for discussion. (Betty)

One of the examples I talked about in chapter 5 involved Richard and one of his students, who shared an alternative perspective on residential schooling in Canada. In response to the student's comment about her grandmother's good experience in one of those schools, Richard spoke about his subsequent facilitating role in the discussion:
I said 'I'd like you to explain this', you know, to keep the discussion going. [But] then I said ‘the problem is that a lot of people had some pretty bad experiences. And I said ‘you know what, there is evidence that many people did have a bad experience.’ I guess what I’m trying to say is the fact that many people did – that there was a problem. That’s how I’m trying to approach it, because that needs to be dealt with. (Richard)

His response to the student who shared his father’s perspective that the environmental harm caused by the tailing ponds was overblown was similar. He encouraged the student to elaborate, and then he responded by presenting the environmental and eco-justice perspective about how these ponds affect groundwater. Richard also gave an example of what he would not do in discussion of CI, which was “be clever with students.” He elaborated by explaining that he contrasted his facilitation of discussion to Socrates’ style, which used discussion as a way of leading his students to where he wanted them to be led, and pointing out to them how their views and reasoning were wrong. Richard did not agree with this style. Mick responded to my questions about his facilitation of conflicts across perspectives between students in their discussion of CI by saying that it “never really arises.”

I also paid attention to how teachers spoke about their facilitation role in terms of if, when, and how, they responded to xenophobic comments made by students when discussing CI. In chapter 6, for example, I reported Betty’s comments about the importance of feeling confident as a teacher in order to respond to homophobic comments made by students. Here, she elaborated more:

Like say a really heated conversation – like in junior high – that whole issue of ‘gay’ right – that word ‘gay’ or ‘faggot’. I mean kids use these words – they throw them out randomly and if you’re a teacher who isn’t confident to deal with that….I mean, I was in charge in my classroom but I would allow lots of discussion. When things came out like one kid called another gay, we could have a conversation about that without it getting out of hand. I don’t know how to explain it. I wouldn’t shut it down and I wouldn’t tell them what to do and it wouldn’t get out of control. I’d say ‘what do you think that word means?’ or ‘how did that word make that person feel?’ (Betty)

Doug also told me how he responded to homophobic comments that students made in discussion:

If I hear someone making an anti-gay comment like ‘oh you fag’ or something like that I say ‘no, we can’t do that.’ And that’s a moment for that student – I mean they may not learn from it, but for others around, what’s acceptable and not acceptable. And we talk about it and I don’t get mad at them – I use it as a teachable moment to say hey, you know – there are people who are gay, and to say something like that is not okay. You need to think about how it affects someone and makes them feel. And to help the kids understand often I’ll choose something else – like, you know let’s say they’re Asian, I’ll say ‘what if we treated you differently because you’re Asian? How would
you like that?’ So I’ll talk about it from a different angle. Girls, I’ll say the same thing. And you can see already they get their hackles up because they’ve been treated differently based on something else. So I’ll say ‘hey, you felt bad about that, so how do you feel about these gay people? How is that fair?’ And sometimes you’ll see people, like really think ‘I don’t know’. But again, by engaging them in that discussion and helping them to look at it, and realizing that not just that person but others around are going to be part of it – just by being there they get exposed to that reasoning. (Doug)

Richard was the only other teacher who described his response to out-group targeted prejudice; his pedagogical response, however, differed significantly from the other two:

Some student last year started making comments like ‘Chinese Canadians [are this or that]’ and one of the students is Chinese. Well, he got a week out of school. You do not do that. Okay, I don’t give a damn what you think but you do not do that. And you don’t shout out profanity in the classroom either. It’s on that level. (Richard)

Richard thus focused on setting a precedent for what was acceptable and not in discussion, and he reinforced punishment (over education) as a response.

Other teachers who spoke about discussion in their teaching of CI described using particular cooperative learning models and activities including value lines (Betty), clustering activity and de Bono’s Hats (Linda), horseshoe activities (Gary and Charlie), the structured controversy model (Mark), and simulation activities (Gary, Simon, Doug, and Nicolas). These activities focus on creating opportunities for students to look at, defend, and position themselves on issues from multiple vantage points, and they tend to emphasize room for movement, to change one’s views, rather than commit. Gary and Charlie, for example, described using some variation of the horseshoe model. Here, Gary described what this looked like in his classroom teaching, and why he found it useful:

You’ll give the typical statement and then the ‘strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree…’ You start with a question, an issue – like, just come out with a declarative statement: ‘Canada should greatly increase immigration levels’ and have them respond. Strongly agree or disagree…on their own, and then do what’s called a u-shape discussion or a horseshoe discussion. And so they arrange themselves according to their responses and as they explain their positions they are free to move and so if they are convinced by somebody who answered ‘disagree’ but they answered ‘agree,’ then they might say ‘oh, but that person’s got a good point’ and they might shift now maybe toward neutral or to the disagree camp. And it’s an interesting way of understanding that it’s an issue because people have these divergent points of view on it…and part of the deal in a democracy is discussing it – and [understanding] that discussion can shape and change ones views on issues. (Gary)

Charlie also described his use of the horseshoe model, although he ended up describing something that looked more like a talking circle:
So maybe you want to create a horseshoe or a circle. [Like in] Aboriginal experiences you can take an icon – and it may be a pen or something like that and that [acts] as a talking stick. As you hand the talking stick around, no-one else can comment and you just have to speak to what you’re speaking to – so I think that’s one way to take up controversial issues. (Charlie)

Mark had been introduced to the structured controversy model in a professional development session offered by the school board and he described this as a "modification of the horseshoe" that he found useful for teaching CI:

So you pick an issue. It’s a modification of the horseshoe argument where you can see whether you’re for or against or neutral kind of thing. And it gives kids an opportunity to explain why they moved, for example, to a different part of the classroom to say that they agree with, let’s say corporal punishment or something. And then they have to sort of discuss as a group and come up with why they moved to this side of the room. You might think that they would all universally agree as to the reasons why they would go there but the reality is that they don’t. So I have them do point form notes and then we do a chart or stick it on the whiteboard and say ‘okay, here’s the ‘yes, capital punishment is good…and these are the reasons'. And then there’s the no side. With structured controversy it's a yes or a no. It’s good because it really makes kids formulate an argument. And it isn’t just an opinion then, because that’s not good enough...So it makes them consider their positions in more detail so they take ownership. You know, you can’t just sit there by yourself and say ‘capital punishment is the best thing ever that happened because.’ You hold them accountable because they’re so controversial these issues that you better have a deep reasoning for them or at least a justifiable reason for your position. And it’s good, cause you know we don’t do essays on this particular kind of thing. (Mark)

Mark articulated several reasons why he thought this practice was useful: opinions are not enough, support for views and strong arguments are essential, and CI are not something you write essays about.

Linda, too, used a strategy that she had been introduced to in a professional development workshop. This was a 4-part strategy developed by Pat Clarke for the British Columbia Teachers' Federation called *Teaching CI without Becoming Part of the Controversy* (2005). Linda liked this strategy because she found that it discouraged individuals from owning arguments, and instead created opportunities for all students to name and engage all perspectives. Here she described in great detail how she applied the strategy to an assignment on issues in the news:

They had to do an assignment on issues in the news. And one girl did that Caster Semenya – the South African transgendered woman who was 19 years old who a year ago won the gold medal in the 200 meters. All the students brought in issues but I thought let’s explore this one because I

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3 While Linda described Caster Semenya and the issues surrounding her gender testing, she incorrectly identified her as transgendered.
wanted my kids to look at trans issues – which is not a common issue. So I used a strategy that I love from Pat Clarke, who developed a really interesting strategy for exploring controversial issues that I use a lot. Basically they have a large think-pair, then small group, a large sheet of paper, and each person is given 5 post it notes and you write the issue in the center of the paper. Should Caster be allowed to keep her medal when there is evidence to show that she may be a man instead of a woman? So then they have 5 post-it notes per person, and they have to write 5 different answers to that question [that respond to] yes and no and give reasons. And then what they do is cluster their responses. It’s a very good opportunity for conversation around deeper understanding. So now you’ve got the ‘for’ and ‘against.’ But what you’re getting is all kinds of different reasons…and some that aren’t discriminate always, some that could be in the middle. What I’d say at this point is – either come to a group consensus on yes or no – although I would hesitate to do that – but go back, and now you’re in a position to write a position paper based on the arguments' for' and 'against.' I think the value of that activity is that nobody owns a single argument. So if you happen to be a person who has a radical single argument, you’re not the only one defending it. That’s what happens in a debate, which I don’t agree with in terms of exploring controversial issues. Now [they] see multiple perspectives and nobody owns the argument because a whole bunch of people put that argument down. So I find that a very powerful strategy for engaging kids in thinking about controversial issues and I’ve used it a lot of times. (Linda)

Linda's account of the 4-part strategy reveals some of her underlying beliefs about how CI are to be taught: debate is limited, students should have the opportunity to discuss issues that are less frequently talked about in the media, binary arguments for and against are useful, individual students' are more and less vulnerable articulating divergent opinions, and essays are a useful strategy for teaching and learning CI.

Other teachers used simulation activities as prompts for discussion. Gary, for example, presented students with the question: to what extent should the tar sands be developed in Fort McMurray? He then assigned roles to students that made sure to capture "the environmentalist’s point of view, the real estate developer’s point of view, and the First Nations' point of view on the pollution of the waterways." Charlie described something very similar, telling me that he took up CI by focusing on perspective-taking and assigning students roles such as the aboriginal perspective. In the following, Nicolas described a simulation exercise that he had enacted with his elementary school students:

We organized a Remembrance Day celebration and one of the things that we had the grade 5/6 students do is read a monologue that basically dealt with perspectives. So you could be a soldier, you could be a parent of someone going off to a conflict area, you can be the son or daughter of someone going off to a conflict area, or maybe you live in a conflict area. We ask ‘how do you feel about all of these people coming into your area?’ You know, all of a sudden you look out the window and you have this soldier with a Canadian emblem on their shoulder, what do you think? (Nicolas)
While simulation activities are frequently used with the intention of fostering students' empathy, Nicolas was slightly more explicit about this in that he invited students to consider their feelings. I also had the opportunity to watch a short video about, and participate in, a similar activity in a conference workshop focused on tar sands and facilitated by Simon. In my interview with him, Simon called this a "debate" although it looked very much like simulation in that students were assigned roles and stakeholder perspectives in groups, only to then articulate arguments from the vantage points of their characters, more so than from themselves. Lan, similarly, told me that she had tried having debates, although, again, what she described sounded more like simulation/role-play:

I’ve actually tried a debate. Yeah, where everybody was a representative of one type of energy. Of course there was the oil company, and they had to argue their own points. Yeah, I tried that one year. We always pick, like the students pick a view and then we purposely switch them around or something like that so that it’s like they’re arguing for the opposite point – but we always say that you’re arguing the point, not the person. So you’re attacking the point, and not like ‘well, you are not popular so you suck.’ (Lan)

By telling me that she “tried” debate, Lan implied that she did not find this method successful, but she did not elaborate on why. Overall, it was not common for teachers to describe their use of the debate method as a discussion strategy for teaching CI. Some used this term loosely, again synonymously with discussion and talking. Some teachers also spoke against debates, like Linda who believed them to be limiting in that students took ownership of arguments in ways that made some students more and less vulnerable. Science teachers used this term more frequently. Lan and Simon, as I have reported, described role-play simulation activities that resulted in debate. When asked about debates, Jim talked about the popular appeal they used to have in the 1980's, when he began teaching, and his former students who once even participated in a televised debate:

There was a small television studio in the school that I worked at, and Shaw cable actually carried the debates. We had scientists and students and a variety of people interacting. I’m trying to think…we did something on reproductive technology, and one was climate change. But the big one that I did a lot on was work on recombinant DNA. (Jim)

Overall, while debates are commonly associated with the teaching of CI, I heard very little from teachers about actual debates. Nor did I hear any teacher refer to deliberation.

Teaching Multiple Perspectives on Issues in Discussion as a strategy for avoiding accusations of indoctrination and proselytizing
Teaching students to learn about and account for multiple perspectives on CI was a common focus of teachers’ instructional practices, which correlated with how they spoke about discussion. Many teachers reported that one reason why they taught with and for multiple perspectives was because they wanted to be sure to avoid teaching a single perspective on a controversial issue, which they believed would make them vulnerable to reprisal from parents. Mick, for example, included multiple perspectives because he "was not [there] to proselytize." Teachers consequently differentiated between teaching religion, for example, and teaching about religion when they described their instructional practices for teaching multiple perspectives. Ron, for example, described this as using the social science approach. Multiple perspectives, then, was both a strategy and a desired learning outcome for discussion of CI.

Some teachers were more comfortable discussing why they taught multiple perspectives than they were talking about how. Mark, for example, taught with and for multiple perspectives on CI because he believed this made his teaching balanced, and he thought it important to provide students with as many perspectives as possible so that they could make a decision (i.e. take a position) on the issue:

I mean, why don’t you teach all aspects and then let kids decide themselves? If all you teach is abstinence, girls will get pregnant…so I don’t understand why you wouldn’t do the whole gamut – birth control and whatever, and then allow them to make that decision. If you taught creationism and evolution…I mean why don’t you give people all of the information that’s out there and then let people make up their own mind. So I would rather have it balanced. I don’t care what you’re teaching unless it’s the Holocaust where it’s no balance, then you teach all sides because issues aren’t black and white. (Mark)

Simon also taught multiple perspectives on issues as a way of “getting students as much balanced, non-biased information.” Lan, similarly, believed it was important to "just teach them as views, like this is what the church thinks and look, here's another view." That way, she explained, students were not learning "evolution exists, the Bible sucks, or the other way around."

When Nicolas told me about his young student who was unsure of how to reconcile her identity as an environmentalist and Albertan who understood the importance of the oil industry, he made sure to respond in such a way as to emphasize not only that multiple perspectives existed on this issue but that individuals could simultaneously have multiple perspectives too because he was "not going to teach her that one perspective is good versus the other." In his words:
What I said to her was that there was a lot of people within that industry that were also pro-environment and their job was to have a minimal impact. You know, still do their job but with a minimal impact...and just to take that perspective. It worked for her...but, you know, I’m not going to teach them one's [perspective] good versus the other. (Nicolas)

According to Jim it was how teachers taught with multiple perspectives in discussion of CI that mattered most:

I’ve always heard precautions. I worked in a Catholic school system – and so I’ve always heard people say ‘well you could never do that in a Catholic school system.’ But I’ve never had a problem, ever. Because you’re not proselytizing, you’re not saying ‘this is the way it must be.’ [Instead] you’re presenting the issue, which exists in the real world, and they’re relevant issues. You’re not saying ‘this is the answer.’ The importance is the debate and understanding the issue...I’ve seen people get in trouble because they’ve done something really stupid, but it wasn’t the issue [that was the problem], it was their approach to the issue that put them in trouble, such as telling students: ‘this is the answer,’ or ‘this is what you must believe’ or ridiculing someone because they hold a different view. (Jim)

Doug also described teaching with multiple perspectives in classroom discussion of CI as a strategy that he used to avoid leading students:

We need to look at more than one side of the issue so that way the students aren’t being led a certain way by me because I’m the adult and the teacher, and they’re actually getting the opportunity to see that there’s more sides to it [and understand] that there may be negative aspects but there are also positives. And that there are different things to think about when making decisions about this… We look at the environmental impact of the oil sands and I do treat it as something that we need to look at carefully. Things like logging I talk about with students and we look at different perspectives. I let them know that there is environmental damage being done – it’s a proven fact. But there’s also the [perspective acknowledging that] oil and gas industry drives Alberta. Oil and gas industries also provide our plastics. So there’s other angles that they need to think about. I embed these issues more into lessons. For example, in biology I had them write letters to the Minister, and to take a perspective on the oil issue. And this is something you could do with the gay issue too – have them put themselves in different shoes and think about what they would have to say. It was a very good learning experience. They were sitting at tables and had to discuss it in groups of 4 first and then do their letters. A lot of them wanted to take the same perspective, so I had to ask ‘who wants to take the perspective of a Native elder? I say ‘not everyone can be a tribal elder though, only one of you’ cause I want to get as many perspectives. Some were loggers. So whatever that role is, whether you believe it or not, you need to express your opinion from that perspective. So that’s one of the mechanisms for me to teach controversial issues. (Doug)

Betty described what could happen when a teacher "crosses the line" and takes an extreme stance on an issue. In her lead into this example, Betty also differentiated between teaching CI and teaching about CI:
I think that teaching controversial issues is our job. Maybe not teaching…maybe that’s the problem. It’s not ‘teaching’ controversial issues because to say ‘teaching’ controversial issues is too much like teaching children you know ‘this is what I’m going to teach you.’ Really, [I mean] facilitating it - allowing the space in your classroom for the discussion of things that people have different opinions on…An example is a teacher that I would hold in extreme high esteem. I was in her class, not even observing – I was just in her class and she was a Science teacher, and there was a child in her class who was talking about the difference between creationism versus evolution. And this teacher would be on the far extreme end of a belief in evolution, and the child had a creationist kind of perspective. [The teacher] made a statement first and the child said something after and then the teacher laughed in a way like ‘who would believe this?’ in a similar way to somebody who would laugh at somebody who believed the world was flat. And I had to call her in after and I said ‘are you aware of what you projected?’ And she could not for the life of her understand that a belief in Creation, in opposition to her belief, could be a valid belief. Like to her, religion was dark ages, brainless, the earth is flat kind of thinking…it shows me how easy we can fail. And I suspect that I probably did many times. And you know, there probably were times when I was teaching when I just, too quickly, chose a side or gave my opinion on something. That’s what [this] teacher did. [She] had such a belief on something that [she] couldn’t even imagine that anything different could be valid. And something different was very valid. (Betty)

Between this and the other example Betty relayed to me concerning a teachers’ views of Ralph Klein (which I reported in chapter 6), Betty spoke about the importance of the teacher’s role in discussion of multiple perspectives, turning her attention mostly to what teachers should not do more so than what she did personally and why.

**Framing CI in discussion as topics, tensions, questions, and/or binaries**

Teachers framed CI for discussion in a number of ways. Some framed them as single topics (e.g. global warming, evolution, homosexuality, war etc.) without identifying the underlying tensions. Others posed specific questions to students, but often in such a way as to solicit binary responses and positions. Linda had students consider arguments for and against a given issue. Simon, too, told students "whether you're for or against it, I want you to have 2 opinions so that you can understand both sides." Doug spoke about organizing discussion on abortion by "those strongly in favour and strongly opposed," and Mick wanted students to give a "measured answer that covered both sides." Stan asked students to consider what the oil sands mean "in terms of jobs versus environment" and to "present both sides of an issue". Ron framed a series of binary oppositions for his students to consider:

Liberalism versus illiberalism, communism versus capitalism, security versus freedom. [The students] are great because they always relate it to the specifics of Palestine and Israel, not the Muslim-Christian, West-East issue…Yeah [when teaching about the tar sands], we bring in
interests, you know national interests versus regional interests, we look at economic versus environment. We just finished [the oil sands] and they understand both sides of the issue. (Ron)

Lan sidestepped the ‘issue’ altogether when she taught about birth control in her Catholic school. “Teaching birth control is not good in a Catholic school,” she said, and her approach was to teach students that birth control was a method for preventing the spread of disease, while leaving out any discussion of pregnancy prevention, conflicts implicated in the issue surrounding women’s rights, or foetus’s right to life.

Other teachers framed specific questions and tensions pertaining to CI in ways that acknowledged their complexity and multiperspectivity. This overlapped with teachers’ emphasis on teaching and learning for students’ appreciation and understanding of multiple perspectives and their not being interested in answers or resolution on issues. Using this strategy, teachers questioned, rather than reinforced, perspectives on issues and they avoided setting parameters or limits on the perspectives that students accounted for. Nicolas, for example, asked his young students to consider the question “how does human use of land impact community?” Social science teachers’ questions frequently started with “to what extent…,” which is a format used in the Social Studies curriculum for the academic courses. Richard also liked this strategy:

I always like to sort of stand at the front of the room and say ‘well, here – you’ve got this question ‘to what extent…’ and I said the great thing about this is that you don’t have to take an extreme position on either one or the other. It’s somewhere in between. Maybe tending toward one or the other position – but it gives you a tremendous amount of freedom. Because otherwise you’d be coming along saying ‘look – well, yes or no?’ or ‘I can’t make up my mind’. Well, this way you don’t have to... (Richard)

Although Stan referred to "both sides," in other moments of the interview he articulated complex questions that he invited students to consider for discussion:

What becomes more controversial is how do we move forward from here? Does it mean the end of jobs if we restrict oil sands activity? What would the effect be on Alberta, realizing of course that the oil sands is not only a major employer – either directly or indirectly in Alberta, in terms of the salary size? (Stan)

He gave further examples whereby he provoked questions intended to demonstrate to students just how complex some issues can be in that they pose moral dilemmas and challenge individuals' established values, morals, and beliefs:

One of the most recent controversial issues that I talked about in my class was airport security scanners and racial profiling. After 9/11, especially with the Patriot Act in the United States and the Department of Homeland Security in the US, and even in Canada too – you start to see that human rights are coming under attack. And given that in reality we know in our heart of hearts
that it's morally wrong to racially profile people at airports, [I ask students] 'if you were in charge of airport security and your job depended on your ability to maintain security and safety at the airport – what would happen?' And I mean I don’t believe in racial profiling and I don’t believe in airport security scanners, but the reality is that the circumstances have changed. These are really tough issues. We did the waterboarding issue with respect to the CIA and torture and [I gave them] a scenario. [I said] 'let’s imagine for a second that a known terrorist was caught on camera coming into a crowded football stadium carrying a duffel bag, and a few seconds later they catch him but the duffel bag is gone and they’re concerned that inside this duffel bag would be a set of explosives. Would that person be tortured to find out where that duffel bag would be? And these prominent defense attorneys who were very much civil libertarians said that even though in Canada it’s clearly illegal to torture someone, the reality is that’s what’s going to happen because that’s how society functions. And you know, what a great controversial issue to have a debate on. I don’t think that any student would accept the argument that you can torture someone, but I think [they can] realize that the reality and the theory is something different. (Stan)

Jim also framed CI as complex questions and he described this as a further strategy for teachers to use to help them avoid using the classroom as a platform for the expression of their own values. In this next comment, his inclination to frame issues in binary terms was apparent, but Jim caught himself and re-framed his argument:

The big question can become ‘should oil sands development continue until we have a better understanding of what’s causing this?’ And so you have to show some of the other argument which is ‘well, what happens to jobs?’ And the reality is that we don’t just live in science we live in a reality that requires jobs for the economy. So they have to understand that there’s 2 sides to an argument – or even 3 or 4 or 5. We would do getting stem cells from foetuses – but we wouldn’t say whether it was aborted or not. Stem cells are planted into the brain and there are increasing levels of dopamine which seems to have an effect on Parkinson’s disease. So, should we explore this further? What are some things that we need to look at? And so it would be an issue framed around something relevant, not ‘so do you think abortion is right or wrong?’ I mean you approach that and you’re going to get a very different kind of response. That’s not a legitimate social issue. You’re researching something that is so wide, so broad; it’s not a problem-solving scenario. (Jim)

Charlie, too, gave several examples of the types of questions that he had posed his students on the issues of Canada’s role in Afghanistan and on the environmental impact of the tar sands. Charlie was particularly interested in asking why questions:

Let’s take the controversial issue of ‘should Canada be in Afghanistan in 2010?’ You could have an academic discussion about that...Or, 'are they tar sands or oil sands?' Maybe we should start asking some questions, and then maybe another way to take them up would be ‘what questions – what essential and important questions surround that debate about whether its tar sands or oil sands, or whether there should be development of the oil sands?’ We have to ask ourselves why. And ‘why’ is always surrounded by controversy. (Charlie)
In this example, Charlie used provocative language as a strategy to provoke discussion, intentionally referring to *tar* sands rather than *oil* sands because he was aware of strong feelings many Albertans had about this: “and those are the words I would be using – I would use those trigger words too. Everybody here calls it oil sands cause we’re supposed to call it oil sands. So let’s call it tar sands and then see what happens in the classroom.”

**Positioning self on issues in discussion of CI**

I asked all teachers whether, and how, they positioned themselves on CI with their students. All but 4 of the 16 teachers reported that they were *transparent* about their positions and frequently even shared them with students. I report how they spoke about their transparency practice later in this chapter when discussing practices that came closest to examples of teacher reflexivity. Four teachers intentionally withheld their positions on issues from their students as a form of their pedagogy for teaching CI. Mick, for instance, “hoped his politics were vague” because he had no interest in "proselytizing". Nevertheless, he was aware of students knowing where he stood on issues because of the arguments he promoted (e.g. global warming is a serious threat), and the jokes he told (e.g. about right-wing conservatives). His positioning therefore was a manifestation of the hidden curriculum more so than an expression of transparency that might enable students’ opportunities for critical engagement. Gary, Lan, and Simon told me that they intentionally adopted a neutral approach. Gary’s belief in teachers as neutral came across most evidently in his example of comparing police officers with teachers (chapter 6), who both wore "neutral" uniforms. Similar to Mick, Gary was aware of the effect the jokes he made (e.g. about George W. Bush in particular) would have on his desire for transparency, but was careful about explicitly acknowledging his bias:

Well that’s a toughy because you don’t want to show your cards to the students, because then the students might think ‘oh, Mr. M. thinks that we ought to answer this way – he’s such a socialist or whatever.’ So you gotta really try to be neutral in the presentation of the issue, help them explore various points of view on the issue and points of view on an issue are all valid…I mean you got people who are concerned about it who are expressing this viewpoint, who are drawing this political cartoon, who are writing these articles, and you say here’s this range of opinions on the issue, and all points are valid. Unless they’re advocating that we just go over there and nuke them, you know, as long as it’s a reasonable viewpoint and not extremist, I guess it’s a valid viewpoint. They will ask, well Mr. M., what do you think? Do I reveal my own biases? It’s hard not to sometimes, but the more controversial it is, the more I think that as a teacher I have to stand back and remain neutral and objective. But sometimes it’s fun to play up…like the George W. Bush thing, you know? And write the Bush quote of the day on the board …I’m neutral I guess but I try to take that sort of impartial take most of the time. I try to draw out from students what their points of view are. (Gary)
Lan strongly believed that teachers should practice neutrality, in order to avoid that students uncritically adopt her opinions on issues:

No [I do not position myself on issues] – and I’m very careful on that because they need to form their opinions and a lot of the students are ‘teacher pleasers’ so they try to be like ‘what do you think? And I’ll think exactly like you and then I’ll get a 100.’ So I try really hard not to, especially if it’s an issue question, I don’t let them know at all. (Lan)

Using the same descriptor Betty used when speaking about her political identity (chapter 6), Simon described himself as a “fence-sitter” both in terms of his views on issues (even outside of the classroom) as well as in his teaching of CI. He believed that not having strong positions on issues was something that made him feel “fortunate” in his role as a teacher because he could appreciate multiple positions on issues and model for his students that they, too, could hold “2 opinions as opposed to one.”

Follow up one-on-one consultation with students

Another teaching practice for discussion of CI was consulting with students one-on-one after class, which a few teachers did. Doug and Mary, for example, both made themselves available for students to talk to after class if there was anything "bugging" them about an issue discussed in class. In Doug’s case, students who came to seek advice were mostly those whose religious beliefs were in the minority, while Mary's students would come to talk primarily about gender-related issues, which they felt uncomfortable discussing with their parents. Mary told me that in both cases, "they come by after school and say you know this has been kind of bugging me."

3. Resources Used for Teaching CI

Teachers described a range of resources that they drew on to teach CI. These included guest speakers, film, music, literature, colleagues, educational software programs, the internet, and curriculum.

Guest Speakers and Colleagues

A few teachers brought in guest speakers as well as colleagues that teachers believed were more appropriately positioned to address particular sensitive issues with students. Stan, as I have mentioned, arranged videoconferences with Holocaust survivors, and Lan “sometimes [got] the Chaplain to come in and talk to students [about evolution versus creationism] to cover all the church stuff,” which she conceded she did not know well. Lan also told me that her school sometimes brought in prominent speakers like Romeo Dallaire and Stephen Lewis “to talk to
students about different parts of the world and about poverty.” As I alluded to in chapter 6, Richard drew on visits from the school nurse to speak to his students about issues pertaining to sexuality, and he also sought the advice of colleagues. Here, he gives an example of a time he consulted a colleague about whether the topic of suicide was age-appropriate:

I consult colleagues, just to get a second opinion… With my grade 9’s I talked to one of the English teachers and said ‘you know, I’d just like to get your input on this- is the concept of suicide just a little too rough to get your head around?’ After talking to the other teacher, who was a special education teacher, she said ‘you know I think you’re okay.’ But that’s where I am cognizant of the level of maturity (Richard)

Use of film, music, and literature

A few teachers also drew on film, music, and literature as pedagogical tools for teaching CI. As I reported earlier in this chapter, Sean sometimes used film and photography to enact his “shock and awe” strategy, and Lan also described showing students films such as Al Gore’s An Inconvenient Truth (2006). Richard provided countless examples of the ways that he used video, music, and literature as primary teaching tools. In grade 10 Social Studies, for example, he showed his students the films The Eleventh Hour (2007) (about climate change) and Flow: For Love of Water (2008) (about the politics of water) in the context of teaching the 8 Millennium Development Goals for a unit on globalization and sustainability. He also showed his students a CBC documentary about Fort McMurray and the social impacts of the oil sands industry. He conceded that the film was "not entirely positive," but that he had "no problem putting it out there." Richard also played students the Simon and Garfunkel song Richard Cory to teach them about irony:

Simon and Garfunkel are singing about a very wealthy man and how much they admire him and how much they wish they could be like him and it goes on and on and then they say ‘well surely he must be happy with everything he’s got’ and then one of the lines is “… so my mind was filled with wonder when the evening headlines read that Richard Corey went home last night and put a bullet through his head. (Richard)

He also showed Rabbit Proof Fence (2002), which is an Australian film about Aboriginal children in residential schooling. Here, he describes his pedagogical rationale:

Now the reason that I do that is [because] it happens in another country. And so what I’m trying to say is ‘this is a process’ that was in fact worldwide. And I think that helps with perspective. An awful lot of focus for example in Canada on this situation can sometimes obscure the students’ understandings of issues. For example, if I’m looking at the Japanese Canadians in World War II, I’ll look at what the Americans were doing in the United States…and you’re offered the chance to get a bigger picture on this. Often that’s what I’ll try to do is promote a bigger picture. (Richard)
Finally, Richard also drew on the news of the day as a resource for teaching CI, adding “if it’s in the news that very day – bang, I go right to it."

**Supplementary Internet Research**

A further strategy that teachers described was supplementing the information found in textbooks with Internet research, and, in Mick’s case, “voracious reading.” Lan, for example, found textbooks were limited in terms of the level of detail and background information they included on issues, and Richard (as I described in chapter 6) believed that the textbooks were limited in that they tended to “shy away from things that might be considered controversial.” Both teachers described the Internet as an important resource for responding to these challenges. Jim, himself a textbook writer, was also attuned to the limitations of textbooks, and keen on the possibilities afforded by the Internet, and software programs such as web quests:

> Even with textbook development, I’ve found that there is less and less scrutiny because textbooks are developed faster and faster and so the information tends to be more dated, less reviewed, because its built on other stuff that was reviewed so they don’t tend to have it reviewed again. And so, because their timelines… I mean we used to produce a textbook in 3 years and now they want to produce a textbook in 9 months. So now all that you’re doing is recombining previously existing knowledge – so there isn’t something that’s necessarily contemporary. We look at issues – but they change over 5 and 6 years, so what was written in 2005 may not be looked at in the same way… I mean, [you can find information on controversial issues is] in books and resources and podcasts – but is it happening in a classroom? There’s lots of evidence to show you that it’s not. I think teachers now can do it better than we did it because of all of the electronics out there. The net does provide dissenting opportunities to look at the divergent data. [Whereas with textbook development] we tended to funnel issues into specific areas. The things that should be happening right now are things like web quests. A web quest is a way of understanding an issue. It’s a way of progressing through an issue so that the issue isn’t ‘I feel this, therefore its correct.’ A web quest is a series of readings and activities that allow [students] to gather information to allow [them] to interact in a debate or a town hall meeting or something like that, and it’s managed through the web. (Jim)

**Using the curriculum as a resource for teaching CI**

As I briefly alluded to in chapter 6, Mary used the political spectrum outlined in the social studies curriculum as a strategy for diffusing emotion when students discussed CI. Here she elaborates more on how and why:

> The strategy that we use – well, that I use for every issue that comes up… [because] our mandate is to get them to understand the political and economic spectrum. So the way that we do it is [we ask] ‘what would an extreme position here feel and do and why?’ We do all the major points across the spectrum on every issue. And then, we ask, where do you fall? And that’s what you use to buttress it. And it’s very kind of clinical – and you have to be that way because some [students] are so passionate. But I have to follow the curriculum – that would be malpractice if I didn’t so
we always do it the same way. It’s a routine for them. And in some ways it diffuses the emotion – which is a good thing because than they can maintain that distance academically. (Mary)

Mick used the curriculum for teaching CI by using the themes, topics, questions, and expectations as an opportunity to go further by introducing real-world examples to students. The following examples showcase Mick’s creative interpretation of the Science curriculum:

I try to make time available to expand on things like [the relationship between] waste and climate change. For example, dumps release methane into the atmosphere. The vast majority of dumps in north America, and city garbage dumps, or waste disposal sites or sanitary landfills – whatever you call them – are one of the biggest sources of natural gas, of methane greenhouse gas, because the stuff rotting in there is contributing methane into the atmosphere… [which contributes to global warming]…Or, I’ll ask students ‘how was the Second World War lengthened through the efforts of a German scientist who won the Nobel Prize in 1918?’ Because Fritz Harber figured out how to turn hydrogen from coal and water and nitrogen from the air into ammonia and then gasoline. And that was figured out by a guy whose whole intent was to feed the world. Because if you can make ammonia, you can make fertilizer. And so indirectly he’s responsible for the fact that the world population is 7 billion because with fertilizer we can grow more food. But when the axis blocked the Baltic ports, [this also meant that] Germany with its massive coal deposits was still able to make supplies for waging war [by combining hydrogen from coal with nitrogen from the air]. Some of these things are controversial. (Mick)

These teachers drew on the curriculum as a resource for teaching CI by using the language, terminology, and generality of official curriculum to expand on specific issues. This was also a strategy that teachers found facilitated their work in this area, in that it provided some level of legitimation to their teaching practice.

4. Assignments & Assessment

Teachers rarely described creating assignments on CI, although there were a few exceptions, most of which I have already referred to. Richard and Lan both assigned extended essays geared toward students' meeting the learning goal of learning to write effectively. Lan, Nicolas, and Sean also all assigned project work, although for different reasons. Lan found that "open-concept project work" enabled the teaching and learning of “opinion things,” for example, whereas Sean found that assigning projects was a useful strategy because with project work he could include a series of “higher order cognitive questions.” The little I heard about assignments may have in part been related to teachers' struggle with assessing opinions. In the following, Mick elaborates on why he excludes CI from formal tests:

Well I’m afraid that controversial issues don’t make it into tests. We want kids to know the facts. That’s a wee bit more important for tests than discussing controversial issues. I’m afraid that
discussing them rarely crops up in tests…we're not there yet. And we may not go there – I don’t know… (Mick)

Jim expressed his frustration about the lack of assessment of CI engagement, and offered several suggestions for how this could be done:

Actually [curriculum attention to controversial issues] has decreased [over the years]. What’s happened is that as the accountability movement in Alberta has increased, there’s been a reluctance to engage in anything but learning outcomes. And learner outcomes have become checklists of knowledge. Open-ended questions on diploma exams, which there aren’t any anymore, used to deal with social issues, although at a superficial level. There really wasn’t an investigation into what constitutes bias in an argument, or what constitutes evidence. And unfortunately, [even the little there was] has disappeared in favour of more content. And it’s been that sort of accountability driven curriculum. So yeah, we’re not doing as much as we were 10 years ago, and that’s a shame. And the other thing that used to happen in science a lot is that when they did social issues, the only mark that was achieved was the writing of the position paper. There was no recognition that you could assess the research that students did, or the way in which the group collaborated…There was no recognition that identification of bias was an important function, no indication that a town hall meeting could be assessed. [But] peer assessment could be one [way of assessing these]. Like there’s a town hall meeting and you’re representing an agricultural worker and you’re worried about a waste disposal site coming in onto your farmland, so you’re worried about water, you’re worried about land reclamation, you’re worried about a whole bunch of things. So, [the assessment could respond to] how did that group do the research? What kinds of articles did they use? What did other people do within the group? Did everyone contribute equally? I would use peer assessment, self-assessment, and my assessment. It’s not just the town hall, it's preparing for the debate. It’s also not how much you say but what you say. And how prepared you are. If [teachers] don’t evaluate it, that’s saying you’re not valuing it. And that’s a problem. (Jim)

No other teachers expressed concerns about how to assess students' engagement with CI, nor did any teachers talk about actual assessments of CI in their teaching practice.

5. Establishing Classroom Climate based on Mutual Respect, Civility, and Tolerance

Many teachers emphasized the importance of establishing climates of mutual respect, civility, tolerance, trust, and safety in their classrooms to facilitate teaching and learning with CI.

Teachers seemed to be more comfortable talking about the importance of establishing these conditions in the classroom, however, than they were describing how they actually went about doing so. Charlie, for example, spoke about the importance of establishing a climate of trust, respect, and safety, and described this endeavour as “one of the biggest challenges for teachers,” but he did not elaborate on specific practices or instructional strategies that he enacted toward that end.
Some of this was evident in much of the data that I have reported thus far – particularly with regards to the attention that teachers paid to teaching with and for mutual respect (earlier in this chapter). Doug emphasized how important it was that everyone in the room feels that their dignity was being respected when engaging CI. Richard and Jim, similarly, were interested in establishing climates of "civility" and "tolerance." Jim called this "tolerance and understanding," but he did not provide examples of how he worked to establish tolerance through his teaching. Richard provided an example of his pedagogical practice (when he had a student suspended for making disparaging comments about Chinese Canadians), but this was more an example of his pedagogical response to exhibitions of intolerance in his classroom than it was an example of how to teach for tolerance. Here Richard talks about the importance of "being civil":

There are certain rules: you keep it civil…you keep it civil and you keep it respectful. Okay well one thing I do in that discussion is I try to establish a premise in terms of language like 'you know, that's pretty gay.' They say that sometimes and I challenge them on that. I say 'so where does using a sexual persuasion as a pejorative [come from]?' You know I do a little exercise when I say 'I want you to think of the meanest racial slur that you can think of – I know you all know them – I want you to think it in your minds'. And I’ll say 'now tell me, would you say that out loud around here?' No…of course not. Because we have evolved past that and so it doesn’t matter what you have to think of homosexuals, there are certain rules of civility that we maintain. And that’s how I’ll try to approach that is just to establish that level of civility. (Richard)

Richard thus established rules that were intended to enshrine values of "tolerance and respect for individual rights and liberties." He compared these to "rules of the game in soccer," which for him meant "once established, certain things are not acceptable." Like Richard, Linda also told me that she tried to ensure respect for dignity, civility, and tolerance by establishing classroom rules, norms, and principals for engagement: "it's not a free for all - we establish certain basic principles of respect and good judgment."

Stan and Charlie worked at establishing classroom climate through relationship building with students. Stan, for example, believed the only time there were problems was when students approached their parents or administration, and for this reason he thought it was important to have a "pretty good" relationship with students: "If you develop that relationship, I think you can talk about a great deal of CI without any fear." Charlie did not elaborate, but told me "you build relationships - it's fundamental to build relationships." Safety was yet another characteristic of classroom climate that teachers were concerned with establishing. Teachers wanted to create spaces, in which students felt comfortable articulating their opinions, values, beliefs, and views
without feeling any fear of repercussion by teachers or peers. Mary, for example, mentioned that in 30 years of teaching, she never had a student complain who felt that their opinion was downgraded, and she told me she was "proud of that." Ron, too, put a great deal of weight on establishing this sense of comfort and safety in his classroom, stating that he believed that as long as the classroom climate provides “a safe place to talk about things” then “you can do all these things.” Betty was the only teacher who elaborated on the types of practices that they enacted to create these climates in their classrooms. She described opening a “safe space” for discussion by sometimes sharing with her students what she believed about an issue, before explaining to students that there existed many other perspectives on the issue. For her, establishing safe space involved teaching students from the outset that there existed varied and legitimate perspectives on issues.

7.2 Teachers' Practices of Critical Reflexive Engagement with their Multiple Identities and how these intersected with their attitudes towards teaching CI

In this chapter, my attention to teacher identity differs from what I reported in chapters 5 & 6 in that I am not concentrating anymore on teachers’ articulations of beliefs and feelings about their identities but instead on how teachers reflexively engaged these beliefs and feelings through specific practices. Certainly, engaging with the involuntary responses that accompany subjectivity could take various forms for teachers, including (though not limited to): participation in professional learning communities where teachers talk together about the challenges of teaching CI, journaling or note-taking practices that engage biases and assumptions on issues being taught, and/or being explicit with students about how teachers’ identities might impact which particular CI they teach, and how. While I found some evidence of teachers being reflexive (i.e. in the interviews), talk about the importance of reflexivity, few teachers spoke about specific self-reflexive practices that they enacted to critically engage their own identities against which CI they taught and how.

Betty, for example, was reflexive about her multiple identity locations in particular moments of our interview, much of which I reported in chapter 6, when she spoke about the limitations of her perspective as a white, middle class Edmontonian. In other moments of our interview, Betty also spoke with me about how strongly she believed it was important for teachers to be aware of their own values, beliefs, and biases and how these impacted their teaching of CI. After sharing with me two examples of teachers, who in her view "crossed the
line” when teaching CI, Betty told me why she believed teachers’ critical engagement with their identities to be critical to teaching CI:

We as teachers just have to be so aware of what we believe…and I think both of those examples illustrated to me how important it is for a teacher to be so aware of what they believe to the point where they know when they have such strong beliefs about something. And how hard it is to detach yourself, because the stronger you believe about something the harder it is to understand the opposite. What I want teachers to do is be aware of who they are and what their values are, and about what they believe is important for children to be doing in a classroom…I believe so strongly that a teacher plays such an important role as to what happens in that classroom. And in order to do it successfully they have to be so aware of what’s happening in the classroom, of what their own values and beliefs are, and be able to put themselves a little bit to the side – not far, but a little bit to the side of the discussion. (Betty)

While awareness of beliefs and values and their impact on teaching was clearly important to her, Betty did not describe any examples of how she practiced staying aware of her own beliefs and values while teaching (what types of experiences, practices, opportunities enabled that), nor how she facilitated this practice for teachers under her supervision. Nevertheless, unlike Jim who argued that “what you believe is irrelevant in terms of the social issue [you are teaching],” Betty strongly believed that teachers' critical engagement with, and attention to, their values and beliefs were vital not only to teaching CI, but to teaching more generally.

Charlie, similarly, was reflexive in our interview in his critical engagement with his own identity as a Canadian and global citizen (chapter 5 & 6). Unlike Betty, however, he told me about an explicit reflexive practice that he conducted every day in relation to his identity as a teacher:

Why do I walk into the classroom in the morning? I kind of like asking myself that every day. I am here for only this many minutes, and I am privileged [to be in this position] – as a teacher I am a privileged individual in the world. So don’t screw it up, right? (Charlie)

Now that I have talked about teachers' articulations, and beliefs about reflexivity, I would like to report what I found in terms of evidence of teachers' reflexive practices for engaging the relationship between their identities and their attitudes toward teaching CI.

**Teachers positioned themselves on issues with students**

Whether, and how, teachers position themselves on issues with students has been a frequent question in discourse on teaching CI. Furthermore, this question has often been at the core of the tension concerning accusations of indoctrination. In this study, nearly all of the 16 teachers that I interviewed told me that they did position themselves when teaching CI. Some of
these teachers elaborated on their rationale and specific strategies that they used for doing so, and others not. Sean, for example, simply stated that he shared his position on nuclear power with students and told them “how terrible” he thought it was, and also told his students that he believed that the oil sands were a “necessary evil.” He did not elaborate, however, on why he positioned himself with students, or what opportunities for learning he created around this practice. Jim’s response was similar in that he stated that he sometimes did and other times did not position himself, “depending on the issue.” When I prompted him to describe the criteria he applied in making that decision however, he struggled.

Most of the teachers did, however, describe their rationale and strategies. Mary, for example, explained that she wanted students to understand that “everybody is a politician whether you accept it or not.” Several teachers, moreover, viewed it as an opportunity for their students to have a position to bump up against in discussion. They viewed their own positions on issues as resources that enabled their teaching practice. Stan shared his position as a means of teaching students about the relationship between personal circumstance, beliefs and values:

Yeah, for sure I do. A lot of times I tell them why my position is a certain way. For example in 1993 in Alberta when Ralph Klein made big cuts to education, my wife had just started nursing and I was just a teacher for a few years and obviously, it’s when there is an election when kids ask ‘well, who did you vote for?’ I explained to them that given the circumstances that my wife and I faced, it would be very difficult for my wife and I to support the conservative party. But [I also explained] that doesn’t mean that there aren’t a lot of people in Alberta who didn’t love Ralph Klein. (Stan)

Mary, Mark, and Charlie all shared their positions on issues with students and then invited students to challenge them. Mary told me that her students all knew where she stood, and they also knew that where she stood "had absolutely no impact on where they stand or where they should stand." It was important to her that that her students knew that her job was not to get them to think like her, and she told them in fact that she did not want them to. Instead, she encouraged them to "fight and argue" with her. Mark stressed a similar point to his students:

Oh yeah [I position myself]. My kids know very well [where I stand on issues]. And I tell them – this is me. This is one person’s position, one person’s opinion, and I’ll tell them why I base my opinion the way I do – and I tell them you know, ‘my way is not the right way’ – it’s just my way. And if you can convince me otherwise, if I was provided with different evidence that would clarify or correct my misinterpretation then you know, you have to be open to that. Being rigid and reactionary is not going to solve environmental issues in Alberta. The kids know my position on things and I’m really up front with them about it, and so, I wouldn’t say it provides a platform to spout off about what I believe in but it certainly, through discussion, the kids will know, by
grade 12 – when they’re familiar with the political spectrum and that kind of thing…they’re going to know what side I’m on, or where I am on the spectrum. And I don’t know if that will influence their position at all – I hope not. I would rather that they just come up with it on their own. And if they agree with me then that’s great…but it’s not important. (Mark)

Charlie acknowledged the difficult questions that the issue of teacher disclosure raised, and he described how his position on this had changed over the years:

Well, there’s 2 positions on that [question]. Do you tell your kids where you stand on an issue or do you not tell your kids? For the longest time in my career I played the ‘I’m not taking a stand – I’m going to play devil’s advocate’ cause I didn’t want to lead my kids to a place where they weren’t thinking for themselves. Like ‘you’re telling me you’re NDP and an environmentalist and so I’m just going to feed that back to you.’ I was always afraid of that and so I always kind of sat on the fence. Not so much anymore – now I can wear it on my sleeve a little bit - [and tell them] this is what I bring to the classroom, my experiences, my beliefs on C.I. like the oil sands/tar sands…I’m to the left on many many positions and I think that enables me in this climate to get kids reactions as many students are not to the left and let’s talk about that and let’s talk about where we are in terms of our personal and political beliefs about where we stand on issues. And can we, by taking up C.I., can we respectfully listen to one another so that we don’t necessarily have to solve, but at least we can inform each other about where we stand. (Charlie)

Linda’s motivation for positioning herself was strategic in that she invited students to guess what her views were on issues so that she could hear from them why they thought what they did as a means of having students think about the basis of their assumptions:

I ask them to guess if they know where I would position myself on an issue. I think you can say you know ‘what do you think I think?’ And it’s interesting because they aren’t always united in what I think on an issue. And then I usually tell them. (Linda)

Linda also stressed that it was important to her not to position herself on issues until after the students had already engaged in conversation about the issue at hand, and in part because she was attuned to the teacher-student power dynamic:

I try not to before they had the conversation, cause so often I know that kids are often in the position of less power and they write exams which I assess and evaluate and so I would have to be really careful about positioning myself so that they thought they had to say the same thing. Or believe the same thing. (Linda)

Nicolas had a similar approach, positioning himself only after students had the opportunity to discuss the issues themselves:

I do make it clear that’s my opinion and that’s how I feel and it’s not necessarily right, right? I think I’ll say something once there has been enough of a conversation and discussion happening. Because if I throw my thoughts or my opinions in right away or within minutes of the discussion happening, then, it just dies. And the risk is if I do it too early, then they take my opinion as fact. And I try to avoid that. (Nicolas)
Further reasons teachers gave for their disclosing practices included their interest in being honest with students as a manifestation of the mutual respect they frequently prioritized. Richard, for example, disclosed his position on issues to his students because he believed that it was important to be honest with them:

With the issue of global warming I do [let students know my position]. I will try to tell them ‘look, I’m going to tell you right up front what my feelings are about this, what my position is and why I feel this way. And I say because it’s something that I have such strong feelings about, it would be dishonest not to tell you. (Richard)

Richard told students that he believed that global warming was very real, that it was human induced, and that actions (emissions cuts) had to be taken to remedy this situation. At the same time, however, Richard reported disclosing his views only on the specific issues of global warming and evolution - issues that he consistently made exception for as issues that were not “real” CI because they were about science. Later in our interview, moreover, he told me that he also expected students to affirm his beliefs on these two topics on tests.

I’ve told them look, on the issue of global warming, on the one side you have a few people who argue that it isn’t happening, and on the other side there’s every scientific academy in the world who says it is happening. And it’s happening now. And that’s how I look at it. I weigh the evidence. So there is my position. That’s where I’m at. I’m not going to treat this as just a theory… [And] I do teach evolution when I’ve taught anthropology. It’s in the curriculum. And I’m not going to go and engage in, uh, a debate over it. It’s not up for debate. It’s a science, alright? So that’s how I approach it. And if you have a problem with that, well… And my daughter has made the same point, she’s taught at Cleardale and that’s a Mennonite area, she said ‘look, you know what, I’m putting [evolution] here and to pass the course you have to know this, regardless of what you think of it.’ You know, I can get very passionate on the issue of global warming. (Richard)

This example raises questions around when teachers value multiple perspectives and when they do not – relative to when they are teaching about specific issues that they hold strong beliefs and feelings about. Arguably, the tension here is the potential for teachers like Richard to not realize that they are making exceptions for their own beliefs when they remove the question around whether or not an issue should even be regarded as controversial. I discuss this more in chapter 8.

In her experience as a principal, Betty told me that teachers often approached her for input on the question of whether they should share their positions with students:

Several teachers asked me questions like ‘should I tell my students what my opinion is?’ Lots of times they are worried what the principal would think… [I’d tell them that] we as teachers just have to be so aware of what we believe, so that we allow conversation to carry on but we don’t
absolve our self from responsibility from being part of it. And it’s tricky. I think that if you know what you’re talking about, there is nothing wrong with saying ‘this is what I believe’ as long as it’s really clear that you understand that they don’t have to believe it. We’re crossing a line if we say ‘this is right and this is wrong’. But I don’t think that there is anything wrong with saying ‘well this is what I believe, this is how I formed my belief, but I am aware that there are other beliefs’. And you have to be clear ‘this is what I believe, this is why I believe it, but I believe that there are other perspectives’… Or you might start by saying ‘this is what I believe about this issue, but there are many perspectives on this issue. (Betty)

While Betty believed that teaching sometimes involved taking a stance on issues, she was uneasy with regard to how this was done. She was weary about teachers expressing judgment when they positioned themselves, cautioning that “judgment is like the word ‘pride’: having pride in yourself is a good thing but having too much pride is a bad thing.”

Although Doug often gave students his opinion because “they asked for it,” he was uncertain about this because he was "cognizant of the fact that they're impressionable" and consequently found it "tricky." Like Jim, this meant that he positioned himself in some ways, and not others, "depending on what the issue is". While he sometimes disclosed his views, he would never tell his students who he voted for or what political party he supported. He did, however, share his position on employment equity with students, and with me:

White males who aren’t in a wheelchair [are penalized], I mean that’s unfair. I shouldn’t be discriminated against because that’s who I am. That’s unfair. I’m big on fairness and equity. Same with my students, what I do for one I have to do for the others. (Doug)

The majority of teachers thus positioned themselves on issues with students, and were transparent about where they stood on issues and why. Admittedly, this is not strong evidence of reflexivity, particularly because these examples rarely involved teachers questioning their own power or complicity, which I discuss in chapter 8. In some sense, the teachers who chose not to be transparent with students were more attentive to power in that they were conscious of the teacher-student power dynamic and students' inclination to adopt the same position as their teachers.

7.3 Teachers’ Instructional Practices for Students’ Critical Reflexive Engagement with their Identities as Pedagogy for Teaching and Learning with CI

In this chapter, my attention to students’ identities differs in that here I report on how teachers’ pedagogical practices included opportunities for students to practice and experience critical reflexivity with their own identities as a component of their learning and engagement
with CI. Although teachers had many beliefs and feelings about who their students were, I found that students' identities were not frequently included as learning material. Instead, teachers spoke more frequently about considering the implications of students’ identities and experiences for their practice. These considerations included classroom make-up (e.g. sons and daughters of oil sands workers, new Canadians), and students' experiences (immigrants, recent experience of loss, etc.). Teachers used strategies like scanning students' reactions to particular issues or inviting students to speak with them after class as responses to these. Though all this is relevant, I was interested in seeing examples of purposeful pedagogical intention (i.e., teachers intentionally attending to students' critical engagement with their identities) and not only as considerations or supports for practice.

As I reported earlier, some teachers spoke about why reflexivity with teacher identity was important, more so than how they were being reflexive. This was sometimes also the case in terms of student reflexivity. In Linda's words:

I think it’s also important for students not to just explore positions without having a benchmark you know – ‘what is it that I say I believe in, what are my principles and values?’ and sort of always measuring points of view against criteria. And that they learn to do that in school is really critical…it’s not just a matter of ‘I think this because it’s in my own self-interest' you know. It’s an opportunity to get at a lot of critical thinking. (Linda)

Jim and Charlie also believed that opportunities for students to be reflexive about their identities were important experiences when engaging CI, and both referred to the transformative potential of these types of experiences. Jim, for example, noted that students were very interested in talking about conflicts they feel about their own identities, and he believed that getting the chance to talk about them in school could "help mold their identities." He continued: "Because their identity isn't pre-formed, it's going to change because of the social issue [they engage in the classroom]." Charlie, too, told me how important he believed it was for students' to articulate views on issues by engaging their own identities. Neither, of these teachers, however, described how they enacted these types of experiences or climates in their own teaching practice. Charlie articulated this more as a far-reaching ideal yet to be realized, than a possible and realistic outcome of specific teaching pedagogy.
Opportunities for students’ reflexive engagement with their Canadian identity

Teachers believed that what it meant to be Canadian reconciled with the teaching of CI because of the Canadian values: tolerance, freedom, open-mindedness, multiculturalism, and emphasis on dialogue and public opinion (see chapter 5). Thus, as seen in the previous chapter, they felt that Canadian identity enabled, more than hindered, them in their teaching practice of CI. Canadian identity was also frequently identified by several teachers as one dimension of their students’ identities that they purposefully invited students to trouble. Arguably, however, in some cases the examples that teachers gave did not involve the description of specific things, as much as they did their own beliefs about Canadian identity. Jim, for example, stated:

If you look at Canada’s role in the world traditionally, within the UN, it has been as a country that has been tied to other nations. Less so recently. I think there has been a retraction, with the latest government, away from those responsibilities. And I’m not only talking Afghanistan, I’m talking about having doctors in Africa. (Jim)

Nevertheless, teachers frequently troubled Canadian identity in their instructional practice. Mary, for example, was surprised by the extent to which her students regarded Canada as a peacekeeping nation, and, in response, created opportunities for them to broaden their perspectives on their Canadian identity:

It’s really interesting – these kids come from a tradition of ‘Canada is the world’s peacekeeper’ and they view almost all issues from that perspective. And I don’t know where that’s come from but that’s a very strong recent trend. Every kid will tell you ‘we’re a strong peacekeeper’ and that’s an interesting one because, to some degree [Canada] is very international but to some degree it’s very narrow. So I try to broaden that view because I think that’s not necessarily a good lens to approach everything through. It also tends to mask any flaws in Canadian behaviour – because we’re a peacekeeper, and of course that’s almost Christ-like. [Students] assume that there is a peace to keep in many instances and I don’t know why they think this but they kind of envision our arrival at places sort of as like a peace-bomb on the situation – and [they’re under the impression that] the presence of Canadians simply causes everyone to hold hands and sing hallelujah. It’s a bit idealistic. (Mary)

Inviting students to critically engage with their Canadian identity was something that Richard addressed as well when he spoke about his teaching practice of immigration issues: “I like to sometimes put across, when I’m talking about immigration, I say look ‘unless we’re First Nations or Aboriginal, we are all immigrants and children of immigrants.” He also invited students to consider the extent to which Canada may have been negligent leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War, and he took time discussing Canada’s residential school system and the Japanese-Canadian internment (i.e. Canada's difficult history).
For Mick, this meant having students engage with “facts” such as Canada's status as the world's third largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions, and having them discuss the implications of Canada's complicity in global warming. He asked students to consider the implications of their own behaviours:

You have to honestly admit your faults don’t you? So as a Canadian I guess I think that it’s important to be aware of what you’ve done. But you know we’re one of the world’s largest personal contributors to global warming. So I tell [students], you know, and I don’t varnish it over. [I say] you have to do more than simply not run the tap when you brush your teeth. You have to do more than not idle your car. (Mick)

Other teachers also discussed specific issues and events that implicated Canadian identity. Teachers created opportunities for students to talk about Canada’s involvement in Afghanistan, and Canada’s interest in oil sands development. Charlie, for example, raised the question of whether Canada should have a presence in Afghanistan as a question for academic discussion. Sean taught students to question Canadian government policy and legislation that privileged corporate interests:

At times I think that the Canadian economy is more slanted towards the oil industry. You know, like I said [to the students], we’re stuck by policy, and government protocol that are limiting and hindering our ability to use renewable resources. Were still stuck in this vision, and this cycle of exporting everything we have, rather than taking care of what we have here, right now. So I think our policies need to change and I think someone at the really highest level of government needs to open their eyes and take a good look at what’s going on because were in a downward slide if it doesn’t happen soon. (Sean)

Another way that teachers addressed Canadian identity in their teaching practice of CI was through opportunities for students to learn that their Canadian identities were shifting, uncertain, and still open to possibility. As I mentioned in chapter 5, Charlie described teaching students that there is “an on-going discussion about who we are,” and in turn he created opportunities for in-class discussion about what being a good Canadian means. According to Charlie, all teachers should ask themselves: “what perspectives of Canadianism can I make my kids aware of today or this year, or this month?”

Ron also taught his students about the changing roles and definitions surrounding the "Canadian question," and he related this directly to the social studies curriculum program of studies:

In the sense of international conflict we talk about changing roles…you know, Canadians have always been peacekeepers, right? Now, suddenly were peacemakers, right? And so what does that mean for Canadians? So how does that play in, cause we’ve never dealt with this before, we've
always been the nice guys and everyone likes us, right? So now, we’re involved in these conflicts…so now what does that mean? You know, it’s a bit more confusing. We have trouble with our identity as it is, right? But now – geez – now things are changing – and so where do we fit in? (Ron)

Lastly, Stan discussed his approach to teaching about the changing configurations of Canadian identity, as well as how he used this topic as material for teaching:

I say to the kids I think David Suzuki said something great one time and I’m paraphrasing him…he said that ‘when times are good, your country can promise you the world when it comes to human rights, but it’s when times are bad that you really see what your country stands for’. And after 9/11, especially with the Patriot Act in the United States and the department of Homeland security in the US, and even in Canada too – you start to see that human rights are coming under attack. First of all I would take issue with the fact that Canada is one of the most ally nations on earth, we’re certainly far from being a neutral country…so, I don’t think that we are…I think that Canadians would like to see themselves as peace-loving and I think because of Lester Pearson’s role as the creator of the UN emergency force – I think that during the Suez crisis it gave us a sort is world sense a country that’s committed to being part of every major peacekeeping operation in the history of the UN. But I don’t necessarily think that has always been an incredibly fair assessment. My grandmother in Germany often referred to me as her American grandson – and I said ‘grandma, I’m not American, I’m Canadian.’ Well, she said ‘to Germans, American or Canadian – it’s the same thing.’ So I say that I think that we, you know, when Canadians travel overseas we like to put the maple leaf on our shoulders so that we don’t get confused with Americans but I don’t think that the rest of the world sees Canadians as terribly different, especially because of Canada’s recent history with respect to the war on terror. (Stan)

Opportunities for students’ reflexive engagement with their Albertan identity

Similar to how they perceived their Canadian identity, teachers tended to view their own and their students’ identities as Albertans more as enablers than hindrances for teaching and learning CI (see chapter 5 & 6), particularly with respect to the environmental issues. While some teachers were mostly concerned about offending students and parents who were connected to the oil and gas industries, teachers like Richard saw this as a reason to teach about global warming. Others described Alberta’s relationship with oil and gas as an opportunity for teaching and learning a range of CI linked to global warming, renewable resources, waste management, and water quality. Sometimes, this meant creating opportunities for students to consider and question how their own identities were related to these issues by virtue of their identities as citizens of Alberta. As I have reported, Charlie did this by intentionally using the expression “tar sands” instead of the politically correct term more frequently used in Alberta, “oil sands,” as a way of igniting discussion on an issue he knew would generate strong feelings, and by asking students to consider what role consumerism played in their life and how this was related to environmental degradation. Richard, as I have already reported, showed his students a CBC
documentary that was critical of the oil sands, and here he elaborated on the opportunity for learning he created around this:

The film is not entirely positive but I have no problem putting it out there. I had them actually do a research assignment on the problems of the oil sands industry and how it impacts on the various groups like the Aboriginals in the area and how it is impacted on Alberta – negatively and positively. (Richard)

Lan, too, invited her students to think about the tensions across “their oil” and the implications for the rest of the world, from the explicit vantage point if what it meant to them to be Albertan:

In a lot of my teaching it’s like ‘you know, we’re thinking about you, were thinking about Calgary, about Alberta, about Canada, and then what about the world? Is it actually good for us to be drilling for oil, for the whole world? And then of course it doesn’t help that there is an oil spill….And we’ll ask [questions] like ‘well, have you thought about that because you’re in Alberta, and your dad works for, you know, a big oil company, have you considered how if [global warming] is very viable then your dad might be out of a job?’  (Lan)

Mick also described several examples of the ways that he created opportunities for students’ to be reflexive about their identities as Albertans in relation to specific issues that he taught in science, such as waste management and water contamination issues resulting from cattle production:

Well, we have water treatment plants – so we do our best to make sure that we don’t return antibiotics to the river – but wait a minute – Alberta is also the province that has, in North America pretty much, a hell of a lot of beef. And we use hormones, growth hormones, and we use antibiotics. We have farms that have 40,000 head of cattle. So that’s a problem – that creates a waste problem. Let’s take garbage, for another example. You can landfill it, you can burn it to get electricity, you can recycle as much of it as you can or you can dump it in the ocean. So for example I will say ‘well, we don’t have incinerated garbage in Alberta because 20 some years ago in the US when people started this they did such a crappy job. They didn’t burn things at a high enough temperature or scrap the gases well enough that they gave the idea of waste energy generation from garbage a bad name. So then ‘oh but we don’t want it in Alberta!’ And nuclear power? ‘Oh we don’t want that because of the accidents that will happen!’ So we have a problem in Alberta – so I tell them ‘well, you’re going to have to use less garbage and recycle more.’  (Mick)

Similar to some of the opportunities teachers created for students to be reflexive about their Canadian identities, however, Mick’s examples more resembled learning about these issues (or being told about them) than they looked like opportunities for students to practice reflexivity.
Chapter 8

Discussion

The real field of knowledge is not the given facts about things as they are, but the critical evaluation of them as a prelude to passing beyond their given form (Marcuse, 1973; 145)

8.0 Introduction to the Chapter

In this discussion chapter, my principal aim is to critically engage the research findings by asking questions of common answers within a particularized context, rather than to answer questions toward universalized presumptions (Shor, 1993). Toward that end, I discuss the research findings against the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, and respond to this question: how do these findings inform an understanding of how students are being prepared for critical democratic global citizenship education in Canadian classrooms?

The role of critique in critical theory is theorized in dynamic interaction with the identification of conditions of hope, possibility, and transformation. I have organized my discussion of the research findings to align with this formulation. In turn, this chapter is divided into three parts. While I reported teachers’ beliefs, feelings, and practices separately as individual chapters, I have affirmed throughout the extent to which these components are inextricably intertwined. Rather than discuss the components individually, my focus now is on the relationships between these and what can be learned from them.

In part 1 of this discussion chapter I critique the research findings from the interviews against critical theory and the 3 categories of indicators of critical democratic global citizenship education (CDGCE) that I advanced in chapter 1. These include critical and explicit attention to: 1) Challenging Pretence of Neutrality: Identity, Power, and Difference, 2) Privileging Engagement with Discourse & Practices of Discursive Democracy, and 3) Enacting Critical Reflexive Practice for Transformative Possibility. Focusing the discussion around these three indicators enabled me to carefully attend to specific characteristics of CDGCE against the research findings. Because the three categories of indicators are complexly related, I was cognizant of how my treating them individually as neat and tidy constructs oversimplified the discussion. It was difficult to discuss one category of indicators without also attending to the others, and because I believe that these entanglements are so important, I made the decision to discuss them together, speaking to specific aspects while acknowledging the relationships and
implications for others (e.g. interpreting identity as static and fixed is related to hegemonic discourse and has implications for agency). Indeed, the complex overlaps across these three foci become most apparent when focusing on teachers’ voices and perspectives.

In this first part of the discussion, I argue that naming and challenging hegemonic discourses of neutrality and universalism in schools and education (critique) — asserting instead explicit discursive and reflexive attention to difference, identity, tension, the power in and of education, and the agency of teachers and students — are vital conditions of possibility for deepening democracy. They signal the difficult work involved in, and necessary for, deepening democracy under conditions of globalization, and the promise that education holds toward that end; just as education has the power to perpetuate oppression, it also holds immense power for disrupting it. In light of this, it was important that I attend both to the ways that teachers’ attitudes were contributing to such promise, as well were stifling it. Toward that end, I approached my discussion of the research findings and their implications for CDGCE by asking the following question: in what ways do teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues reproduce and/or interrupt dominant paradigms of schooling, identity, and citizenship that reinforce hegemonic discourses of universalism and neutrality?

Next, in part 2, I discuss how the outcomes of my critique, and in particular the tensions and contradictions across the three components of attitude that they elucidate, point to areas for transformative possibility. I revisit the three component model of attitude and discuss contradictions and tensions across Alberta teachers’ beliefs, feelings, and practices from the data reported in chapters 5-7. I also draw on some of the survey findings for the broader context they provide, and considerations they raise. In this part of the discussion, I argue that denying complexity and conflicts has negative implications for discourse reproduction and cultural hegemony, and I call attention to the related etymologies between the terms controversial and contradiction in their reference both to contra (against) and to the written word (e.g. diction as the expression of ideas in words and verse as in line of writing), and in their reference to the operation of power across these emphases through the oppositional versus they connote (or, turning toward or against). Both words commonly connote something negative and undesirable for the ways that they interrupt impulses toward harmony, cohesion, and reconciliation. Yet these interruptions are vital for deepening democracy as they challenge taken-for-granted truths and hegemonic discourses, which have material consequences for people and for equity. These
contras have the potential to widen spaces for the articulation of difference and create space for naming and for feeling, rather than denying, difficult tensions. It is within these contra spaces, I argue, wherein lies opportunity for discursive and reflexive possibility for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization. These contras are valuable for what can be learnt from them, for what possibilities and spaces they open up, what questions they raise, and what areas for transformation they point to. I frame this discussion by attending to four specific areas for consideration: 1) identity matters, 2) feeling matters, 3) citizenship matters, and 4) curriculum matters.

Finally, in part 3 of the discussion I articulate a series of questions raised by engagement with the findings, and I identify a range of potential implications that may be at stake in terms of discourse reproduction and interruption through students’ critical democratic global citizenship education. I conclude by arguing that these findings have implications for understanding how students in Canadian classrooms are prepared for critical democratic global citizenship education because, as suggested by the findings, hegemonic discourses of universalism and neutrality are being both reproduced and interrupted in complex ways that affirm, but mostly refute, the promise of education for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization. In the final conclusion chapter 9, I focus on the specific areas that the findings point to as requiring attention, and I delineate specific recommendations that I believe are vital responses for realizing this promise.

8.1 Indicators of Critical Democratic Global Citizenship Education: Reproductions and Interruptions of Hegemonic Discourses of Neutrality and Universalism

In this section of the chapter I revisit the three categories of indicators of critical democratic global citizenship education (CDGCE) that I advanced in chapter 1. With these look-fors in mind, I discuss the research findings against a central question: In what ways do teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues reproduce and/or interrupt dominant paradigms of schooling, identity, and citizenship that reinforce hegemonic discourses of neutrality and universalism? I organize this discussion by examining three central findings: 1) Teaching for Sameness: Reproduction of the Difference-Blind Ideal and Discourses of Universalism, 2) Teaching for Neutrality: Refutations of Post-Modern Conceptualizations of Identity and Citizenship and Reproducing a Blank Slate Ideal, and 3) Interruptions to Dominant Discourses of Schooling, Citizenship, and Identity. Throughout, I delineate essential questions that directed my
discussion of the research findings, and I respond to these questions by drawing on specific examples from the interview data that support my arguments.

**Teaching for Sameness: Reproduction of the Difference-Blind Ideal and Discourses of Universalism**

One way of examining how participating teachers thought and taught about difference involved looking closely at how they spoke about sameness. It is commonly assumed, as many discourses of morality and humanitarianism attest, that in order to counter Othering one needs to focus on how all humans are the same. Indeed, it is important to recognize this element of what is popularly referred to as common humanity. A dangerous outcome of this discursive habit, however, is that people may not be reflexive about whose version of common (or global) is presumed to be the norm. These presumptions, and the exclusions they reproduce, are why attending to the politics of difference and identity matters. It is the negative connotations that people have been enculturated to associate with difference that constitute the problem, not difference itself.

CDGCE is critical of a liberal multicultural approach to inclusion that obscures the fact that schools continue to enforce dominant norms and values that persistently marginalize any form of difference (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2010). CDGCE involves paying attention to differences rather than ignoring them or asserting that these do not matter (Marion-Young, 2009; Benhabib, 1996). On the contrary, differences do matter for equity and inclusion because social relations and institutions are mediated by power. As long as differences are ignored and sameness—masquerading as equal treatment—is advanced, status quo identities and interests will be normalized, reproduced, and universalized over others—guised as neutral and natural norms constructed outside the purview of human interests. The implication is that when these are advanced as natural, they are presumed to also exist outside the purview of critical engagement or challenge. The effect can be the advancement of homogeneity premised on a particular version of sameness guised as neutral and universal (Shiva, 2006).

In order to better understand how the participating teachers in this study reproduced and/or interrupted the marginalization of difference, I asked the following questions of the research findings: How did teachers talk about, and teach for sameness? Did they challenge or reinforce the difference-blind ideal of liberal pluralism? Additional questions narrowed in on discourses of citizenship: to what extent did teachers accept or transgress liberal democratic
narratives of citizenship that claim neutrality and universalism despite the existence of social, political, and economic inequalities? How did teachers imagine what it means to be a Canadian and a global citizen, and what role did sameness play in their conceptualizations?

What I found was that teachers significantly reinforced the difference-blind ideal of liberal pluralism. This was most evident in the ways that some teachers spoke about equality and inclusion through discourses of assimilation. Furthermore, all teachers spoke about teaching and learning with multiple perspectives through discourses of neutrality, which were centered on learning that multiple perspectives exist and that all views are valid (disregarding the political aspect), rather than engaging with multiple perspectives through a critical approach that attends to the politics of difference and identity.

Equality & Inclusion: Discourses of Fairness and Assimilation

CDGCE points to the ways that structural inequalities of gender, race, and sexuality are not adequately perceived or combatted by the dominant liberal paradigm of equality, non-discrimination, and inclusion that applies the same principles of evaluation to all persons regardless of their social identity location or backgrounds. A politics of difference asserts that the difference-blind ideal of liberal pluralism (i.e. ignoring gender, racial or sexual differences among peoples) is part of the problem perpetuating structural injustice, inequity, and exclusion (Marion-Young, 2009; Mouffe, 1999). Equating equality with equal treatment ignores deep material differences in social position, division of labour, socialized capacities, normalized standards and ways of living that continue to disadvantage members of historically excluded groups. For this reason, CDGCE asserts that it is vital that students learn to distinguish between equality and equity. Equity is often conflated with equality, and with a one-size-fits-all model of standardization and sameness. CDGCE means understanding that equity differs from equality in that it involves taking differences into account. These have to do with social identity locations across gender, race, class, and sexual orientation, as well as privilege and disadvantage, uneven social structures, and institutionalized oppression. Equity involves more than a mere acknowledgment of students’ circumstances as reasons why they perform better and worse in school, for example, to instead identifying and responding to social, physical, cultural, and institutional barriers they confront — including the roles schools and the education system play in producing and sustaining these barriers. Indeed, equity is not easy to understand because it challenges the common view that equal is fair, which is often not the case.
None of the participating teachers in this study made explicit mention of equity, with the exception of high school science teacher Doug when he explained that he was against “what they call employment equity.” Doug conflated equity and equality and affirmed the dominant liberal discourse of equality that presumes equal = fair:

White males who aren’t in a wheelchair [are penalized], I mean that’s unfair. I shouldn’t be discriminated against because that’s who I am. I’m big on fairness and equity. Same with my students, what I do for one I have to do for the others.

The connections between Doug’s attitude toward equity and the implications for his teaching practice need not only be inferred – he makes these connections explicit himself: what he does for one, he does for the others. Doug focused on discrimination – but he focused on what he perceived to be his own experience with discrimination as a white able-bodied man. He believed that every person should be treated the same way without accounting for how people experience the same opportunities in different ways based on their social identity locations, among other things.

Nor did teachers significantly refer to equality in their elaborations of their attitudes toward teaching controversial issues. While they did not name it explicitly, they often alluded to it when speaking about the value of offering multiple choices and multiple perspectives. Stan, for example, described Alberta and Edmonton Public as a “district of choice,” listing the array of options available to parents to send their children to schools whose mandate aligned with their own identity interests. He spoke of such choices as indicators of equality:

Alberta is well known as a district of choice…you know we have a variety of charter schools now that cater to a wide variety of interests. Even within Edmonton public, we have a school for the Jewish community; we have a school for the Muslim community.

Certainly, charter and faith-based schools raise a number of issues concerning access, equity, and tensions around the creation of clusters of sameness that have potential to exacerbate stratification at the same time as they have potential to affirm cultural identity and respond to uneven systems that institutionalize exclusion and oppression. Stan did not make mention of these types of tensions and questions that these schools provoke – instead, he interpreted the *choice* element as the valuable indicator of equality within Alberta public education.
Similarly, nearly all teachers spoke about the importance of multiple perspectives for teaching and learning with controversial issues – emphasizing the multiple as the valuable indicator of equality over and above the implications of learning with multiple perspectives for equity and power in terms of engaging the difficult tensions within and across perspectives. This theme epitomizes the affirmation and reproduction of difference-blind ideal of liberal pluralism. Before I engage in this discussion, however, I want to also call attention to the ways that some teachers spoke about inclusion in ways that reinforced integration and assimilation of Others into status quo identities.

Teachers often addressed the theme of cultural integration in ways that underscored some of the tensions I referred to already with regard to cohesion. Gary, for example, spoke about the impact of technology under conditions of globalization and the constraints and possibilities for cultural integration and cohesion:

One of the positive aspects [of globalization that students talk about] is they’ll say ‘well, yeah, you know, Bollywood is getting more widely known and there’s more integration and cross-cultural understanding going on in the world,’ because once upon a time everybody was in their own little cultural pocket and people were fearful and didn’t understand and were like ‘people are foreign and strange.’ Now with the advent of modern technology, communication and transportation – it’s a boundary-less world and so that has provided a couple of things. First of all, if you’re an immigrant, it’s probably challenging for your group identity but also with all of these modern technologies, there’s also possibilities to do some cultural promotion and connect to people that share those same cultural origins or whatever.

In his comments about the constraints and possibilities of globalization for cultural integration, Gary at once critiqued the formation of cultural pockets of sameness and affirmed their importance – underscoring the complex tensions surrounding unity and diversity and considerations for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization.

In some instances, I heard teachers argue for the assimilation of students perceived as Other into communities of sameness – a motivation with a long history in Canadian public education, including the Canadian residential schooling system intended to assimilate First Nations children into the Christian faith and European culture through Eurocentric paradigms of schooling and languages of instruction. Mainly, I heard this in comments made by Doug and Richard about the Black and Aboriginal students in their classes.
Here, for example, Doug argues for racial integration, and presents it as an argument against segregation. At first, in these comments regarding racial segregation in American television, it sounds as though Doug were, to at least some extent, arguing for inclusion:

The black people hang out with black people and it permeates through society. Take a look for example at how many comedy shows that it’s a black comedy family. All of the people on the show are black except maybe one token white guy. And it’s not just shows that are old. Modern day shows are like that too. And to me, that’s wrong because that just promotes this racial segregation. If you’re going to make a comedy show have black, white, Oriental, Mexican, Spanish descent or Hispanic intermix – in the show. Make it a joint show. But they don’t. You see a black family. I don’t know if you heard of the Fresh Prince of Bel Air – all black people.

Following this statement, I asked Doug about Canada, and he responded:

The school that I teach in, we’re mostly white. So the coloured people that are there for the most part are integrated. You know, like in my one class I’ve got one black boy. Okay, like you are the one black boy in the class. You know, so if you don’t integrate and talk with the others, then you’re not going to be integrated. Then you’re not going to have anyone to talk to. And it’s the same for others. I know that there are schools where there’s a higher ethnic percentage. And maybe they see things different there. But I feel by being a Canadian, you know, I do have a certain opportunity, and a certain angle to come from. I was born in a mostly white neighbourhood, grew up in a mostly white school system, and now I teach in a mostly white school. So maybe I’m not seeing the right spectrum. But at the same time too, there shouldn’t be issues of race. That should be a non-issue in the modern day world.

At this point, it became clear that Doug was not arguing for de-segregation but for assimilation, and it was evident who Doug thought should be assimilating to be more like who. The only example that he gave as an argument toward de-segregation was with respect to what he perceived to be an African-American tendency to exclude white people, while altogether ignoring the deeply violent history of racism against black people in North America (and elsewhere) that persists today. He did not talk about white people hanging out with white people as a problem, or the predominance of television shows that exclude black people or people of color altogether. Further, he commented on how important he believed it was that “the black boy” in his class talk to and integrate with the others (i.e. white students). In speaking about inclusion, he put no onus on his own or his students’ attitudes or behaviour toward “the black boy” but instead put it on this student to become more like everyone else in the room. While on some level Doug was arguing that everyone should integrate and not discriminate, on another level he was arguing that everyone should integrate to be more like his presumed norm: white people (which he also equated with being Canadian, while correlating black people with the “ethnic” population). Doug argued that “there should not be issues of race” instead of
acknowledging that race matters because racism exists and persists, as evidenced by how people talk about it—he being a prime example. Doug argued that race should not be an issue because “we’re all the same,” but his version of sameness was predicated upon his presumption of whiteness as a colour that need not be named.

Richard made similar comments but with regard to the First Nations students in his classroom—although he was slightly more careful in his wording:

An awful lot of [First Nations students] I think do try to make an effort to…I hate to use the word assimilate, but I think to become more and more integrated within the greater student body. And I can tell you that it’s not because of a matter of shame or lack of pride or anything like that. What it is that we find is that those students who tend to be more successful who are Aboriginal tend to be the ones who are more likely to mingle with non-Aboriginal students. And they just tend to feel more confident within the school. Does that make sense?

Here, Richard argued that assimilation leads to “success.” Again, like Doug, Richard spoke about inclusion in a way that put the onus on his Aboriginal students to become more like non-Aboriginal students, and without thinking critically about what counts as success and how he contributed to reproducing that. He articulated this perspective by talking about this as a trend that he had observed in schools, and one that he did not see as problematic. He did not see these assimilative practices and expectations as behaviours and discourses that he and the school were perpetuating by virtue of their not intervening or interrupting pedagogically in such a way as to acknowledge and normalize Aboriginal identities and ways of knowing within the school and curriculum. Instead, the way that Richard spoke about this trend resembled a microcosm of discourses of First Nations assimilation that is consistently perpetuated in Canadian politics, effectively arguing that Aboriginal people will be more likely to “succeed” if they better adapt to Eurocentric values and institutions. Such discourses ignore and discredit the complexity and diversity within and between First Nations’ Peoples, they disregard the value in Aboriginal ways of knowing and being, and they ignore the legacies of colonialism within which they are rooted.

Certainly, these examples were not common among teachers and they represent unique cases. At the same time, they are extremely important in that they illustrate the power of hegemonic discourses in their capacity to be reproduced through insidious manifestations. These two teachers did not come out and say “black people scare me” or “I believe that First Nations Peoples should assimilate.” Nor do I believe that either of these teachers was necessarily aware of what they communicated to me. Superficially, these comments could be articulated in everyday conversation without anyone registering their racist or oppressive undertone. Being
embedded in discourses of inclusion and success, they sound more innocent than the problematic messages that they communicate. This is what makes discourse powerful and is why doing critical work necessitates paying attention not only to what is said and how, but also to what is unexpressed or implied. In these cases, the teachers said that Other students should assimilate with white students but they did so in such a way as to highlight words like inclusion and desegregation. Not only were teachers unaware of their own complicity in perpetuating oppression, but they also failed to acknowledge legacies of racism and colonialism and their impacts on thought and action.

I heard very little from teachers about how they taught about racism, sexism, classism, elitism, homophobia, or colonialism. Teachers sometimes named these as a phenomenon that they had observed in the world and in their classrooms, and sometimes they described how they responded to them (largely via the informal curriculum after class). In their teaching of controversial issues, however, teachers were not looking for evidence of students’ learning for critical, thoughtful, engagement with difference as outcomes. Doug’s pedagogical response to a student’s homophobic jokes in class was to challenge racial minority and female students to consider how they felt being discriminated against based on their difference. Instead of using this as an opportunity for learning by asking all students to consider the underlying causes of discrimination, prejudice, or xenophobia, he focused only on the consequences of xenophobia, and in a way that reinforced, rather than challenged, these identities (i.e. racial minority and female) as Other.

**Multiple Perspectives & Neutrality**

How all sixteen teachers interviewed spoke about the importance of multiple perspectives for teaching and learning with controversial issues further affirmed and reproduced the difference-blind ideal of liberal pluralism. They taught what I call *the fact of multiple perspectives* in very much the same way as liberal democracy attends to pluralism by treating all people, and in this case, perspectives, *the same*. Sameness is implicated here in a different, yet similar, way than in the previous examples: rather than treating all students the same, the focus here was on treating all perspectives the same. Attending to *difference* though does not mean attending to *different* perspectives in the same way. Just as liberal multiculturalism emphasizes equal respect for different and multiple cultures (connoting harmony and cohesion) without adequately attending to the politics of identity and the ways that differences *do* matter and have material consequences (because people experience the *same* structures, systems, laws, and institutions *differently*), teachers may have been teaching about different and multiple
perspectives. It is, however, less evident that they were teaching about the *politics* of difference. I base this argument on two trends I observed from the interviews:

1) **Teaching that multiple perspectives exist**

Rather than critically engaging with the tensions and conflicts that arise from multiple perspectives, teachers’ main focus in relation to controversial issues was on the *existence* of multiple perspectives. This comment made by Nicolas, for example, was not at all uncommon: “more than anything, I just want them to understand that there’s different perspectives and different players.” As in my previous example related to school choice, it was the *multiple* in multiple perspectives that was being most valued as the opportunity for learning and as the indicator of equality that teachers were interested in. The teachers were interested in introducing students to as many perspectives as possible with the intention of broadening students’ perspectives on issues beyond those they may have been exposed to elsewhere, and with providing students with a range of perspectives to choose from (thereby reproducing discourse equating choice with freedom and neutrality). Richard, for example, spoke about encouraging students to take a position “somewhere in between” multiple perspectives because he believed that this gave students a tremendous amount of freedom. Mark, similarly, stated that “you need to inform people as much as possible so that they can have a *wealth* of information before they make an objective choice.” In prioritizing choice over opportunities to critically engage with the tensions and conflicts implicated in controversial issues the teachers affirmed discourses of neoliberalism that underscore values of freedom, accumulation, and choice over and above consideration of harm, oppression, and asymmetrical social relations. Moreover, they often viewed their identities as teachers as facilitators whose role it was to offer these choices to students. Ron, for example, stated: “[with multiple perspectives] we’re not taking sides, we’re just looking at this, we’re exploring, we’re presenting information, here’s the facts, make up your own mind…great.”

The emphasis that some teachers placed on the responsibility of broadening students’ perspectives beyond those they were exposed to at home and in mainstream culture did come closer to attending to the politics of difference in their attention to emancipating students from the limitations of local circumstances (Oakeshott in Appiah, 200). Teachers such as Gary saw in the teaching of multiple perspectives a subversive response to “parents who don’t want their children exposed to a wide range of views…especially those that might contradict their own.” Many teachers referred to promoting a bigger picture and a wider worldview, and some wanted
their students to learn to question views that their family members took for granted as human nature. Mary, for example, with reference to teaching about sexual orientation, noted that “the comments that kids make, off hand and in class, kind of indicate that a wider worldview is [necessary].” Mark, too, noted that learning about multiple perspectives in school may be the only time students are exposed to views not espoused by their parents. Certainly, challenging assumptions and taken-for-granted truths is a more critical orientation in that these call attention to the social construction of knowledge and identity. Nicolas, for example, stated that when his elementary students “see the other perspectives,” they often respond with surprise, stating “oh - I always thought it was this way!” However, learning that some of those long-held assumptions may be open to debate is not enough. Real learning occurs when students question how and why their assumptions are formed, and when they consider what purpose and in whose interest those assumptions might serve. These teachers were introducing students to multiple perspectives on issues like gay marriage, but they were less likely to attend to the political dimensions of difference by naming the xenophobia implicated in homophobia, for example.

In some cases, multiple perspectives were being taught so that students could learn to simultaneously hold multiple positions on issues. Here, for example, Simon stated: “my little secret agenda is I try to have my kids not really have one position but understand multiple positions…I try to model having more than 2 opinions as opposed to one, and I’ll bluntly say ‘I want you to have two opinions so that you understand both sides.’” Certainly *holding* two positions on issues is different from *learning* about two perspectives on issues. An important question this conflation raises (teaching students about multiple perspectives vs. teaching them to adopt multiple views) is: what would politics look like if everyone adopted all perspectives? The effect is the perpetuation of neutrality, the preservation of status quo values, and the dissolution of the political.

This misplaced attention on the *multiple* was also evident in the language employed; the teachers, for example, spoke about collecting as many perspectives as possible, the result of which was that these perspectives were often tokenized and essentialized for students. Doug, for instance, stated: “A lot of them wanted to take the same perspective, so I had to ask ‘who wants to take the perspective of a Native elder? Not everyone can be a tribal elder though, only one of you – cause I want to get as many perspectives in as possible.” Gary made a similar statement, listing the go-to roles that tend to be presumed on particular issues like tar sands development: “whether it be ‘to what extent should the tar sands be developed in Fort McMurray’ or whatever, it means you’re going to have the environmentalist point of view, the real estate developers point
of view for opportunity, the First Nations point of view on the pollution of their waterways and
so on.” It seemed that teachers often had a pool of perspective positions in mind that they would
apply to any controversial issue, rather than delineating these in their specificity relative to
specific issues. By not attending to the political dimensions of difference implicated in specific
controversial issues and particularized contexts, this form of pedagogy has the potential to
essentialize people and stakeholder groups (e.g. assigning students the First Nations perspective
on tar sands development versus assigning them the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation
perspective on Shell’s Athabasca tar sands project).

While it is important to introduce students to a variety of perspectives on controversial
issues, the learning is meaningful only insofar as opportunities for deeper questions surrounding
power, conflict, ideology, assumptions and values are being provided. If students are not given
the opportunity to think about these questions in relation to their own identities and positions,
then the difference-blind ideal of liberal pluralism is likely to be reproduced. Like Mouffe’s
(2000) critique of the fact of pluralism, the existence of multiple perspectives is not merely a fact
that we should bear grudgingly or try to reduce. Multiple perspectives implicate contests across
values, beliefs, and interests and they need to be explicitly taken up and critically engaged for the
vital promise they hold for deepening democracy.

2) Teaching students that all views are valid

Theories and practices of radical democracy and agonistic pluralism caution against the
kind of extreme pluralism that emphasizes extreme heterogeneity and the valorization of all
differences for the ways that these, too (similar to unquestionably accepting dominant
perspectives) circumvent the political and reinforce neutrality. Mouffe (2000), for example,
acknowledges that certain differences are constructed as relations of subordination and should
therefore be challenged (not just named or acknowledged). Otherwise, she argues, “we are left
with the typical liberal illusion of a pluralism without antagonism” (p. 247) whereby the political
dimension is evaded (relations of power), and whereby the fact that some existing rights have
been constructed on the very exclusion or subordination of others, is ignored. The real threat to
democracy, from Mouffe’s perspective, is negating the ineradicability of antagonism behind
pretences of neutrality that aim at a universal rational consensus.

There is a strong liberal discourse operating within educational theory and practice for
teaching controversial issues that affirms the primacy of freedom of expression as a fundamental
principle inscribed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This discourse is in the
forefront of pedagogical considerations and tensions for teaching and learning with controversial issues, and is one that causes a great deal of confusion among teachers, especially when students express racist or homophobic views (this confusion and unease were articulated by both teacher candidates in my own classroom and teachers in this study). One can see how easily freedom of expression can be stretched to encompass the, I think potentially dangerous, belief that *all views are valid*, and therefore worthy of equal respect. Gary, for example, stated: “points of view on an issue are all valid…I mean you’ve got people who are concerned about it who are expressing this viewpoint, who are drawing this political cartoon, who are writing these articles, and you say here’s this range of opinions on the issue, and all points are valid.” More than anything else, my assessment that the difference-blind ideal of liberal pluralism was being reproduced by the teachers that I interviewed in Alberta is most informed by teachers’ consistent affirmations of this belief. Treating all perspectives the same was frequently viewed as an important pedagogical practice, and one that some teachers correlated with teaching for democracy because it reconciled with their notions of equality (i.e. treating all perspectives the same). This discourse thus invokes a further manifestation of teaching for sameness and neutrality, which attends to the *multiple* in ‘multiple perspectives’ (and democracy) over and above equity and the politics of difference and identity.

In addition to teaching students that multiple perspectives on issues exist, many also taught that these diverse perspectives sometimes are in conflict, and that it was sometimes important to “agree to disagree.” Doug, for example, stated: “I think people have to have the opportunity to fairly express their opinion without anyone putting their opinion down, or putting their reasons down, let bygones be bygones, agree to disagree, but allow others to express their opinion. For me it’s a valuable thing for students to learn.” Agreeing to disagree, however, while conciliatory, is very different from critical engagement with conflict and difference. It is akin to saying: “our mutual understanding that we have conflict means that there is no point in talking further.” What would the implications of the agreeing-to-disagree principle be, if applied to democracy more broadly, if not reinforcement of neutrality and preservation of status quo norms? Similarly, imagine if democracy were limited *only* to voting, instead of citizen discursive engagement with public issues in the public sphere. Not only does the agreeing-to-disagree principle obviate the value of critical engagement and dialogue about the issues and conflict involved, but it also affirms the notion that conflict resolution is *all* that matters (i.e. that there is only value in resolving conflict, not engaging it).
The same liberal discourses surrounding freedom of expression and the validity of all views were what motivated teachers to teach for balanced perspective-taking — yet another focus frequently taken up in educational research and practice related to the teaching of controversial issues. Indeed, the dominant discourse of teaching for balance is popularly conceived as a principal ethical responsibility of teaching. Many teachers told me that it was vitally important that they teach students about both or all sides of an issue so that students were aware of the range of perspectives involved, and so that teachers did not get accused of privileging one perspective over others. Thus, teachers preserved their alleged neutral identities and further dislocated the political dimensions of difference and identity from teaching and learning with controversial issues. Some teachers equated teaching “multiple perspectives” with teaching “balanced perspectives,” regardless of the perspectives themselves. Mark, for instance, stated that he thought it was “important to try to give a balanced approach” by “teaching all aspects and then letting kids decide themselves…” Others, such as Simon, seemed to think that balanced meant bias-free. My impression was that discourses of freedom of expression led teachers to believe that all views should be treated and responded to equally, and that doing so meant that their teaching was balanced. Simon’s comment elucidates this point: “for instance a student will have opinion C and that might be really against my opinions, but as a teacher I need to teach everyone to respect that, and I need to defend that person just as much as I defend everyone else’s.” This line of thinking raises questions about the extent to which teachers are mindful (or not) of what lessons students learn when their teachers do not respond to discrimination and hate. If students are taught to defend all perspectives equally, when do they get the chance to form opinions and take committed positions on issues? What if, like Betty, their goal becomes learning to see from every perspective, rather than to critically and reflexively engage their own perspectives and those of their peers/fellow citizens? This is the same tension that I talked about earlier when I discussed the conflation between learning about multiple perspectives and learning to hold multiple perspectives. If accounting for all perspectives results in having none, the implications for democracy are devastating.

Existing research has well documented teachers’ concerns about accusations of indoctrination if articulating judgments on views. “We’re crossing a line if we say this is right and this is wrong,” Betty explained. This concern has vital implications when teachers fail to respond to views that implicate relations of power and subordination — i.e. views that have
harmful consequences for individuals and communities, such as racist, homophobic, and sexist perspectives. Doug, for instance, commented: “even topics of how women are treated around the world you have to be careful of. There are girls [in class] who are Jehovah’s Witnesses and if they believe in that way of life, do you want them to feel belittled because you’re saying that women should be equal?” Certainly, this tendency is related to hegemonic discourses that presume and expect teachers and schools to be neutral (and wary of offending students or parents). Yet there is a crucial difference between ‘freedom of expression’ and the acceptance of all views as valid. One does not mean the other, nor does critically responding to views compromise freedom of expression. Yes, a student may be free to express that they believe First Nations children benefitted more so than they suffered from residential schooling (an example given by Richard), but a teacher’s response (or lack thereof) to violence, power, relations of subordination, injustice, and irreparable harm matters greatly. Yet, I consistently heard teachers argue that it is not what students’ views are that matter, it is whether they can demonstrate respect for others’ views and be able to defend their own. Richard, for example, argued: “it doesn’t matter what [they] think of homosexuals, but there are certain rules of civility that we maintain.” In another example, he stated “…and one student said ‘Chinese Canadians’ and we had a Chinese student in the class and so that student got a week out of school because I don’t give a damn about what you think but you don’t do that.” Mary, similarly, maintained: “the fight is always defense of your opinion, not your opinion.” Likewise, Ron described a motivation for teaching multiple perspectives: “whatever they think, the key for us is, can you support it? Have you got evidence? Great.” I found such comments troubling in that the principle of respect for all views overruled critical engagement with views that students expressed and articulated. Teachers more often were concerned with behaviour than with what students thought. How could it not matter what students think about homosexuality or Chinese Canadians?

Some teachers did make exceptions in their belief that all views were valid, and I reported how these exceptions primarily referred to morality, science, and the law. When discussing these areas, notions of right and wrong did matter to teachers. Richard, for example, speaking about the science of climate change, explained: “I think that what we do is establish that there are certain things that are right and that are acceptable, and there are certain things that are wrong and are not acceptable. Moral relativity is not really what we’re going to work with.” Similarly, Gary commented that “unless they’re advocating that we just go over there and nuke them, you know, as long as it’s a reasonable viewpoint and not extremist, I guess it’s a valid
viewpoint.” These types of comments raise a range of issues, not least of which is consideration for the fact that what one person considers extreme or moral may not be considered extreme or moral by someone else. In many instances, it is these precise tensions that are at the root of what makes issues controversial. A similar sentiment was affirmed by Betty and Mark when they qualified their comments regarding the validity of all views by adding “unless it’s illegal or immoral” and “barring things like violations of the Canadian criminal code and that kind of thing.” While they acknowledged that there are important exceptions to the all views-are-valid approach, they framed these more in terms of what they perceived to be misunderstandings of science, clear violations of the law, and transgressions of a particular version of morality (presumed as the norm) — rather than attending to unequal power relations, and how these could be disrupted or perpetuated in ways of thinking and speaking.

Blind acceptance of normative perspectives and/or extreme relativism should not represent the only two options available to teachers. Both of these approaches leave out the political dimensions of difference, and, therefore, continue reproducing hegemonic discourses of schooling that presume schools as neutral spaces and teachers as neutral individuals. Deepening democracy under conditions of globalization requires that the political aspect be left in, and that it be purposefully attended to. For this reason, it is vital that teachers create opportunities for students to talk about how the politics of difference are represented within and across perspectives, and to engage with the ways that power is implicated in these. An important project for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization through schooling is to disrupt the discourse that all views are valid. While respecting others and their views matters, it is a non-sequitur to believe that one ought to do so blindly, without critically considering how those views may implicate relations of subordination. Nor should the pedagogical goal be limited to only understanding that multiple perspectives on controversial issues exist, and sometimes conflict, and that students may not agree with all perspectives. Instead, it is important that pedagogical intention be directed at thoughtful and critical engagement with the politics of difference.

**Difference and Sameness in Discourses of Citizenship and Globalization**

I also posed 3 additional questions of the research findings pertaining to the theme of sameness, this time narrowing in on discourses of citizenship and globalization. These included: to what extent did teachers accept or transgress liberal democratic narratives of citizenship that
claim neutrality and universalism despite the existence of social, political, and economic inequalities? How did teachers imagine what it means to be a Canadian and a global citizen, and what role did sameness play in their conceptualizations? In what ways did hegemonic discourses of universalism intersect with the discourses of globalization articulated by teachers and what might be the implications for agency?

Discourses of Citizenship

Sameness figured in teachers’ conceptualizations of citizenship (Canadian and global) principally in their belief that we (as Canadians and human beings sharing a planet) are the same despite our differences. The difference-blind ideal of liberal pluralism was, therefore, further reinforced in that teachers emphasized cohesion in diversity, more so than they attended to how discourses of cohesion can ignore and exacerbate the politics of difference (similar to what I discussed in relation to assimilation of students’ identities in schools). This was also evident in the way teachers spoke about Canadian identity: Canadians are the same in our attitude toward, and relationship to, diversity. Teachers underscored the characteristics of tolerance for, and appreciation of, cultural and religious diversity, and differences in opinion, and they frequently described these attitudes as the feature that makes “us” as Canadians “the same.” Jim, for example, stated that: “it is this tolerance of understanding…this sensitivity to the fact that others will not have the same opinion, but that it’s important to understand their opinion, to be open to them – that’s Canadian.” Charlie expressed a similar perspective on Canadian identity: “[its consideration for] other perspectives – that there may be people who feel differently than we do, and rather than show them my hand and say ‘you’re wrong!’ – if I can lower the hand and listen to your perspective even though we may not agree, I think we should be quite good at that as Canadians.” And lastly, in Richard’s words: “basic to Canadian identity is the idea about respect for people’s freedoms and for tolerance and openness to draw on many cultural expressions and experiences. There’s no cookie cutter here, there’s no melting pot.”

In many ways, I would argue that this very attitude of tolerance for diversity is the cookie cutter. If so, this matters for deepening democracy for several reasons. First, the connotations and narratives of cohesion mask and marginalize conflict, exclusion, and contestation. Second, treating everyone the same does not account for how people experience the same in different (and inequitable and uneven) ways. Third, the same implicates a particular version of sameness (taken for granted as neutral) characterized by particular values, norms, ways of knowing,
beliefs, interests, and institutions that are not shared by all. Saying that differences are irrelevant — or that diversity matters primarily in that it enhances our national self-concept as an open and tolerant society — is not the same as calling attention to the important ways that differences have material consequences for people. Distinguishing diversity from difference is as important as it is separating different from difference, which is a point I argued earlier in this chapter. Hegemonic discourses entangle these words and their associated meanings in complex ways, which often leads to their conflation. This can result not only in the marginalization of difference, and the difficult challenges that accompany it, but also in the reproduction of harmonious discourses of diversity and cohesion. A case in point includes the following comments made by Gary and Betty:

So if I take diversity as sort of a characteristic of a country and what it means to be a resident in this country, I think that allows us to explore that diversity and say that hey, when we do have issues, hey, yes there are going to be diverse and divergent opinions on the issues that arise. (Gary)

So why do I think it’s important? Because it’s really what life’s about – it’s about our differences and our similarities and how we figure out how to live together in some kind of a harmonious way. And so it’s really engrained in everything we do. Differences in opinion. If you would imagine trying to think of something that everybody would agree on – there’s nothing. There’s always differences of opinion. It’s the core of life really – of social life. (Betty)

These considerations of difference have implications for teachers’ conceptualizations of global citizenship too, which frequently reproduced discourses of universalism and had the potential to contribute to the reproduction of neo-colonial relations. When I asked the teachers what global citizenship meant to them, they articulated characteristics that they presumed as neutral and universal, rather than those that they interpreted as particular to their contexts and social identity locations. According to Lan, for example, global citizenship meant “knowing a bit of everything, being well-rounded, and helping the world.” Indeed, “helping the world” was what most teachers focused on, and teachers had ideas about what that ‘help’ should look like, as well as whose versions of well-being the outcomes of this help were intended to resemble. Jim, for example, described global citizenship as a “global responsibility to share knowledge, expertise, and resources” and he mentioned his work with the Ministry of Education in Mexico as a manifestation of that. “There’s a responsibility that when they ask for our help,” he said, “we provide it.” Similarly, Charlie, defined global citizenship as “making a difference on a one-to-one basis around the world.” Because this is how he conceptualized global citizenship, he doubted (as did Linda) that he was, or could be, a global citizen, stating: “I’m not sure how
powerful I am within my classroom, talking about changing the world in terms of social justice if there’s no meat behind the words.” In their identities as teachers, Charlie, Linda, and Betty all described feeling powerless in their capacity to enact or affect global citizenship. To them global citizenship required helping others, over there and was less an aspect of identity they could enact in/through their identities as teachers in Alberta classrooms.

When Ron stated that “we look at things pretty globally” he took for granted that what globally means looks the same from anywhere in the world (i.e. whose version of global?). Betty conceptualized global citizenship as the capacity to be absolutely non-judgmental (to treat all people and perspectives in the same way). She described this as “the ultimate” – the capacity to not judge. What such comments communicated to me significantly reconciled with similar comments teachers made about difference and sameness within schools and within Canada in that they reinforced the difference-blind ideal of liberal pluralism.

As I reported in chapter 5, teachers most commonly conceptualized global citizenship in their belief that global citizenship was an identity expressed through travelling abroad and/or doing humanitarian work overseas, and that it required absolute reconciliation between knowledge, values, and behaviour. Teachers were more likely to describe students who had studied abroad or whose parents had worked abroad as global, affirming their beliefs that global citizenship was an exceptional identity reserved for nation-state actors, celebrities, and people who travel and volunteer elsewhere. For Mary, global citizens were not only people travelling abroad, but also individuals who came from abroad. When she described her “Bosnian and Croat students going at each other and expressing their opinions dynamically” she told me that the other students in the room loved it and were envious because “they wanted to be global citizens too.” This was one example of how universal pretensions of global citizenship that link it with encountering Other yet disconnect it from analysis of power relations can reproduce discourses of citizenship that marginalize conflict for the sake of cohesion, and that contribute to the reproduction of neo-colonial attitudes and relations. Some teachers’ comments regarding their own relationship to Other suggested that these attitudes were prevalent to the extent that teachers did not acknowledge their own privilege or complicity in harm. Sean struggled to identify as a global citizen because he found it “difficult to empathize with the people of Haiti.” Jim addressed the notion of privilege when he described some of the work he had done with teacher education programs in Iraq, however, he attributed his privilege and access to education to his
genes rather than to his identity as a white, middle-upper class, man living in a country that valued access to public education and health care:

I think there’s a responsibility to share with those who are less fortunate. It may be that I’ve got good genes that allowed me to go and get a PhD and learn, and have good health to work hard, and so there isn’t a reluctance in the sharing or in the responsibility to others. (Jim)

By locating the source of his privilege in his genes, Jim implicitly argued that the reasons why Others have not achieved his level of success are biological and pertain not to social barriers that perpetuate inequity. There is nothing, in other words, to be responded to but bad luck.

Discourses of Globalization

CDGCE means challenging hegemonic discourses of market liberal globalization that assert the logic of no alternative and the fact of globalization (inevitability), which presume the adoption of neo-liberal market values as pre-determined, fixed, and outside the purview of human agency (Rizvi, 2009). It means challenging discourses of globalization that advance particularized constructions of global and globalization as universal, and that presume its direction of influence from the European core to the Southern periphery (Shiva, 2009). Lastly, it objects to discourses of globalization that de-historicize it from its relationship to colonialism, by demonstrating the relationship between new articulations of economic and cultural imperialism, as well as neo-colonial relations, and globalization (Spivak, 2004; Shiva, 1993; Rizvi, 2009; Rizvi et al., 2006; Tickly, 2009). Instead of assuming globalization simply as a fact and the way things are, CDGCE focuses on naming the politics of globalization, and pays attention to the discursive and material practices by which people create patterns that either enable or constrain them (Smith, 2001; p. 11). Rizvi (2009) underscores the potential implications for agency of accepting hegemonic discourses of market-liberal globalization:

There is an assumption [operating in hegemonic discourses of globalization] that it is the time-space compression that causes people, independent of their historical and social location and their will, to experience a sense of insecurity that often expresses itself in various forms of identity politics. This approach renders a view of culture not as an ever-changing product of human practices but as an expression of the deeper logic of economic imperatives. Such a view fails to come to terms with people’s situated-ness in the world – the situated-ness of their knowledge as well as their unique positionality. It is largely devoid of historical actors, and elides the historicity of economic relations. We need to understand contemporary ideological constructions of globalization historically rather than as a set of naturalized economic processes operating in a reified fashion. Otherwise neoliberal ideas will continue to appear as a natural and inevitable response to the steering logic of economic globalization. It will be impossible to recognize the ideology of globalization as historically specific, which serves a set of particular interests on behalf of powerful social forces, namely the transnational corporate and financial elite. It is
significant that globalization will appear dissociated from its roots in the European projects of imperialism and colonialism, which continue to shape the lives of people within not only the developing but the developed world, with a global geometry of power that is inherently unequal (p. 50).

Keeping these indicators and their implications in mind in my analysis of the interviews, I found that neo-liberal discourses of globalization were being reproduced mainly through teachers’ emphasis on consumerism. In rare cases, teachers referred to education as a good and the relationship between them and their students as one of producer and consumer (e.g. Mick telling me that he sometimes gave students a wee bit of extra material for free). In fact, teachers cited their consumer identities and lifestyles as the primary obstacle standing between them and global citizenship identity. Their conceptualizations of global citizenship were intricately connected to the discourses of globalization that they were reproducing.

All teachers thought and spoke about global citizenship identity with reference to consumerism as the primary reference point. When asked what global citizenship meant to him, Richard suggested that I walk around my kitchen and identify all the products that came from somewhere else. Nearly all of Mick’s examples of how he taught science for citizenship implicated consumer decision-making (cars, food products, etc.) and/or consumer marketing strategies. Even Simon, who was an exception in that he did consider himself a global citizen, made consumer identity and relations the primary reference point for thinking about global citizenship because his “decisions, especially purchasing decisions, affect others around the world.” Most teachers felt guilty about their consumer identities, which they thought were an inevitable by-product of globalization (rather than a manifestation of the cultural identities which they did not feel they possessed). Gary, for example, told me that as much as he aspired to global citizenship as an identity he was “working towards,” he was progressing slowly because this would imply having to “alter [his] lifestyle to be more respectful of the other 7 billion people in the world.” Gary also disconnected his own decision-making and complicity from his consumer behaviours by telling me that he “came from a generation that wasn’t concerned with resource use or impacts on environment and other parts of the world.” Because of that, he viewed himself as “already locked into this lifestyle.” Had he known, he told me, he “wouldn’t have bought a house in the suburbs.” Sean, who was an exception in that he was explicit about the relationship between consumerism and culture, felt similarly helpless and disclaimed responsibility for his consumer decisions. He felt that he “was forced to do certain things” that he knew were “wrong”
like buying products from China, and he expressed frustration with Canada’s trade policies that resulted in “needing to export all of our resources away.” He also believed that he was “hindered by the fact” that he could not “do a whole lot as one person” because he believed that the power that he had was “very limited.” He told his students that at an early age he was “led to believe that this was okay” and that as hard as he tries “it’s very difficult in a must-have society.” He then described “Canadian culture” and “North-American culture” as “very much consumer-driven” and that he encountered a lot of “propaganda saying buy buy buy.” This, he explained to students, was why there was a “need” to make plastic.

Stan, too, conceded that while he believed in fair trade, he did not buy fair trade coffee, chocolate, or bananas, even though “[he] knew it was the right thing to do.” When Charlie acknowledged his intra-identity conflicts, and those of his students, he expressed these foremost as a tension between students’ consumer identities and their citizen identities:

… That’s what I see global citizenship is about…let’s stop being consumers. And you know what? I drove here alone from Edmonton in my car and I’m going back alone in my car tomorrow. Tell me how authentic I am about social justice. Do we believe we are global citizens or are we just kind of saying it to ourselves – kind of lying to ourselves? How are we contributing to injustice in the world simply by the fact that we are consumers and not very aware consumers? And so perhaps what we need to ask is ‘what role does consumerism play in our life?’ or ‘what is the relationship between consumerism and environmental degradation in society?’ Or we can make it a little more controversial and say ‘are my actions as a consumer or my actions as a purchaser, or my actions as a participant in a free market society – do they cause someone pain – someone else, somewhere else in the world? (Charlie)

Many teachers also spoke to the implications of consumerism for their students’ sense of global citizenship and responsibility. When asked about educating students for global citizenship, for example, Simon’s instinct was to talk about their consumer behaviour: “they might not fully involve themselves because they’re still not at that stage of life, but when they do become older and have to decide whether to buy this car or that car, hopefully they’ll be prepared for it.” Ron noted that some of his students experienced tensions too whether to buy $300 blue jeans made by a 12 year old in Bangladesh, for instance. He told me that after they discussed how they could help, some still said they would rather have the blue jeans, “or they say ‘yeah, global’s great because I get all the cheap bananas.” Even the teacher’s ideas of global citizenship, in terms of its potential for travel and humanitarian work, invoked notions of the volunteer experience and the opportunities for cross-cultural interaction that could be viewed as goods that individuals
could pay for and consume. Mick and Jim spoke about producing and consuming professional development materials for oil and gas industries, thereby contributing to the reproduction of corporate-school partnerships and neo-liberal values.

These various examples suggest that teachers were not attending to the discursive and material practices by which people create patterns that enable and constrain them (Smith, 2001; 11). Globalization, and its implications for consumerism, was a force beyond them, something that happened to them. It was such a powerful force that it even, they believed, prevented them from identifying as global citizens. To these teachers, globalization, consumerism, and global citizenship were all intimately related to the point of being enmeshed in a broader discourse of the logic of no alternative. I did not hear any versions of globalization from teachers other than the neo-liberal market version; nor did I hear any teachers historicize this hegemonic discourse of globalization by putting in perspective its relationship to colonialism. I did hear neo-liberal and neo-colonial implications, however, by way of evidence of a new form of domination centered on mass culture and consumption. Consumer behaviour guided these teachers’ notions of citizenship, and their beliefs of what it means to be a good citizen were predicated on their relationship to consumer goods. Some might see this as evidence that those hegemonic discourses of neo-liberalism that focus on economic actors above all else are winning. These relationships between schools, neo-liberalism, globalization, neo-colonialism, and citizenship have implications for democracy. The teachers that I interviewed, however, did not seem to recognize this as a problem. Instead, they viewed it as just the way it is.

**Teaching for Neutrality: Refutations of Post-Modern Conceptualizations of Identity and Citizenship and Reproducing a Blank Slate Ideal**

Interpreting the research findings for indicators of CDGCE also meant paying attention to how teachers spoke about identity in ways that elucidated post-modern conceptualizations of identity as plural, polyvocal, complex, vested, shifting, unfinished, and internally conflicted. It also meant attending to whether, and how, teachers spoke about identity as material for teaching and learning of controversial issues. This was important because deepening democracy under conditions of globalization requires challenging conceptions of identity as fixed, singular, contained, essentialized, neutral, and ‘knowable’, and it involves regarding identity conflicts and their continued contestation as evidence of attesting to the political dimensions of difference and the politics of identity, and as a condition of possibility for deepening democracy (Mouffe, 1993).
CDGCE means enacting practices in which critical engagement with identity is understood as a starting point for deepening democracy, instead of viewing identities and the conflicts and contests that surround them as end points that stifle democracy (Mouffe, 1999). According to Ellsworth (1989), identity in this sense becomes “a vehicle for multiplying and making more complex the subject positions possible, visible, and legitimate at any given historical moment, requiring disruptive changes in the way social technologies of gender, race, ability and so on define Otherness and use it as a vehicle for subordination” (p. 322). CDGCE also requires mindfulness of the political nature of education and its consequences for the cultivation of students’ social and political identities (Apple, 2000 & 2004; Bickmore, 2006; Giroux, 2005; Freire, 1998). It critiques dominant paradigms of schooling that exclude explicit attention to teachers’ and students’ identities, and it enacts culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy that is responsive to all students’ cultural identities (not just those perceived as Other) as valuable material for learning. (Ellsworth, 1989). Pedagogical emphasis is placed on students’ concrete and experienced lives, including the larger social and political contexts of their identities and experiences (Portelli and Vibert, 2001).

Additionally, CDGCE also involves being mindful of the implications for equity that result from liberal multiculturalism’s reliance on the notion that individuals belong to singular and readily identifiable cultural groups that predetermine their behaviours, beliefs, and orientations toward institutions like schools, and thus their (in)ability to succeed (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2010). It involves paying attention to how diversity becomes a euphemism to refer to individuals who appear to belong to some predefined and stable cultural category that is different from the norm, even though these categories are defined through abstractions that reduce very diverse communities into flattened and monolithic stereotypes (ibid). Instead, CDGCE underscores the value of cultural difference by affirming an explicitly anti-oppressive understanding of inclusion that recognizes how social and cultural categories operate to manage and marginalize individuals deemed diverse (Ibid).

Finally, CDGCE challenges discourses that treat national and global citizenship identity as incompatible, and instead recognizes individuals as holding multiple identities – even when these conflict and provoke difficult tensions (Kymlicka, 1995; Carter, 2001; Delanty, 2006; Tan, 2005; Falk, 2000; Bhabha, 1990). Rather than view national and global dimensions of civic identity in either/or terms, CDGCE recognizes binary thinking as a dominant discourse that
constrains individuals’ capacity to apprehend multiplicity and complexity, and that reinforces social and socio-ecological relations of subordination. Because CDGCE recognizes the power of schools and curriculum texts as instruments of discourse reproduction and identity construction, it recognizes their emancipatory possibility in that they provoke considerations of not only what it means to be a Canadian but also what it might mean to be both Canadian and global citizen, as well as how these multiple dimensions of identity and their ensuing interests may at times conflict. These intra-identity conflicts need to be regarded as opportunities for deepening democracy in the ways that individuals can name and feel identity struggles within and not only in adversarial terms in their relationships and engagements with Others (Freire, 1998; Andreotti, 2011).

Guiding Questions

In order to better understand how the participating teachers in this study reproduced and/or interrupted the marginalization of identity and the hidden curriculum surrounding identity as learning material for teaching controversial issues, I asked the following questions of the research findings: Did participating teachers reinforce or challenge notions of identity as singular, fixed, essentialized, and as entities that can be known? Did they acknowledge identities as plural, polyvocal, unfinished, and in conflict? What were teachers’ attitudes towards intra-identity conflicts and how did they take these up as learning material for teaching and learning controversial issues? Did teachers speak about the relationship between Canadian citizenship identity and global citizenship identity as compatible or in tension? How did teachers reinforce or challenge discourses of teacher neutrality often presumed and expected as a characteristic of teachers’ identities in dominant paradigms of schooling? How did teachers speak about cultural identity and what did “culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy” look like?

Significantly, when I engaged the research findings with these questions in mind, I found that the majority of teachers did acknowledge that individuals hold multiple identities. Likewise, they did believe that some of these can shift and change (mainly political and civic identities). However, and to a great extent, the teachers neglected the potential of identity as explicit and intentional material for teaching and learning with controversial issues, despite the implicit impact of their own multiple identities (and those of their students’) on their pedagogy for teaching controversial issues. When asked directly about the role of identity in the classroom and
in discussion of controversial issues, for example, teachers frequently stated that they rarely “go there” or “get that far.” At the same time, students’ cultural, gender, and religious identities – as well as their identities as sons and daughters of parents who work for the oil and gas industries – were brought up consistently (not only when prompted) throughout the interviews. While in these instances students’ identities were regarded as both obstacles and opportunities, more frequently they were considered obstacles. Similarly, when asked about the intra-identity conflicts, many teachers not only denied experiencing these conflicts themselves, but also trivialized their students’ experiences with them. And yet, during the course of a general discussion about controversial issues, teachers did cite numerous examples of intra-identity conflicts that they personally felt and believed their students experienced.

As I discuss in greater detail below, I also heard teachers reinforce discourses of liberal multiculturalism that assert that individuals belong to singular and readily identifiable cultural groups, which predetermine their behaviours, beliefs, and orientations toward institutions like schools and consequently their (in)ability to succeed. Many teachers articulated generalizations about students’ gender identities, cultural identities, religious identities, age, as well as their academic identities relative to their interest in and engagement with controversial issues. Similarly, it was evident that teachers perceived their own teacher identities to be readily identifiable and predetermined – only the key characteristic defining them was neutrality. This was most elucidated through the ways that teachers asserted a blank slate ideal of teacher identity as an enabler for teaching controversial issues.

In what follows, I discuss four manifestations of teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues that support my argument that teachers, for the most part, affirmed liberal and modernist conceptions of identity, and reproduced dominant paradigms of schooling that discount teachers’ and students’ identities as valuable material for learning. These include the ways that teachers a) presumed teacher identity as a neutral norm, b) reinforced a belief in a blank slate ideal, c) essentialized identity, and d) denied and trivialized intra-identity conflicts.

Presumptions of Teacher Identity as Neutral and Norm: The Blank Slate Ideal

While many of the teachers conceded that individuals have multiple dimensions to their identities (“I can be both a science teacher and a Christian at the same time”), they tended to perceive their own identities in significantly limited ways. For instance, they accepted the
existence of multiple identity categories on a census form, but felt that only a small number of these were relevant to them. In fact, many of the teachers believed that they did not have a political, religious, or cultural identity – at all. Common responses to my prompting, for instance, included “that’s neutral for me” (Mark), “that doesn’t apply” (Lan), “I don’t have one” (Simon), “doesn’t even play into it” (Mary), and “doesn’t exist” (Ron). Teachers seemed surprised by my questions about the impact of their gender, cultural, political, and civic identities on their teaching of controversial issues. Their brief responses indicated to me that it was not only a matter of teachers making decisions not to draw on their identities as resources for teaching; it was that they struggled to understand the connection between their identities and their pedagogy.

The only identity that stood out, in that some teachers elaborated on it, was cultural identity. Of the three responses that I got, one was by Mick who replied “I’m sort of British, you know, I tend to see things in black and white.” Richard described himself as “English-Canadian” and explained that he relayed this to his students to make the point that “unless we are First Nations People, we are all immigrants.” Nicolas explained that people often mistakenly assumed that he was from a Spanish speaking country based on his physical appearance (i.e. culture as Other discourse that is dominant in liberal multiculturalism). When asked about their cultural identities, teachers thought I was confused (this was evidenced by their body language, in particular their facial expressions). I had the impression that this was primarily because they assumed that their white skin (all but 2 of the 16 teachers) communicated a neutral norm from which Other cultures layered onto in unique ways which gave them a cultural identity. This resonated with discourses of neutrality and universalism that presume that ‘we have knowledge, they have culture’ (Andreotti, 2011). In disassociating culture from freedom and liberalism, — as well as cultural community from consumer society — Gary, for example, failed to view his own consumer identity as a manifestation of his culture, and, in contrast, regarded Other cultures as disassociated from consumerism.

Teacher’s assumptions about cultural identity (who has it and who doesn’t) also has implications for how they conceptualize culturally responsive pedagogy. However, teachers’ predominant assumptions about culture as Other, and the seemingly minimal number of students they saw fit that category, might explain why so few teachers talked about cultural identity. Nor did I hear examples of pedagogy that I would interpret as culturally responsive in this Othering
sense (practices that normalized a diverse range of values, customs, and worldviews, and that involved relationship building with the various cultural communities of which students were a part). While a great deal of their subject matter has the potential to be culturally responsive (in terms of the attention teachers paid to consumer culture, in particular, and to values and priorities associated with Albertan identity), these examples did not align with teachers’ own conceptualizations of ‘culture’ as ‘other.’

Teachers affirmed not only their belief that they were neutral, but also their presumption that their identities were the norm. Gary’s comparison of “a police officer who does not wear a turban” to a public school teacher whose uniform he believed was similarly neutral implied a few things. First, it implied that leaving identity markers at home was a positive thing for public servants, and second that the uniform of a police officer and that of a social studies teacher were neutral uniforms. In effect, he did not recognize these as markers of privilege and power:

As a teacher in the classroom, it’s just like ‘hi, I’m here doing my job.’ And the uniform of a social studies teacher is just sort of relaxed, casual, Eddie Bauer sort of catalogue wear (laughs). So I’m neutral I guess.

What I heard in many similar instances again affirmed this assumption that Others have culture; whereas teachers and white Canadians are neutral. While some teachers were equating Canadian identity with whiteness (Gary, Doug, Richard, Betty), others conceived of religion only in terms of Christianity (Richard, Sean, Mick, Lan), thus once again reflecting their own reference points as the norm. Religions and skin colors that deviated from these perceived norms were perceived as add-ons. These examples underscore the need for critical reflexivity in professional practice. Gary’s comments, in particular, struck me because I would describe Gary as a progressive educator, if I were to apply the criteria traditionally associated with this term. He asked questions, valued critical thinking, he was one of the only teachers who explicitly linked teaching controversial issues with democracy, and he attended educational research conferences focused on social justice with the goal toward applying what he learned in his role as a curriculum consultant. If Gary was not thinking about how power mediates unequal social relations and identity locations, what inferences might be drawn about teachers who are not interested in social justice education at all?

With regard to their political identity, some teachers did respond by positioning themselves along the official political spectrum that they taught their students. When this was the
case, they tended to describe their political views as “moderate” (Richard, for example, proudly described himself as a moderate because he “disliked extreme ideological positions.”). An exception to this was Stan, who described himself as “a modern liberal.” These teachers acknowledged that they had a political identity (likely important to the politics teachers, in particular, of which there were many). Also, nearly every teacher interpreted political identity in the context of formal political participation, as exemplified by Lan’s response: ‘I’m like, I have to vote this year?’ Although expressing strong political views throughout our interviews, some teachers failed to commit to any particular political identity. A case in point was Mick, whose politics were made abundantly clear to me throughout our two hour telephone interview, yet who, when asked directly about this aspect of his identity, described his political identity as “neutral”. Many of the teachers also spoke about their political identities in ways that suggested they believed this aspect of their identity to be open to redefinition. They were more likely to acknowledge the fluidity of their political identities than any other identity location (with the exception of their civic identities, which I will discuss shortly). Gary, for instance, described his political identity as “always evolving” and “not a static thing.” He explained to me (as did Richard, Betty, and Ron) that over the course of different elections he had voted for at least three different parties. Ron described how he explained to his students that his political identity was “constantly changing” which he told them was “great” because “you don’t have to be one or the other.” Betty, too, explained that her political identity “changes daily” and that she “hops around.” She went on to explain that “there are people that think I’m a raging conservative and other people that think I’m a raving liberal!”, which she expressed with pride. Betty went on to describe herself as a “fence sitter,” a position which she defended as “just meaning [people] who can’t decide.” Simon, similarly, felt “fortunate” because he was “on the fence on many issues.” Neutrality seemed to be interpreted as goal for both teaching and learning with controversial issues and multiple perspectives.

While teachers affirmed fluid and shifting post-modern conceptions of this aspect of identity, their saying that their political identities were constantly shifting was one way for them to uphold their presumed neutral identity status by avoiding positioning themselves ideologically. This was in line with their emphasis on teaching students to hold multiple positions on issues. These types of responses were just a sample of indicators of the extent to which the teachers believed that being a teacher meant having a neutral identity. Sadly, many of the teachers, viewed identity — and, by extension, strong beliefs, values, opinions, or culture —
as an obstacle that stood in the way of teaching controversial issues. This was evidenced by the language that teachers used in interviews in that they rarely spoke from the first person, and instead most often referred to *we*. This belief was predominantly expressed in their articulation of what I am calling the blank slate ideal for teaching and learning with controversial issues.

The blank slate ideal that I frequently heard articulated by teachers refers to the ways that they spoke about identities and their associated values, beliefs, and interests as obstacles, not assets or resources, for teaching controversial issues. Teachers argued both that strong identity affiliations were impediments, and that their absence was an enabler of teaching and learning with controversial issues. This blank slate was perceived as an ideal condition for the pedagogical focus. Several teachers, for example, believed that their absence of a “strong religious affiliation”, in particular, enabled their ability to teach controversial issues (Peter, Sean, Lan, Gary, Richard). This was articulated most clearly by Gary in his example of the turban-wearing police officer. Not only did they regard their own absence of strong religious identities as enablers of controversial issues teaching, moreover, Richard also implied that students with strong religious identities were not the target of his instruction about multiple perspectives on controversial issues, as though these students represented lost causes. To the extent that when teachers considered students’ identities they were principally concerned about how material might negatively be received by students and/or their parents, it was clear that it was not only teachers’ own identity affiliations that they viewed as hindrances instead of assets for teaching and learning with controversial issues, but students’ as well.

Indeed, the primary reason teachers gave for believing that the absence of strong identity interests and affiliations enabled them in their teaching practice was their belief that these obstructed peoples’ capacities to appreciate multiple perspectives. Teachers’ valuing of multiple perspectives also clearly intersected with the blank slate ideal to the extent that teachers viewed the multiple dimensions of their identities as impeding their capacity to value all perspectives. Betty, for example, stated: “say I only saw myself as a white female Canadian Edmontonian…how many people I would exclude from having value.” Betty described her ultimate goal as being able to “get out of” her perspective and wished this upon all teachers and students as well. But this is very different from critically examining one’s perspective (and the legacies, factors and assumptions that inform it) and taking that up as material for learning. The former is not only a manifestation of the difference-blind ideal but is also a form of denial.
because, like common misconceptions about being able to escape bias, getting out of one’s perspective is not possible. Looking critically and reflexively at one’s perspective is much more difficult and uncomfortable, yet very possible. While Betty argued that teachers needed to be aware of their own values and beliefs in order to minimize bias (e.g. "put themselves a little bit to the side"), CDGCE involves acknowledging the inevitability of bias (in both teachers and students), and examining how and when it operates (as well as looking at what beliefs and values underlie those biases and assumptions). This kind of explicit critical scrutiny is what ought to comprise the practice for teachers from the perspective of CDGCE. Pretending that identities do not exist, or that they can be stored in a locker before class, won’t do.

A further assumption that I heard in this line of thinking that is concerning is the assumption that anyone different from oneself would necessarily be perceived to have less value. Betty believed that her identity hindered her because she was “very white, middle class, and heterosexual.” In effect, not only did Betty not regard identity as material for teaching and learning controversial issues, she argued that identity was the greatest obstacle standing in the way of that. The important work that needs to be done, however, is not to deny identities or erase the perspectives that are shaped by them, but to be reflexive and provoke difficult questions about how aspects of identity are constructed and how they intersect with and implicate the lives of others, including by conceding privilege and complicity in harm and exclusion, and complicity in the reproduction of status quo interests and relations of subordination. This would mean, for example, looking carefully at the assumption Betty made that she would necessarily perceive Others who are different from her as having less value. Such assumptions are legacies of deeply embedded and historicized discourses of power and relations of subordination. A simple act of wiping the slate clean will not dispel these discourses. Moreover, although it may seem counterintuitive, the notion that any kind of erasure is possible, or even desirable (as an “ideal, using Betty’s words), would only reinforce and reproduce those discourses.

While most teachers felt impeded by their identities, Mary was an exception. She felt that her age and gender enabled her in that the students, parents, and administration viewed her as a harmless “little old lady.” This feeling of advantage, however, was a product of hegemonic discourses that portray seniors and women as nurturing, non-threatening, and apolitical, rather than an affirmation of these identities. Although Mary viewed these identity assumptions favourably, in that they enabled her to do some critical work, she did not describe these
discourses as opportunities for her to enact agency by naming, confronting or subverting them. Instead, she was comfortable with not being taken seriously. Mary also implied having a strong association with her identity as a teacher, which compensated in some ways for the invisibility she felt in society as an older woman. She did not feel invisible in school. On the contrary, she felt needed and capable of influencing and nurturing her students’ well-being and morality by being there for them after class. In this way, however, she viewed her teacher identity in relation to controversial issues more as a manifestation of parenting (individually counselling students to cope with difficult issues) more so than teaching children how to discursively engage and respond to controversial issues. One way that Mary’s gender and age informed her attitude toward teaching controversial issues was via her uncritical acceptance of hegemonic discourses of subordination. This is wherein the power of discourse lies: individuals fulfill the roles and identities that they have been enculturated into, without notice – even while believing themselves to be doing critical work.

The blank slate ideal reinforces the difference-blind ideal of liberal pluralism and runs counter to political theories of agonistic pluralism. It is when people confront identity differences, rather than avoid them, that democracy is deepened. It is when students are given the opportunity to express their strong religious/political/cultural beliefs that pluralism thrives. Instead of exposing students to multiple perspectives, the goal of pedagogy should not be to stifle those strong views but prepare the students to articulate and critically engage them. Instead it seems that teachers wanted their students to learn how to have a blank slate so that they could be open to learning about and understanding multiple perspectives. There is an important difference here, which is very much related to discourses of multiculturalism. Respecting diversity of views, customs, and cultures does not mean that you cannot also critically and discursively engage them. Richard’s comments that he ‘dislikes extreme ideological positions’ and that he will not engage the notion of homosexuality as a controversial issue sound nice. But regardless of our stance on extremism and homophobia, these need to be named and discursively engaged. These views need to be responded to and challenged because some people are extremists and homophobic. Doing this kind of work cannot involve accepting all perspectives as equally valid; because doing so would reinforce views that perpetuate xenophobia and that have material consequences for people. Instead, the work, and the learning, needs to involve unearthing the historicized tensions and assumptions that underlie such views.
The importance of taking up differences across identities as material for learning and deepening democracy is also asserted in classroom research such as that conducted by Hess (2009), which demonstrated a crucial connection between the discussion of controversial issues and the health of a democracy, especially among people with disparate views. Hess found that talking in clustered communities of sameness with likeminded people can lead to the aforementioned ideological amplification of views. This has important implications for the politics of difference in schools. If pedagogical ideology leans toward the ideals of neutrality and blank slate little room is left for difference to be articulated, let alone normalized. Consequently, students will think of their multiple identities (and their concomitant values and beliefs) as obstacles, and not as assets for learning and democracy.

Since when does democracy presuppose neutrality and the adoption of all perspectives? How did this discourse become so engrained in teachers’ thinking and pedagogy for teaching controversial issues? As seen earlier, the all-views-are-equal approach can result in adoption of no one particular perspective on issues. Similarly, the avoidance of — rather than critical engagement with — perspectives that have been shaped by our multiple identity locations can result in empty democracy, where people have no opinions or positions on issues, where relations of subordination are left unchallenged, where difficult questions about the social construction of identity and difference are discouraged. De-politicizing democracy can only lead to apathy and complicity and, more important, the reinforcement and reproduction of status quo interests.

**Essentializing Identity as Hidden Curriculum**

Rather than destabilizing their identities (and those of their students) and attending to their complexities, teachers were frequently essentializing them, thus again affirming liberal and modernist conceptions of identity. Whereas CDGCE challenges liberal multiculturalism’s notion that individuals belong to singular and readily identifiable cultural groups — that predetermine their behaviours, beliefs, and orientations toward institutions like schools, and thus their (in)ability to succeed (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2010) — many teachers were reinforcing these monolithic stereotypes in ways that again were pointing to the insidious power of discourse. Instead of openly and critically examining the role of schools in constructing and perpetuating such categories, many of them were reinforcing these categories as hidden curriculum. This was a further example of how the notion of identity was significantly neglected as explicit and
intentional material for teaching and learning with controversial issues despite the extent to which teachers’ and students’ identities were so evidently impacting teachers’ pedagogy. In particular, identity was essentialized with respect to three foci that I will discuss herein: 1) Albertan identity, 2) Canadian identity, and 3) a variety of dimensions of students’ identities.

What it means to be Albertan and the Implications for teaching controversial issues

Several teachers spoke about Albertan identity in essentialist terms, describing it using a variety of descriptors that teachers distanced themselves from personally: “rednecks,” “Christian fundamentalists,” “right of center conservatives,” “right-wing mean spirited types with ulterior motives,” and “staunch supporters of the oil sands.” Sometimes, I had the impression they were describing a very close relative of theirs that had financially supported them through school and helped position them in a comfortable lifestyle, but a relative who they were uneasy about introducing to friends for fear of what they might say. Jim was the only teacher who was explicitly critical of the popular tendency to pigeonhole Alberta, stating that “the Alberta context can be overblown” and cautioning that this discursive trend to lump all Albertans together as a knowable and fixed entity was just as problematic as referring to the Aboriginal perspective as though all Aboriginal Peoples thought the same way.

Many teachers not only used essentializing descriptors when talking about Albertans, (or people who live in particular areas of the province like Fort McMurray, Calgary, and Central Alberta), but they also associated these with very specific ideological positions – illustrating the power of essentializing practices. Doug, for example, equated “redneck” with a “conservative” and in turn someone who would likely never vote for a woman or a Muslim (both of whom incidentally have recently reached political positions of power in Alberta), while for Stan the term conjured up an image of tar sands workers who do not believe in global warming. While the term “redneck” connotes a variety of identity characteristics (most recently, racist people), historically it has been used as a derogatory slang term in reference to poor, uneducated, white farmers. In this case, teachers were substituting “farmers” for tar sands workers, and they seemed to overlook the connotations concerning class altogether (i.e. unlike the reference to farming, the tar sands are a significant generator of wealth and income). Mick, Mary, and Betty all spoke about the large number of Christian fundamentalists in Alberta, and associated this identity descriptor with homophobia and “people who don’t believe in science.” Such comments reinforced oversimplified conceptions of identity premised on assumptions that discount the
complex array of subject positions individuals hold. A comment made by Sean further exemplified the essentializing of Albertan identity, though this time it concerned more the identity of the province itself. Sean described Alberta as an “oil province” and explained to me that this characteristic was “part of our natural way of doings things here.” The “natural” he was referring to was “tradition,” which he interpreted as a force that predetermined, defined, and locked in Albertan identity and Albertans’ relationship to oil sands development. The troubling implications of essentializing practices for agency were most evident when he stated “there’s not a lot the average Albertan can do about that” because that’s “who we are”. These examples underscore the “power-full” effect of essentializing people and places as fixed and knowable in that they invoke associations and draw conclusions that impact people’s understandings of themselves and others in ways that discount agency, complexity, and possibility.

**What it means to be Canadian and the implications for teaching controversial issues**

Many teachers also spoke about Canadian identity in essentializing terms, principally describing Canadians as open-minded, safe, diverse, fence-sitters, middle-ground, multicultural, consensus-reachers, peacekeepers, and not American. These attributes, which teachers frequently associated with enabling their teaching of controversial issues, were named by nearly every teacher – suggesting that they believed that Canadian identity could be known. At the same time, however, as they did with their political identities, they also spoke about Canadian identity as shifting and uncertain (“tough to put your finger on”), and thus open to change (unlike Albertan identity). What could be “known” about Canadian identity, in other words, was only uncertainty itself, which one could argue to some extent subverts essentialization and asserts post-modern conceptions of identity. I revisit teachers’ conceptualizations of Canadian identity in more depth when I discuss “intra-identity” conflicts, and later when I discuss teachers’ interruptions of dominant discourses of schooling.

**What it means to be a “particular” student and the implications for teaching controversial issues**

When speaking about their students’ identities as both hindrances and enablers for teaching controversial issues teachers frequently used essentializing terms. They commonly described, for example, what they assumed could be known about particular categories of students based on their age, gender, geography, ethno-cultural identities, religious affiliations, and locations within educational streams (applied, International Baccalaureate, academic). More than that, they drew associations between these categories and students’ engagement with
controversial issues. In addition to the various categories that I will elaborate on here, teachers also sometimes essentialized the category of student to the extent that they frequently referred to students as predictable and as passive absorbers and receivers of knowledge (distinct from complex agents and citizens who participate in constructing knowledge and culture).

Some examples of essentializing statements about students’ identities were comments by just a few or individual teachers. Ron and Mark, for example, labelled the students that go to school in Fort McMurray as “vehemently happy oil sands kids” and “supporters of the oil sands because everyone they know works for them [oil companies].” Mick spoke about Muslim males as a source of discomfort in that they tended to give female teachers a rough time. In light of this, Mick felt enabled by his gender identity as a male when teaching controversial issues. What is more, earlier in the interview he had made another essentializing comment about Muslim males when he relayed a news story about the sexual assault of a female western news correspondent by a group of male Muslims. As he was talking about male Muslim students, however, Mick became aware of his xenophobic view that positioned Muslims as aggressors, and added a qualifier: “but that’s not a controversial topic, it’s just an interpersonal thing that seems to crop up with certain groups of kids.”

In another example, after having earlier expressed his adamant belief about the indisputable rights of Aboriginals—this being an issue that he refused to name ‘controversial’ because “a right is a right,”—Richard made essentializing comments about the Aboriginal students in his school when he described them as “not politicized,” as students who “do not speak with a strong voice,” and as students who “don’t see themselves as having that cultural or ethnic identity.” He proceeded to say that he was under the impression that non-Aboriginal students tended to have stronger views on issues effecting Aboriginal peoples than Aboriginal students did. Richard’s comments were not only troubling in that he made assumptions about his students and judged them, but also in that he disregarded voices of Aboriginal students that have been systematically and violently silenced and marginalized throughout the history of Canadian education. Not only did he not enact culturally responsive pedagogy by integrating, for example, some of this history as curriculum content or by normalizing the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in course texts, but he put the onus on the students rather than himself to enact this pedagogy: he implied that Aboriginal voices were not being heard in the classroom because his
Aboriginal students were not talking. Never did he consider why that might be, and what implications that could/should have on his pedagogy.

Two of the male science teachers also spoke about female students in ways that essentialized gender. Doug, for example, in the context of speaking about the impact of his gender identity on teaching controversial issues, mentioned that female students dressed in skimpy clothing to invite attention, which meant that he had to be “careful.” When I asked Sean, a relatively novice teacher, to describe what a discussion about the topic of the tar sands looked like in his classroom, he responded that female students were “caring, empathetic, sympathetic, and concerned about the environment” whereas male students were more likely to admire the money their fathers were making in the oil fields. When I inquired about his own gender identity, moreover, he responded that his gender did have an impact on his teaching of controversial issues because as a male, he tended to have strong opinions. In effect, Sean expressed the view that women care about environment (or nature, with which the western philosophical tradition has historically aligned them with), whereas men are rational in their consideration of practical implications (like finances) and forming strong opinions.

The two most common, and related, categories of students that teachers demarcated and spoke about in essentializing ways pertained to students’ ages and streaming levels. These, again, implicated power and inclusion in vital ways – particularly with regard to questions about which student’s teachers believed should have opportunities for engaging with controversial issues in school, and which students they did not think could handle these opportunities, or needed them at all. These are not just questions about teaching and learning with controversial issues, they are questions about who is being prepared to participate in democracy, and who is being left out. These essentializing views of students implicate questions about teachers’ perceptions of student agency, which also intersect with equity in that these have dangerous potential to exacerbate and reproduce uneven social relations within this generation of citizens.

Sean and Simon, for example, both taught at the junior high level, and each felt that they could not go into the “depth” that they thought was important for teaching controversial issues with this level of students. Sean described them as “too young”, and Simon felt that younger students’ excitement about arguing was a hindrance. Richard too, was of the view that “high school aged students are more sophisticated” (he also said “accepting” but then recanted), and he
believed that there was a greater likelihood of success in teaching them to “get over the stereotypes.” Not only did the irony of his words escape Richard (he stereotyped his own students), but he also failed to see the importance of teaching controversial issues to children from an early age. This would not only provide kids with an opportunity to pay attention and detect stereotypes (among other things), of which Richard himself was victim, but would also make high school teachers’ work easier. Simon, moreover, expressed interest in being able to teach controversial issues at the high school level, and “especially with AP students” whom he considered to be “more in the mind frame to do controversial issues.” Other teachers expressed similar views about streaming levels. Lan, for example, explained that “the lower kids” love controversial issues “because they get to argue” (lower here referred to lower academic level, not grade level). She also believed they were more likely to become excited by celebrities like guest speakers Romeo Dallaire and Stephen Lewis. At one point, Lan explained that although the topic of birth control was not in the curriculum for the ‘lower kids,’ she taught it anyway because “these are the students that are interested” – implying that they were also more sexually active. Lan explained that generally, opportunities for teaching and learning with controversial issues were more frequent in the IB program than in the applied curriculum. In her words, this was because the IB students “actually need this.” This comment underscored the ways that not only teachers, but curriculum texts, essentialize student identities via the opportunities for learning they include and exclude for particular ages and streams.

Mary also made some essentializing comments about “applied” students when she explained that she preferred to teach this group of students about controversial issues (over the academic stream of students) because these students were “more open, accepting, and respectful of each other.” She attributed these characterizations, moreover, to her view that “applied students are not as focused academically” and so “not as terrified of the exam process.” Academic students, conversely, she described as “focused, career oriented, and the crème de la crème.” Mark believed that his liberal arts students were more accepting of homosexuality than your average student, in line with what he interpreted to be their more “progressive” character. Finally, the sorting practices of schools and their implications for students’ social identities and relations were similarly left unquestioned by Gary, who shrugged his shoulders and conceded: “you know, it’s high school - you’ve got the nerds and the jocks and whatever – the traditional types of social sorting that go on.” Like Richard, while he alluded to schools’ complicity in participating in the construction of students’ identities, Gary did not view these sorting practices
as something that he thought important to intervene in, respond to, or create learning opportunities around. Instead, this is just how things were in schools.

In their articulation of associations between particular categories of students and their capacity to engage with controversial issues in better and worse ways, teachers implied that students’ identities were fixed, stable, and predetermined rather than complex, historicized, plural, and unfinished. Such characterizations of Muslim males as troublemakers, applied students as promiscuous fighters, IB students as more “in need” of democratic citizenship education, and girls as emotional are vital indicators of the extent to which teachers were not reflexive about the role of schools and teachers in construction of students’ identities and reproduction of uneven social relations. How could schools, ever be regarded as places for students to learn to make identity choices (Appiah, 2007), when schools and teachers significantly regard students’ identities as knowable and finished? How teachers spoke about students’ identities further affirmed the power of the discourse dimensions of thought, perception, and action: individuals fulfill the roles that they are encultured (and educated) into, without notice. The individuals that are relevant here include both teachers and students. Teachers are fulfilling their roles as neutral facilitators of education within a system that sorts students into “singular and readily identifiable groups that predetermine their behaviours, beliefs, and orientations toward institutions like schools, and thus their (in)ability to succeed” (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2010). Students are encultured, through schools, into particular identity categories that influence how they view themselves and Others. CDGCE, in its attention to reflexive practice, has the potential to prepare teachers and students to learn to notice how these discourses operate in and through schools (including teaching, curriculum, and normalized practices) – and yet these were not the type of learning opportunities that I was hearing teachers describe. What I was hearing instead were reminders of why these opportunities matter so much.

**Intra-Identity Conflicts as Hidden and Null Curriculum**

Deepening democracy under conditions of globalization requires not only acknowledgement of identities as complex and unfinished, but also of subject positions and identity interests as multiple, and at times conflicting – not only between individuals, but also within them. A valuable aspect of the identity work required in response involves not only engaging discursively with others about conflicts across competing identity interests, but engaging reflexively with ourselves about how aspects of our own identities uneasily intersect
with one another. This kind of intra-identity work attends to the politics of identity and
difference to the extent that it can enable visceral and not only rational understanding of the
challenges implicated in identity contests. In addition, it is vital for unearthing and confronting
difficult subject positions that may be unknown, ignored, or suppressed as a result of such factors as, for example, the null curriculum of schooling and/or the hidden curriculum of essentialization
and normalization of identity that occurs in schools. These influence how individuals think,
perceive, and act in ways that have material consequences for social relations mediated by power
because they delineate norms and Others.

Rather than function narrowly as institutions of cultural reproduction, CDGCE asserts the
possibility of schools to act as spaces wherein teachers and students thoughtfully engage in intra-
identity work as transformative pedagogy for reflexive interruption of xenophobic attitudes, and
as learning material for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization. CDGCE
encourages teachers and students to critically engage learning material in terms of how it
intersects with their own identities, including their social identity locations, values, beliefs,
assumptions, experiences, prior knowledge, traditions, and interests (Andreotti, 2006; Ellsworth,
1989). This reflexive work involves paying attention to where intra-subjective positions conflict
and contradict one another. According to Ellsworth (1989), identity in this sense becomes “a
vehicle for multiplying and making more complex the subject positions possible, visible, and
legitimate at any given historical moment” (p. 399). These types of intra-identity conflicts can
and should arise when teaching and learning controversial issues.

Significantly, as I reported, with few exceptions teachers were not taking up intra-identity
conflicts as explicit material for learning. When teachers referred to multiple or competing
perspectives, they assumed multiplicity only from outside of the self. When I asked them directly
about intra-identity conflicts, many teachers did not feel these were something that they
personally experienced, and many trivialized and downplayed students’ experiences with them,
telling me that they had the impression that students had “pretty much reconciled those within
themselves” (Ron) and that students “don’t seem to take issues that personally” (Richard). When
they did acknowledge their own polyvocal identities, some spoke about these as multiple, but
nevertheless treated them as discrete and compartmentalized rather than complexly overlapping.
Doug, for example, stated that he did not experience conflicts across multiple dimensions of his
identities because “you pick different times to [be] different things.” When Sean mentioned a
teacher who taught the creationist perspective in a science class, he condemned the teacher because, while conceding that he himself believed in God as well as evolution, he felt strongly that the creationist perspective “should be kept for religion class, and [the evolutionary perspective] for science class.” These examples elucidate one of the ways that teachers seemed not to be committed to understanding identity through its complexity (Appiah, 2007), but instead understood identity through a denial of its complexity.

Teachers’ denials of intra-identity conflicts were both influenced by, and manifestations of, hegemonic discourses of neutrality, including the difference-blind and blank slate ideals that I heard being reinforced by teachers. Some questions that these ideals evoke, for example, are: how do you experience, and teach, engagement with intra-identity conflicts when you believe your own identity to be neutral (and significantly singular) and your students’ identities to be predetermined and closed? If you presume to know who your students are, what identity conflicts might you imagine your students confronting? These beliefs leave little room for engagement with intra-identity conflicts as material for teaching and learning.

In their responses to my interview questions about their attitudes toward teaching controversial issues more generally (not when I asked them about intra-identity conflict specifically), teachers cited numerous examples of intra-identity conflicts that they personally experienced (and others that they believed their students experienced as well, which I will discuss shortly). These discrepancies affirmed my belief in the critical importance of reflexive work as a response to the power of hegemonic discourses that presume identity as singular and knowable. Teachers’ instincts were to respond that identity conflicts were not relevant to them in their neutral identities. Yet, it became evident to me throughout the interviews that they did experience these conflicts, and that they impacted their pedagogy for teaching controversial issues in complex ways that had implications for students’ opportunities for learning. Sean and Lan, for example, both expressed some unease reconciling their Catholic identities with their identities as science teachers. For Lan this meant inviting the school pastor in to teach about “the church stuff” (i.e. choosing to compartmentalize her identities, or as Doug put it “be different things at different times”). Mark, relatedly, referred to some conflict across his personal religious beliefs and what he believed his responsibilities were as a teacher when he expressed discomfort teaching the creationist perspective of the Evolutionist/Creationist issue because he himself was an atheist. He felt uneasy teaching something that he himself did not believe in. Rather than
being transparent with students about his identity as an atheist, Mark upheld his perceived neutrality and turned off this aspect of his identity. Richard, too, experienced some conflict but in terms of his identities as a male and as a teacher when he was responsible for teaching sex education. The effect on his “not wanting to cause any female students to take offense” was that he “tread more carefully” and invited the public health nurse in to teach these topics for him, thus temporarily turning off his teacher identity in light of his gender identity.

Stan, in particular, gave several examples of intra-identity conflicts throughout our interview. He opposed the passing of Bill 44 from the perspective of his identity as a teacher, but supported it from the perspective of his identity as a parent. He also felt some conflict between his own values and those of the community that he taught in, and this was most apparent when he shared his discomfort teaching about issues related to war and conflict to students whose parents were fighting in Afghanistan, and teaching in a community that was home to a substantial military base. Being a pacifist, Stan chose to avoid conflict, rather than provoke discussion on, these tensions: “I have to be a lot more sensitive to that – and that one always causes me some level of discomfort. Maybe I do try to shy away from that just a little bit – maybe more than I otherwise would, you know?” In another example, Stan described feeling some conflict in his identity as an individual of German descent teaching about the Holocaust to Jewish students. In this case, the impact on his pedagogy was that the content of his lessons was focused on his feelings of guilt. While Stan created some opportunity for his students to think about identity conflicts by talking with them about the tensions he felt, it seemed that his engagement with the Holocaust survivors was an opportunity for his own engagement with these tensions more so than it was a learning opportunity for his students to engage difficult questions and tensions that they may have been experiencing (including their own feelings about being taught about the Holocaust by a teacher of German descent). Because he may not have been reflexive about the value of his intra-identity conflicts on his teaching practice, Stan’s intra-identity conflicts became the content of the lesson in a way that excluded students’ voices, feelings, and perspectives.

One of the more common examples of intra-identity conflict that I heard expressed by teachers (though not framed as such by them) was uneasiness many of them experienced in their identities as teachers and as Albertans, particularly when teaching about climate change. Mark, for example, stated:
Ultimately in Alberta it always has an economic argument – and it’s legitimate. I mean, the wealth of this province is heavily the result of fossil fuels. So for us to sit there and say ‘it’s damaging to the environment and therefore it’s a potential issue’ [is not easy] because billions of dollars are generated everyday as income for citizens and for the province of Alberta, and for the country of Canada. Money speaks louder than ducks ultimately, or anything else that might be damaged. It’s a tough sell in this province because it seems that people are quite reactionary when anyone says anything negative about the tar sands. (Mark)

Likewise, Richard cautiously explained that “because a lot of the students’ parents are employed in the oil industry” he censored himself somewhat when teaching about climate change “so as not to say something that students may find offensive.” Nicolas made a similar comment when he spoke about his wife’s employment in the oil and gas industry. Mick’s description of his uneasiness participating in “free” professional development offered by the oil and gas industries in Alberta was a further example of this category of intra-identity conflict. Mick described it as a struggle to participate in the PD because of his strong beliefs about climate change and consideration of himself as an environmentalist, and because of his interest in teaching students to be critical consumers. Yet, he did participate in this PD, which was neither mandated nor took place within regularly scheduled professional development time (involving the arrangement of teacher release time etc.), because as a teacher, he required access to resources that were relevant to his subject area (Chemistry), which he felt he was not getting from official channels within the school system. Judging by teachers’ downplaying of the significance of the tar sands on their teaching when I asked them about it directly (e.g. shrugging shoulders as if to say ‘it is not a big deal,’ emphasizing the opportunities for learning they afforded over the challenges they posed), and their frequent references to the tar sands as a major source of employment—as something that everyone was personally connected to—it was evident that there was a discourse of silence operating around this political issue in their classroom teaching. It was also evident, however, through teachers’ descriptions of student interest and engagement with this topic, that these types of conflicts were something that students were interested in talking about. Nearly all teachers gave examples of students’ interest in the topic of the tar sands, and Nicolas’s description of one of his students’ experience negotiating conflicts elucidated the pedagogical import of such opportunities for learning. Although this outcome was unintended on his part, Nicolas recognized it as valuable:

I remember having a student who was – when I mentioned my debate to you earlier – I had them working on…well, there was 4 groups: the industry group, the environmental group, government, and your average worker. I had this girl who ended up working in the industry side and when they started working on their arguments and their pillars, she realized ‘well, as much as I like industry and I want
the economy to work and I want this to go well, I really like the environment and I don’t know if I’m okay with telling industry to go ahead and do all these things because I’m really pro-environment’. So, it was really neat because she started second guessing like…her own identity, right? What I said to her was that there was a lot of people within that industry that were also pro-environment and their job was to have a minimal impact. (Nicolas)

Nicolas responded to this student by explaining to her that she did not need to align herself with only one perspective – letting her know that some people who work for the tar sands are also environmentalists. This example sheds light on the complexity of these issues: he asserted post-modern conceptualizations of identity by affirming multiple, including conflicting, aspects of identity. At the same time, however, his response also evaded the political dimension and affirmed neutrality by encouraging his student to “wear both hats” without also encouraging her to critically engage, rather than simply accept, the tensions across these interests. This was similar to the ways that many teachers encouraged students to adopt ‘multiple’ perspectives without attending to them critically. In each of these cases, students were learning that multiple and conflicting perspectives exist, and that people hold multiple identities and interests that sometimes conflict. When multiplicity (of identity and perspective) is regarded as the end in itself, everybody is everything. While this has a positive ring to it, the implications for democracy and equity are detrimental because the outcome equals neutrality and politics without the political—and that leads to the reproduction of status quo ideals.

Another area of intra-identity conflict that I was specifically interested in probing concerned the relationship between teachers’ Canadian and Global Citizenship Identities. Rather than view national and global dimensions of civic identity in terms of an either/or binary, CDGCE recognizes binary thinking as a dominant discourse that constrains individuals’ capacity to apprehend multiplicity and complexity, and that reinforces social and socio-ecological relations of subordination. Because CDGCE recognizes the power of schools and of curriculum text as instruments of discourse reproduction and identity construction (Bickmore, 2006), it also recognizes emancipatory possibility in the ways that these can provoke considerations of not only what it means to be a Canadian but also what it might mean to be both Canadian and a global citizen, including considerations of how these multiple dimensions of identity and their ensuing interests may at times conflict. With these considerations in mind, I posed this question of the research findings: In what ways did teachers speak about the relationship between Canadian citizenship identity and global citizenship identity as compatible and/or in tension?
Before elaborating on the Canadian-global citizenship dynamic, it is important to recall that teachers expressed intra-identity conflicts when they described the struggles they experienced identifying as global citizens. Earlier in this chapter I discussed how more than half of the teachers that I interviewed did not regard themselves as global citizens because they viewed this outside of their reach as a consequence of their consumer lifestyles. Although they aspired to being global citizens, they did not feel comfortable identifying themselves as such because the characteristics they associated with global citizenship (social justice, equity, awareness of social and environmental harm caused by particular consumer practices) did not reconcile with their consumer behaviours. They experienced conflict across their identities as consumers and as global citizens because many of them believed that global citizenship required absolute reconciliation between knowledge, values, and behaviour. In this way, teachers enforced zero tolerance for contradiction and conflict across multiple dimensions of identity. When one dimension did not reconcile with another, they turned one of them off. The outcome of this belief in absolute reconciliation meant that teachers ruled out global citizenship identity altogether – writing it off as incompatible with their identities as consumers. They reinforced binary discourse of either/or thinking and chose, in effect, to be consumers over being global citizens in order to alleviate the discomfort caused to them by the identity conflict. Were these identities not in conflict, however, it seemed these teachers would not have a problem identifying as both consumers and global citizens. It is important to recognize that the teachers struggled not with the notion of having multiple identities per se, but with negotiating the tensions and contradictions caused by them. Turning one aspect of identity off meant not having to deal with uncomfortable feelings of complicity that might accompany contradictions (such as the guilt expressed by Stan, Sean, Charlie, and Mick about driving their cars and making purchasing decisions that did not reconcile with their values). I am aware that I sound as though I am contradicting myself here, and I think that this is important to underscore because it speaks to the power of discourse. Previously I argued that holding multiple positions and identities was a problem and now I am arguing that choosing and committing to one aspect of identity over another is equally problematic. The point that I wish to make, which is admittedly challenging, is the following: there must be options other than: a) “I am x so I cannot be y” (consumer/global citizen), b) “when I am x I cannot be y” (science teacher/Christian), or c) “I am all of these (x, y, and z) and that’s okay” (Nicolas’ student). Each of these options avoids confrontation with contradiction and conflict, and reinforces neutrality. Instead, an additional option could look like this: “I am all/both of these in these ways and it is difficult and uncomfortable and a struggle, for
these reasons…” This option requires confronting contradiction and paying attention to the implications, including complicity in harm. Like the meaning of equity, it involves not only accepting that particular identity locations, interests, and decisions reinforce social and socio-ecological relations of subordination, but also responding to these. This option is necessary for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization, and for realizing the transformative potential of education toward that end.

While many of the teachers believed that global citizenship identity was an unrealistic ideal for them as individuals, they did nevertheless believe that Canada was responsible for enacting global citizenship. Thus, unlike their beliefs that their consumer identities and global citizenship identities were significantly incompatible, teachers did not subject Canadian and global citizenship identity to the same binary opposition. No teachers expressed the view that individuals were either Canadian or global citizens, nor did they articulate the view that globalization was rendering the nation irrelevant. Instead, they viewed the nation as the primary actor for the enactment of global citizenship, in this way affirming the persistent relevance of the nation under conditions of globalization.

Considering that teachers did not view themselves as global citizens, which was contrary to how they thought of their nation, one wonders how they conceptualized the distinction between Canadian identity and Canada (the former, they believed, enabled their teaching practice of controversial issues; the latter, they felt, was letting them down as an international actor). This also raises questions concerning how they conceptualized the relationship between their personal, national, and global citizenship identities. Despite living in a democratic country, and identifying as Canadian, many teachers saw themselves and their students somehow outside of the nation. When talking about Canadian politics, for example, there were countless instances when teachers said Canada instead of we or our (e.g. “should Canada be in Afghanistan?”). They frequently disconnected the government from the people, effectively refuting democratic and global civic agency (because they conceptualized the nation as responsible for the enactment of global citizenship). I was not given any reason to believe that this was a political gesture signalling their discontentment with the Canadian government. Certainly, teachers were comfortable critiquing both Canadian identity and the Canadian government and with their students in class as well; yet these tensions were rarely expressed as personal conflicts because teachers distanced themselves from Canada’s behaviour. As I discussed earlier in this chapter,
very few teachers (Charlie, Mick, Gary) ever mentioned democracy at all during the interviews. In some instances, as in my interview with Ron, I probed about the significance of democracy and democratic citizenship on teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues because I wondered if democracy was being taken for granted. Ron’s response strikes me as typical: we have democracy already – that was the outcome of the Cold War. Democracy, in other words, is finished, accomplished, achieved – it is not an ideal to be consistently strived for and worked towards and deepened. We call ourselves a Federal Parliamentary Democracy, therefore democracy is given in Canada. Such comments reinforced discourses of citizenship and democracy that relegate citizen participation and agency to voting.

Certainly, what I heard from teachers about the relationship between Canadian and global citizenship identities evokes the complexity of identity in the post-modern era: separation of self from nation; I am Canadian but I am not Canada; I am enabled by my Canadian identity but critical of the nation; Canada is part of my identity in the freedoms it affords me but not part of my identity when the behaviour of the government does not reconcile with my personal values; my nation is a global citizen; I am not my nation, nor am I a global citizen. These are precisely the contradictions and tensions that are evoked by questions concerning citizenship and identity under conditions of globalization. What I was hoping to hear more of, however, was not just the expression of complex tensions implicating multiple layers of identity, but reflexive attention to them from the perspective of their identities as teachers. While I frequently heard teachers articulate complex tensions across national and global citizenship identities, for example, for the teachers themselves (with the exception of Charlie and Gary, perhaps), there appeared to be little conflict: they understood what it meant to be Canadian and to be a global citizen, and because their consumer identities conflicted with the possibility of global citizenship identity, they would leave global citizenship to ‘Canada’ to fulfill on their behalf. This raises significant questions for how the research findings inform an understanding of how Canadian students might be being prepared for CDGCE. Would they teach their students to do the same – to leave global citizenship up to the nation-state? If so, who is this ‘Canada’ and what incentives does Canada have to act as a global citizen without a deliberative citizenry acting as a check on state power (Habermas, 1989)? It is more than likely that this will lead to the reproduction of status quo interests and neo-liberal discourses of globalization that regard globalization as fact and outside the purview of human agency - not only because the operation of such discourses at the level of Politics (with a capital “p”) will go significantly unchallenged, but because they will be being
further reinforced at the level of individuals’ (including teachers’ and students’) seemingly most cherished identity: their identities as consumers.

In addition to listening to how teachers spoke about their own intra-identity conflicts I also paid careful attention to whether they believed that their students experienced intra-identity conflicts, and to how teachers responded to these pedagogically. Earlier, I noted that some teachers made comments about students not taking issues that personally (Richard), and teachers’ beliefs that students had already reconciled any conflicts of identity interests that they might experience (Ron). Lan, too, was under the impression that rather than viewing tensions resulting from economic and environmental interests implicated in the tar sands and their own identities as Albertans and pro-environmentalists as difficult, the students were of the view that “there’s so much oil – it will be okay.” Other teachers responded to my probing about students’ experiences with intra-identity conflicts by confessing that they did not know “because it never gets that far” (Mick).

In my review of the research findings and interview transcripts, it was implicitly evident that teachers did believe that students experienced intra-identity conflicts, and they believed that students were keen to discuss them. Teachers cited several examples of what they believed these types of conflicts looked like. Two teachers spoke about students’ experiences negotiating their cultural and religious identities (and concomitant values that are affirmed in their home and family lives), with their sexual orientations and with the secular identities and values normalized in Canadian schools. Mick, for example, acknowledged that “a poor Muslim student who happens to be gay or bisexual or transgendered must have a rough time.” Gary had “an appreciation for how difficult it is for a lot of the students to be walking in two worlds.” In both of these examples, while the teachers acknowledged that students experienced intra-identity conflict, neither viewed these as material for teaching and learning in the formal curriculum. Instead, they regarded these types of experiences as contextual considerations of their students’ identities. Aside from Gary saying he “validated” them, they did not elaborate on their pedagogical response to these considerations as learning material. Mary, similarly, believed that students experienced these types of conflicts, but she regarded these as side-matter material that her students spoke with her about in their one-on-one sessions after class. Similar to Richard and Doug, who put the onus on students to make their own space in schools for recognition of their voices and ethno-cultural identities, Mary waited to respond to intra-identity conflicts until her
students approached her after class to discuss them: “it doesn’t come out in class, it comes out when they come by after school and say ‘you know, this has been kind of bugging me all day…’ but I’ve never heard it expressed like that, ever…when I go back and look at it, [identity conflict] is what they were trying to say, but they don’t come out and say it.” Mary framed intra-identity conflict as material that she would wait to “come out” and be named by students rather than as material that she would pro-actively teach. In all of these cases, students’ identities and intra-identity conflicts were not being viewed as valuable material for teaching and learning, but were instead principally regarded as extra or “contra to established norms” that configure identity as neutral and singular.

The most common examples of intra-identity conflicts that teachers believed their students experienced pertained to their identities as Albertans, Canadians, and global citizens. Mary, for example, described the tar sands as a “huge” issue for students that causes students a great deal of confusion “because they want to be wealthy and they want to be environmentally responsible.” Several teachers also noticed that some students struggled reconciling their own pacifist values with Canada’s involvement in global conflicts. Ron, for example, mentioned a sample of the types of comments and questions he had heard from his students, including: “I’m pretty pacifist and suddenly we’re warmongers and I don’t like that” and “we’ve always been the nice guys and everyone likes us and now we’re involved in these conflicts, so now what does that mean?” Ron recognized that students, in turn, experienced “confusion” around their identity following from these struggles. He also acknowledged that this was “great ammunition for the course” because the social studies curriculum included attention to identity and nationalism. When I asked for some elaboration of the learning opportunities he created around these struggles to fulfill those curriculum requirements, however, Ron retracted some of his comments, downplaying the seriousness of these struggles, and adding “I think it’s more a conflict about what Canada is supposed to be as opposed to where they are [on this issue] personally.” Gary made a related comment when he stated that the identity struggles that students experienced were “not so much about their national identities as their roles as consumers.” Here, teachers’ own disassociation of ‘the personal’ from ‘Canada’ that I discussed earlier seemed to be colouring how they interpreted students’ experiences and pedagogical needs in this area.

Nor was it clear whether teachers believed that students were global citizens. Although, when prompted, several teachers responded that they “taught for global citizenship,” with the
exception of Mary who said her non-Bosnian and non-Croat students “wanted to be global citizens too,” none of them described their students as being global citizens. Teachers’ comments about students who had studied abroad, or whose parents worked abroad, suggest that global citizenship, in their mind, is an exceptional identity reserved for nation-state actors, celebrities, and people who travel and volunteer elsewhere. Thus, although students were evidently interested in discussing conflicts across economic and environmental interests aligned with multiple dimensions of their identities, it was not clear that they were having opportunities to do so because teachers frequently dissociated these tensions from democracy. The tensions that students experienced were more often framed by teachers in ways that disconnected their personal identities from their citizenship identities. The bigger implication, as I understand it, is that teachers did not regard themselves or their students as complicit in such issues as global warming or conflict in Afghanistan. Though they considered themselves nominally Canadian, they disconnected themselves and their students politically from their democratic citizenship identities as Canadians – and, by extension, from global citizenship (as a consequence of their belief that it is the nation’s responsibility to enact global citizenship). Neutrality was reproduced here to the extent that teachers frequently abstracted themselves and their students from democratic citizenship identity rather than acknowledging the role of complicity both in direct participation and apathy.

In sum, while most of the teachers did believe that students experienced intra-identity conflict, I heard very little about how they responded to them pedagogically. Intra-identity conflicts were significantly left out of the formal curriculum, and when they were included as hidden curriculum, the lessons students were being communicated were that these types of conflicts had implications for their personal, including their consumer identities, but not for their identities as democratic or global citizens. The relationships between these were not being explicitly taken up.

**Interruptions to Dominant Discourses of Schooling**

I have argued throughout this thesis that naming and challenging hegemonic discourses of neutrality and universalism in schools and education (critique), and asserting explicit discursive and reflexive attention to difference, identity, tension, the power in and of education, and the agency of teachers and students are vital conditions of possibility for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization. These ideas signal the promise that education holds
toward that end; just as education has the power to perpetuate oppression and reproduce hegemonic discourses, it also holds immense power for interrupting them. As I elaborated on in the theoretical framework, CDGCE affirms the power of/in education to transform social and political relations toward more democratic and equitable ends (Freire, 2004 hooks, 2003; Shor, 1992; Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1998; Zinn and Macedo, 2005), and interrupt hegemonic cultural values and practices that mask structural barriers to equity and inclusion. The role of critique in critical theory and critical pedagogy is not ‘critique for critique’s sake’ but is theorized in dynamic interaction with the identification of conditions of hope, possibility, and transformation. I have also argued throughout this thesis that paying close attention to implicit messages communicated through talk and action is vital in that that these messages can reinforce subtle and insidious beliefs and practices that reproduce discourses of neutrality and universalism that deny complexity and the political dimensions of difference and identity. This close attention, however, needs to move beyond critique and also name the ways that talk and practices evoke examples and conditions of transformative possibility. It is vital that these, too, be identified, named, and their implications considered.

Thus, in this third area of discussion of how the research findings respond to indicators of CDGCE, I focus on how teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues did suggest some interruptions to dominant discourses of schooling, and in particular some interruption to hegemonic discourses of neutrality, universalism, citizenship, and identity that commonly operate within them. I identify four aspects of teachers’ attitudes that represented some interruptions to, or cracks in, the hegemonic foundation of dominant discourses of schooling, as well as several individual examples that were unique to particular teachers.

The four thematic areas of teachers’ attitudes that evoked some interruption included: 1) teachers’ consideration of the hidden and null curriculum: seeing through and beyond the ‘texts’ of word and world, 2) teachers’ views about the role of consensus and resolution as unimportant learning outcomes of discussion of controversial issues, 3) teachers’ positioning themselves on issues rather than asserting their neutrality, and 4) teachers’ practices of troubling Canadian identity as curriculum content. I will elaborate on these themes and how they affirmed particular indicators of CDGCE, but I will begin first by discussing some of the more distinctive evocations of interruption that I heard.
Mick was unique in that he paid explicit attention to teaching “for what is possible,” which he believed was a professional responsibility of his as a teacher (this was intimately connected to his responsibilities of citizenship). Through this focus, aspects of Mick’s attitude toward teaching controversial issues interrupted dominant discourses of positivism in schooling (i.e. teaching for what could be and not only what is). Additionally, in perceiving his teacher and citizenship identities as intertwined, he interrupted discourses of teacher neutrality.

I always open up with the possibilities – all kinds of possibilities. I’m a pretty voracious reader so I try to keep myself informed all the time. I’m very aware of teaching students to become citizens – not university fodder. We’re here to model lifelong learning and citizenship. That’s what teachers are there for. That’s what it’s about. And I regret that teachers only get to teach, or model, to about 300 students a year. It’s not a hell of a lot is it? Many of those students might have kids now and they might have learned something and be making decisions that I helped them form. You know, I didn’t make them for them but we give them the foundation for making future decisions as responsible citizens. That’s what we do. That’s our job. (Mick)

Mick believed that students’ interest and capacities in effecting environmental change “start with people who work in schools,” and for him this meant creating opportunities for students to engage with contradictions in taken-for-granted human behaviours. “Why are we burning a really clean fuel to make a really dirty fuel?” is just one of several examples of the types of questions he asked his students. Through his teaching, Mick asserted pedagogy of hope (Freire, 1998; hooks, 2003; O’Sullivan, 1999) and acknowledged the constraints and possibilities of knowledge as both a creator and creation of power (Foucault, 1980).

Another example of a teacher who interrupted dominant discourses of schooling and citizenship was Richard who responded to his students’ comments about immigrants by letting them know that “unless you’re First Nations, we’re all immigrants to Canada.” This response implicated interruptions to dominant discourses of subordination and Othering that normalize and depoliticize the identities of predominantly white Canadians as being more ‘at home’ in Canada than other [visible minority, first and second generation] immigrants. In this way he historicized students’ identities as settlers (although he did not explicitly name the fact of colonization, which no teacher addressed explicitly).

Further notable interruptions of dominant discourses of/in schooling were some teachers’ reactions to the passing of Bill 44. Linda and Charlie, for example, each chose to regard section 11.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act as an opportunity for important conversations between
teachers, students, parents, and the communities within which they worked. They interrupted the discourse of teacher silencing evoked by the passing of Bill 44 by choosing to regard it as an opportunity for discursive deliberation and agency. Their agency was also in the forefront of their decisions to choose not to let section 11.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act affect their teaching practice. Instead, they felt it affirmed their commitment to this practice.

Charlie’s attitude toward teaching controversial issues evoked several interruptions to dominant discourses of schooling that de-politicize schools, curriculum, and teaching by presuming these as neutral. He intentionally used provocative language like “tar sands,” for example, with the intention of disrupting the tip-toeing he observed in schools’ frequent use of the less political, and more sanitary term “oil sands” (for similar reasons, Richard showed students a film critical of the Alberta tar sands, although arguably less reflexively and transparently than Charlie). Charlie was reflexive about the power he yielded as a teacher and he believed it was important to remind himself of that every morning so as not to take advantage of it or take it for granted. Relatedly, Charlie interrupted discourses that presume adults and teachers know best when he told me that it troubled him that children were not consulted about whether, and how, their education was serving them. He was also interested in making students uncomfortable and viewed this as a valuable project of education. Charlie regarded his political identity (“committed to the left on many issues”) as a resource for teaching in the ways that it bumped up uneasily against many of his students’ views. Rather than regard this as an obstacle or source of discomfort, Charlie believed that this difference was an asset to students’ learning and a resource that he could use for students’ engagement with controversial issues. Thus he interrupted dominant discourses of schooling that assert teacher neutrality and objectivity and that marginalize difference and conflict.

In his response to my question about his global citizenship identity Charlie wondered whether global citizenship might be “just a liberal concept and way of massaging our collective western liberal guilt about past injustices.” He was concerned that people’s understanding (and focus) of global citizenship was shifting from social justice to globalization and on what it meant to be a globalized citizen. He thus interrupted dominant discourses of global citizenship that align it with harmonious interdependence and charity-based models, and he questioned how these intersected with dominant discourses of globalization and legacies of colonialism. These articulations of his attitude aligned with indicators of CDGCE in that he attended to processes of
“colonization of the mind” (Nandy, 1997; Ngugi, 1981; Willinsky, 1998), and how they persist in the relationship between global citizenship education and contemporary neo-colonial projects that re-inscribe exclusions and subjugation within and across nations.

Lastly, Charlie interrupted dominant discourses of schooling that privilege reason and rationality, and that relegate emotion as a binary extreme perceived to have no place in the public sphere or education by encouraging critical emotional literacy and pedagogies of discomfort (Boler, 1999). He was interested in teaching through pedagogy of love, which encouraged students and teachers to feel more comfortable speaking about their feelings. He regarded emotions as important articulations of ways of knowing that are intertwined with the discourse dimensions of identity, values, beliefs, and behaviour. These comments align with the focus in critical pedagogy on encouraging students to combine passionate response with critical analysis, to define and identify how and when particular emotions inform and define knowledge, and to outline the mutually interdependent ways in which feelings and reality construct one another:

You know, one of the things we don’t talk about in the classroom is love. You know, I just had a conversation with my students – and I put up on the board this concept of ‘how do we, or how can we…take up learning, citizenship, and love in the classroom?’….I don’t mean love in a sexual manner or anything like that. I mean just the kind of human connection about who we are, about our relationships with one another. I mean if you could ever create a climate for kids to say ‘you know, I believe in this because this is so important to me and I want to tell you about why we should stop the oil sands production or why we should build more oil sands and keep it going because my dad works up there and provides for us...’ Whatever that might be, that means taking it from the academic to the heart. (Charlie)

Charlie thus further interrupted dominant discourses of citizenship by linking love and citizenship, and treating these as both content and approach to teaching controversial issues. The connection, for him, was their overlapping attention to questions about “who we are and what our relationships are with one another.” He also interpreted the discomfort that his students experienced when he raised this relationship in class as a valuable indicator of the potential that attention to emotion in schools has for realizing more transformative education.

A few teachers, finally, interrupted modern conceptualizations of identity that regard it as singular and knowable by creating opportunities for students to think about their identities as more complex, multiple, and conflicting (though less to reflexively engage intra-identity conflicts). Gary, for example, considered the implications of students’ multiple identities and how they would impact their engagement with particular issues:
Let’s say they’re a francophone, and were in Alberta, and were talking about globalization and the predominance of English in North America – well that will impact their identity as a francophone in a minority setting right? (Gary)

In another example, Jim emphasized multiplicity and complexity in identity when he talked about teaching students to understand that there existed no one religious perspective or science view but an entire range of perspectives—more or less conflicting with one another. In this way, he emphasized the importance of not essentializing identity or perspectives but attending instead to their multiplicities and potential contradictions. Similar to Nicholas’ student, however, who considered herself both an environmentalist and a supporter of the tar sands, Jim did not elaborate on what types of critical questions and underlying assumptions he asked students to consider and identify about the contradictions they experienced. Instead, he focused on their understanding that these existed, and encouraging students to understand that was okay.

Dominant discourses of schooling were more commonly interrupted by those teachers who believed that teaching controversial issues was their responsibility (in contrast to discourse that posits this as taboo and questionable). Most teachers’ responses resonated with Richard’s metaphor: “it’s like saying I’m going to walk across one end of the pool to the other without getting wet – it’s not going to happen.” Teachers believed controversial issues were mandated by curriculum policy, and both social studies and science teachers viewed this as a disciplinary responsibility, and therefore a “part of [their] role.” For some teachers, this was also linked with their belief that they were co-learners alongside their students, particularly when it came to unresolved issues that affected them as well as students. In accepting that they were not all-knowing—and, more importantly, conceding that to their students—teachers interrupted those dominant discourses of schooling that reinforce teachers as knowers and students as recipients of knowledge and that inscribe relations of subordination them.

Attending to the hidden and null curriculum; what’s behind, underneath, and off the page; seeing through and beyond the text

Critical democratic global citizenship education involves creating opportunities for critical engagement with the political dimensions of education. The goal of this endeavour should be to understand and name the ways that dominant discourses of schooling construct identities, reproduce hegemonic discourses, advance status quo interests and meta-narratives, and legitimize existing social and economic structures (Freire, 1970; Andreotti, 2006). CDGCE
regards the curriculum is constructed and political text, despite how much these features tend to remain hidden (Jackson, 1968).

Several teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues interrupted dominant discourses of schooling by, more or less, attending to the hidden and null curriculum, within the school system and beyond. These examples referred to teaching students to identify underlying storylines and to question official knowledge, to learn to read what is behind, underneath, and off the page and to enact critical consumerism by questioning taken-for-granted messages communicated through the science of marketing. They also included enacting flexible, rather than literal, interpretations of curriculum by seeing through and beyond the text, and acknowledging the ways that teachers’ political identities impart themselves on teaching in unconscious ways.

One of the primary concerns articulated by the teachers pertaining to the passing of Bill 44, for example, were the implicit messages the implementation of the Bill communicated to students. Some teachers felt concerned that section 11.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act was compromising students’ education both through the implicit lessons that the bill communicated about pandering to status quo interests and through the types of learning opportunities that students would not have to engage perspectives and identities that they may not readily encounter in their everyday lives (aligning with concerns expressed by Alberta survey respondents). Simon, for example, worried that it gave people the opportunity to “opt out of an important conversation” which in his view disadvantaged students because this resulted in “a lack of sharing.” Sean was similarly concerned that the legislation might mean that students lost the opportunity to “not necessarily hear the truth as I say it, but at least be exposed to the issue from the best that I can teach it.”

Certainly, section 11.1 of the Alberta Human Rights Act implicitly teaches students other lessons as well which, as the teachers pointed out, can put the development of their exposure and valuing of difference at risk. In addition to normalizing the belief that school is not the place for learning about values and beliefs that deviate from the status quo the legislation reinforces status quo values by Othering the topics of sexual orientation, sexuality, and religion. With regards to sexual orientation, in particular, there is a view that anything outside the status quo hetero-normative identity goes beyond the parameters of what students should be learning about. On
her survey, for example, Linda’s interpretation of the legislation was that it was “regressive regarding human rights for queers,” and that it “indirectly contributes to homophobia.” While discourses that question the location of controversial issues in schools underscore parents’ fears that teachers will indoctrinate their children, support for this bill suggests that indoctrination itself is not a problem – it is who gets to do it and under what circumstances / pretexts that arouses fear. As Hess and her colleagues in the United States have highlighted, lack of exposure to diverse views contributes to ideological amplification—and this is what could, in effect, be an outcome of the passing of Bill 44. Teachers suggested that they were acutely aware that this legislation was about the “contra” and what and whom it challenges.

A further dimension of the discourse surrounding Bill 44 that pertains to the hidden and null curriculum is the presumption that unless teachers explicitly state their political position on issues, they are checking their political identities at the door. Yet, as Betty argued, teachers’ biases come across implicitly via their pedagogical decision-making in terms of making decisions about what and how to teach, including what direction to lead a discussion, whose perspectives are called on and privileged, how students perspectives are responded to, and when/if teachable moments are taken up. Betty believed that teachers’ political identities impact everything they do, “even if they’re not aware of it,” and she also noted that her identity as middle class was “huge” in shaping how she responded to issues. One’s inattentiveness to these implicit forces can have a negative impact on students’ education. While teachers are responsible for teaching children, they are rarely regarded as learners or as subjects who hold values, beliefs, interests, all of which are influenced by the multiple identity locations they occupy. If any of these identity dimensions “leaks,” so it is commonly believed, students are necessarily being taught to conform to their teachers’ views. This belief is likely influenced by dominant perceptions of children as mere absorbers of knowledge rather than as agents capable of engaging this material through critical, inquiry-oriented, and discerning faculties. What matters most, here, is instructional pedagogy (including pedagogical intent) – in other words, what matters is how teachers approach this material and why. There is an important difference between teaching students which values and beliefs they should hold, and teaching them about a diverse range of subject positions, ways of life, values, and beliefs that they will encounter in their lives (including those of their teachers). By disacknowledging teachers’ values and beliefs students are taught that the perspectives of the very people they are expected to learn from do not matter. Instead of being suppressed, those perspectives could be taken up as learning material.
This could be opportunity for learning about the diverse ways that people view the world and why. This could also be opportunity for reflexive practice on the part of teachers and students alike and for keeping consistent and explicit attention to power dynamics in the classroom.

A few teachers, including Richard and Mick, attended to the null curriculum when they spoke about curriculum policy text and textbooks that left out political issues that tend to evoke a high degree of contestation (the relationship between fossil fuels and climate change, in Mick’s case, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Richard’s case). Mick stated that “there is much in the curriculum that is left out,” and he suggested that this was particularly true with regard to the protection of the economic interests implicated in the oil and gas industries in Alberta. At the same time, he was also acutely aware of the hidden curriculum of professional development opportunities offered by the oil and gas industries in Alberta. Richard believed that prescribed resources tended to shy away from conflict and “skipped” conflicts that are likely to evoke strong feelings. He described the grade 11 social studies unit on nationalism and its inattention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—in his words “the most powerful issue involving nationalism and conflicting national identities”—as a “complete cop-out.” Some teachers, relatedly, were flexible in their interpretation of curriculum texts, telling me that an outcome of their examination of it was their reading beyond it. Richard did some “interpretation work” by regarding the curriculum’s attention to teaching tolerance as an opportunity to “go there” in terms of teaching “issues involving gays and lesbians.” In another example, Sean explained that the curriculum’s lack of attention to instructional pedagogy left room for interpretation:

> In the curriculum, there’s not much in there to say, you know, ‘this is the way that you need to teach it’, but instead it says these are the outcomes that you need to achieve’. And in my opinion, there’s lots of things that are not in the curriculum that are important that students need to learn. There’s a lot of open water. It’s not specific. (Sean)

Critical literacy practices also appear in the attention that Charlie paid to eurocentrism in the curriculum, and to the implications this had for students’ learning about what it meant to be Canadian. His comments also affirmed the power of/in curriculum to impact pedagogy and teachers’ and students’ understanding of their Canadian identities:

> The old program of studies was quite Eurocentric…I knew what a Canadian was because the program told me what it was. [The curriculum stated] there is only one kind of Canadian: individuals who bought in and assimilated. This is a very Eurocentric vision of Canadians. Now I would walk into the classroom and that identity in the new program of studies is not prescribed, because one of the questions we ask is ‘is there more than one nation in Canada?’ As soon as you
ask if there’s more than one nation in Canada, there may be more than one kind of citizen and maybe more than one way we’d identify ourselves as citizens. (Charlie)

Through these and similar comments, Charlie was attuned to how modern forms of education and schooling are implicated in European imperialism and colonialism (Tickly, 2009; Fanon, 1970).

When Mick described teaching students to be critical consumers through the study of “buy-ology” and the ways that it intersected with biology, he taught students to pay attention to the hidden curriculum of marketing, through the lens of science. In doing so, he interrupted dominant discourses of consumerism and neo-liberal market values by creating opportunities for students to learn not to take marketing messages at face value, but to instead apply their understandings of science to deconstruct them and their duplicitous intentions. Similarly, Mick taught students to read the news they heard and listen to mainstream perspectives on issues using an approach that encouraged them to uncover hidden agendas.

**Learning goal not for students to reach consensus**

Indeed, traditional schooling practices have commonly affirmed a positivist paradigm, which assumes that knowledge is fixed, that phenomena can be known and enclosed in text, that there exist right and wrong answers, and that questions are principally intended to be responded to in schools, and not left unanswered. In light of this, another more common interruption to dominant discourses of schooling that I heard from teachers—this aligned with indicators of CDGCE—was their interruption of positivist discourses of consensus, answers, and resolution of controversial issues. CDGCE involves challenging prevailing hegemonic liberal discourses of universal knowledge and reasoned consensus and socio-scientific discourses of empiricism, each of which have the potential to undermine difference and exacerbate exclusion in the discursive and inter-subjective construction of knowledge through the epistemic norms they privilege and exclude. This includes determinations of what can be known (as well as how, and by whom) and determinations of what knowledge is of most worth and how this can be measured. CDGCE thus holds that consensus can both mask power and serve it in the ways that it always involves some level of hegemony and exclusion (Mouffe, 2001). Pedagogy of dissensus rather than consensus must be enacted in order to support learners in the development of their ability to hold paradoxes and not be overwhelmed by complexity, ambiguity, conflict, uncertainty and difference (Andreotti, 2011). Tensions and conflicts are not valuable in and of themselves; instead, their
value lies in questions that they raise and discussions they provoke: what are the impasses in this conflict and what lies behind them?, what are the various power relations, and how are they being negotiated?, are there any conflicting values / assumptions / beliefs? A lack of this kind of critical engagement is bound to marginalize some participants’ interests at the expense of those who are privileged.

Teachers such as Nicolas, Ron, Doug, Charlie, Linda, Mary, Mark, and Lan were not interested in consensus as a learning goal, which, they believed, was missing the point, and interfered with the real goal: learning about multiple perspectives and providing support for arguments and opinions. Nicolas, for example, told me that consensus was not something that he was at all interested in because often “the way it works out, nobody is right.” Doug had similar reasons for his lack of interest: “No no [consensus is not important] because there can be different perspectives and I like them to have the opportunity to discuss and share, but also to allow other people to have different opinions and to understand that they have reasons behind it, allow them to express themselves in a fair and open forum and discussion.” From Charlie’s perspective, consensus was an unrealistic learning goal. He told me that he was “not sure that’s possible or realistic because when you take up controversial issues, you’re not looking for answers.” Mary was similarly ambivalent about the role of consensus, telling me “if they don’t have consensus, hey, that’s life, and that’s the good part about it.” Despite Mick’s attention to the importance of facts and students’ capacity to differentiate between reason and emotion, he also expressed doubt as to whether answers to controversial issues were even possible: “whether or not there is an answer is, believe it or not, a good question isn’t it?”

Whereas dominant positivist discourses privilege resolution, closure, and neat and tidy formulas of right and wrong/question and answer, CDGCE involves acknowledging that much gets lost in this process because power is always operating, most explicitly in the power of persuasion, as Mick frequently reminded his students. Here, for example, is an additional example of this from Mick that I have not yet shared:

For example, I’ll bring politics into the class [by talking about how] our current government is right into being tough on crime…The effect has been putting more people in prison than there ought to be, for trivial crimes. Crime is not getting worse – the perception of crime is getting worse. But there’s actually less crime and less violent crime. But we’re more aware of crime because we have the web, we have news media including 24 hour news channels. We weren’t aware of it before but our awareness has given us the impression that it’s getting worse and it’s not. Only what we perceive is getting worse, we’re given the impression that it’s worse by people
who have an agenda [e.g. economic incentives of building prisons and creating jobs; performing protective, paternalistic, and caring role over citizens etc.]. (Mick)

In this line of thought, it is important to pay attention to the etymological relationship between consensus and consent, the latter of which brings us closer to the understanding of the meaning of hegemony. According to Gramsci (1992), hegemony refers to the manufacturing of spontaneous consent to the ideas of the ruling classes. Hegemony is not simply an expression of dominance, but also its precondition in that a social group or class cannot take governmental power unless it has already established its ideological harmony over society (Macey, 2000). The reproductions of discourses that presume consensus as the principal desirable outcome of deliberation of contentious issues operate toward that end; in effect they reproduce dominant views of the world through a seemingly democratic process. Discourses of consensus are also related to discourses of sameness and cohesion in their desire for harmony, like a blanket intended to hold people together and make them feel warm, but leaving some feeling warmer than others.

How teachers facilitate discussion of controversial issues is vital. Consistent reflexive and discursive work is needed, by both teachers and students, to question and challenge normalized and taken-for-granted assumptions, knowledge, and ways of knowing and being. This is difficult work that raises many questions and pedagogical considerations. How is one to know if or which perspectives are being excluded if they are not being articulated as a result of the ways that power mediates the social and pedagogical relationships occurring in the classroom? How, as a teacher, does one bring up these questions and perspectives and draw them out of students without essentializing their identities or making them feel vulnerable and on the spot? These types of practices are in many ways counter-intuitive to dominant discourses of schooling because they require moving away from hegemonic discourses of cohesion and sameness.

In this study, the majority of the teacher interviewees stated that students’ capacity to reach consensus on controversial issues was not a learning goal that was important to them. Instead, teachers were principally interested in the process that students underwent: learning about and discussing multiple perspectives, considering and raising questions, learning to become comfortable with uncertainty and not knowing. Some teachers expressed satisfaction at seeing that student’s continued discussion on issues after class with their friends or family. While teachers were interested in students’ learning to make informed decisions, several teachers
underscored that they understood that there were no right or wrong answers, and that it was the process of talking and thinking about the issues and perspectives on them that was pedagogically valuable to them. In this way, teachers asserted freedom for rather than from uncertainty, and attended to the dissolution of the markers of certainty (Hegel, 1969; Lefort, 1983). They valued questioning and contest, identified and held tensions and conflicts, and, in case of Mick and Charlie, named contradictions and taught for uncertainty. In turn, they interrupted positivist paradigms of consensus, resolution, and predeterminations of what can be known, and how.

Teachers predominantly positioned themselves on issues with students

In chapter 7 I reported that all but 4 teachers told me that they positioned themselves on controversial issues with students, albeit to varying degrees and for dissimilar reasons (e.g. honesty, student interest). Although teachers employed a range of strategies, the outcome of their practices had one thing in common: they all interrupted dominant discourses of schooling and neutrality that delineate who teachers are supposed to be—neutral facilitators of knowledge transmission and reproduction. These disclosing practices aligned with CDGCE by asserting the absurdity of “neutral identity” and in teachers’ explicit attention to their own identities and experiences as teaching and learning material. While teachers’ examples suggest that these practices were primarily responsive to students’ interest and questions more so than they were planned curriculum, how teachers disclosed their positions with students aligned with CDGCE, in that they were principally attuned to the power dynamics operating inside the classroom (Ellsworth, 1989). Teachers were foremost concerned with students feeling that they needed to adopt and regurgitate teachers’ views. For this reason, they used strategies such as waiting until students had the chance to discuss a range of perspectives (Nicolas), asking students to guess what their position was as a strategy for teaching about assumptions (Linda), explaining to students what circumstances impacted their views, as a strategy for students to understand how positions change in line with individual circumstances (Stan), and most commonly, by being clear and explicit that these were their own views and that they did not expect students to adopt them (nearly all 12 teachers mentioned this in one way or another).

Mark, for example, told me: “my kids know very well my position on issues and I’m really upfront with them about it…I tell them ‘this is me,’ this is one person’s position, one person’s opinion, and I’ll tell them why I base my opinion the way I do, and I tell them you know, ‘my way is not the right way, it’s just my way.’ Mary, similarly, told me that her students
“know that [her] job is not to make them think like [her]” and she told her students that she did not want them to. Instead, she encouraged them to challenge her positions and to argue with her about them. “They know where I stand,” she said, “and they also know that where I stand has absolutely no impact on where they should stand.” Mary thus further interrupted dominant discourses of schooling through her disclosing practice by telling students that her job was not to have students think like her, which significantly runs counter to master narratives of schooling and the conventional teacher-student dynamic.

However, disclosing one’s views is different from revealing one’s social identity locations. While I categorized the data pertaining to teacher disclosing practices in chapter 7 under the heading of reflexive practice, I am unsure of whether those practices really belong there. Although teachers came close to being reflexive, they were motivated by honesty and transparency, rather than by a commitment to being reflexive about their identities as learning material for they and their students. The latter approach would have been a great opportunity for them to not only state their position but also be reflexive about how their positions on issues impact their teaching practice, as well as how those very views are influenced by their identity locations. Therein lies the possibility for transformative education. While being transparent is commendable, I am afraid that stating one’s position on issues and leaving it there is not enough. Charlie, I reported, was an exception in that he walked me through the process he had undergone from earlier in his teaching career when he “sat on the fence, didn’t take a position, and played devil’s advocate” because he wanted students to “think for themselves,” to “wearing it on his sleeve” later in his career. It was important to him that that he paid attention, and that his students paid attention to “the beliefs and experiences [he] brings with [him] to the classroom.”

Charlie’s comment regarding the role of the “devil’s advocate” brings me to a related point concerning teachers’ disclosing practices. While there exists a number of possible roles that teachers can play with regard to the question of positioning themselves on issues with students (Troyna and Carrington, 1988; Cotton, 2006), in my interviews I only heard two: transparency and neutrality. The expression ‘Devil’s Advocate’ was not used by any teacher except for Charlie in the example I have just referred to. Arguably, teachers’ infrequent reference to this facilitation role is also indicative of interruptions of dominant discourses of neutrality and of the normalization of status quo views. The position of devil’s advocate is frequently interpreted simultaneously as both an indicator of teacher neutrality as well as a strategy for including non-
status quo perspectives. While there is some value in the latter intent, the term “devil’s advocate” is problematic in that it has been normalized in discourses of teaching controversial issues without adequate consideration for which perspectives are those that tend to be aligned with the devil (frequently it is those considered ‘contra’ to status quo beliefs, perspectives, and norms). Based on what I heard, playing devil’s advocate was a null component of teachers’ curriculum and pedagogy. Teachers were more likely to pose questions than they were to adopt provocative stances on issues to facilitate discussion (granted, not playing devil’s advocate does not mean that they purposefully challenged this discourse either).

**Teachers’ troubled metanarratives of the nation as peaceful and cohesive**

Teachers further interrupted dominant discourses of schooling in that their beliefs, feelings, and practices revealed personal tensions to dominant discourses of Canadian identity as peaceful and cohesive (e.g. guilt, discomfort, disappointment), as well as opportunities for their students to critically and reflexively engage with those tensions. In light of the historically close relationship between national identity and public education in Canada, and the ways that curriculum policy has functioned as an instrument of nation-work (Kymlicka, 2003) for promoting national values, and establishing not only who we are, but also who we are not (Richardson, 2004; Goodson, 1990; Heater, 1980; Tye, 2003), these attitudinal indicators suggest that in troubling Canadian identity (and behaviour), although limited to Canada’s international relations, teachers interrupted dominant discourses of schooling.

As I have alluded to in chapter 2, although uncertainty itself is commonly represented in meta-narratives of the nation in Canada, some teachers took up this characterization as an enabling opportunity for teaching students ‘who we might become’ rather than narrowly focusing on who we think we are. Moreover, the ways that teachers framed this was not in the same way that curriculum might herald Canada’s future leadership capacities in global affairs, for example, but was instead framed alongside teachers’ critiques of Canada’s behaviour in global politics. Uncertainty thus lent itself to teachers’ willingness to trouble Canadian identity and assert post-modern conceptions of identity as complex and conflicted. Nearly all of the teachers did this by articulating provocative questions, disclaimers and qualifying statements that challenged essential characteristics of Canadian identity, including its relationship to peace and inclusion.
Stan, for example, took “issue with the fact that Canada is one of the most ally nations on earth,” and believed that “Canada is far from being a neutral country” regardless of “how much Canadians would like to see themselves as peace-loving,” and particularly since the beginning of the American “War on Terror.” The implications of these beliefs and complex tensions on his teaching practice translated as opportunities for students to analyze Canadian values of peace and non-violence and examine them against a hypothetical case of airport security scanners and racial profiling. He shared with his students a quote from David Suzuki stating something along the lines of “when times are good your country can promise you the world when it comes to human rights, but it’s when times are bad that you really see what your country stands for.” Mary was similarly critical of dominant discourses of the nation as peaceful and non-violent, and she found herself challenging her students’ characterizations of Canada as a strong international peacekeeper. She observed that students held on tight to this notion, and she created opportunities to “broaden that perspective because it masks any flaws in Canadian behaviour.”

Charlie, too, attended to conflict and power in discourses of citizenship and identity in Canada and told me that he believed that it was important for students to think about how “part of what it means to be Canadian is that we don’t let everyone into the club.” He further questioned power and exclusion by inviting students to consider what being a good Canadian really meant rather than take it for granted. He wanted his students to understand that there is an “on-going discussion about who we are” and was further explicit in his characterization of Canadian identity as multiple and complex, stating: “I wish on every public school teacher that they would ask themselves ‘what perspectives of Canadianism can I make my kids aware of today or this year, or this month?’…rather than [adopt and reproduce] a predetermined role of what a Canadian is.” Charlie also invoked some of the tensions that he experienced as a result, assuring me that he was “a patriotic passionate believer in all that we stand for, but at the same time [he] recognized that some of the things we stand for are not in the best interests of other peoples in the world.”

For Mick, relatedly, inviting students to trouble their Canadian identities meant having them examine “facts” such as Canada's status as the world's third largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions, and having them discuss the implications of Canada's complicity in global warming. He asked students to consider the implications of their own behaviours and how these are implicated in Canadian behaviour: “You have to honestly admit your faults don’t you?
So as a Canadian I guess I think that it’s important to be aware of what you’ve done.” I would suggest that these types of opportunities for learning may also be intertwined with teachers’ own feelings of guilt about their own consumer behaviours.

Significantly, teachers did not believe that the meaning of what it meant to be Canadian was fixed and unproblematic; instead, they recognized disconnects between ideals and realities, and they encouraged their students to think about these as well. At the same time, teachers also still held tight to the ideals, naming them as enablers of their teaching practice of controversial issues. In doing so, teachers exhibited complex contradictions that lie at the heart of the post-modern condition. Canadian identity was exceptionalized as a more complex identity position held by teachers and their students, but while teachers frequently described it as knowable and in many ways fixed, they also described it as shifting, uncertain, and open to change. The latter characterizations have valuable implications for the transformative potential of schools as sites for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization in that they affirm the persisting relevance of national identity, while also acknowledging its constructed (unfinished and not predetermined) character. These could create space for teachers and students to question their own roles as agents. Reflexive engagement with the discourse dimensions of thought, perception, and action, moreover, could facilitate their ability to recognize how they are implicated in the construction of Canadian identity.

In my introductory comments to this chapter, I referred to the similar etymologies of the words controversial and contradiction and their common emphasis on turning toward or against (versus). In this first part of my discussion of the research findings, I discussed how teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues both turned toward and against the three indicators of critical democratic global citizenship education (CDGCE) that followed from my theoretical framework. I approached this by discussing how teachers reproduced and interrupted hegemonic discourses of neutrality, universalism, and schooling. In other words, I attended to how their attitudes suggested they were teaching controversial issues in ways that moved toward dominant discourses as well as away from them. Without holding on too tight to the binary (itself an instrument for the reproduction of hegemonic discourse), I have argued that democracy requires versus because it creates opportunities for turning away, and thus for realizing transformative possibilities. Next, I identify four areas of inconsistency in teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues that this critique brings up.
8.2 Alberta Teachers' Attitudes towards Teaching Controversial Issues: Contradiction and Tensions across Beliefs, Feelings, and Behavioural Dispositions

A given socio-historical moment is never homogeneous; on the contrary, it is rich in contradictions
Antonio Gramsci, 1985

In this dissertation study, I conceptualized teacher attitude using the three component model. As I explained in chapter 1, a central motivation for my doing so was my argument that limiting attitude to cognitive beliefs (and disconnecting these from affective feelings) with the goal toward constructing neat and tidy formulations (resonant with discourses of social cohesion) denies and masks the difficult and uncomfortable tensions and conflicts that are provoked by the relationship between beliefs, feelings, and practices. It also reifies hegemonic discourses that relegate emotion as a subordinate construct. This tendency toward denial of complexity and conflict implicates equity and democracy, which like attitude are messy, uncomfortable, difficult, uncertain, and, as absolutely reconciled ideals, unrealizable. Its value is located in persistent contestation and struggle toward realizing deeper and more equitable democratic societies and structures.

Denying complexity and conflicts has implications for discourse reproduction and cultural hegemony. Critical theory pays attention to contradiction and dissolution of the markers of certainty (Hegel, 1969; Lefort, 1983) through engagement with cultural hegemony and what is taken as given (Hall, 1996; Bourdieu, 1980 & 1984; Gramsci, 1992; Foucault, 1980). The terms contradiction and controversial share a similar etymology in their reference both to contra (against) and to the written word (e.g. diction as the expression of ideas in words and verse as in line of writing), and in their reference to the operation of power across these emphases. Contradiction, for example, refers to “speaking or declaring against,” “opposition,” and tendency “to be argumentative, contrary, and inconsistent.” Controversial, relatedly, refers to being “turned in an opposite direction,” “disputed,” and “turned against,” and the oppositional connotations stem not only from the contra but also from verse, related to versus meaning “denoting action of one party against another” and “turning toward or against.” Both words commonly connote something negative and undesirable for the ways that they interrupt impulses toward harmony, cohesion, and reconciliation. Yet these interruptions are vital for deepening democracy in their potential for challenging taken-for-granted truths and hegemonic discourses,
which have material consequences for people and for equity. These contras have the potential to widen spaces for the articulation of difference and create space for naming and for feeling, rather than denying, difficult tensions. It is within these contras, I argue, that lies opportunity for discursive and reflexive possibility for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization.

Rather than regard the absence of correlation between beliefs, feelings, and practices as an obstacle or evidence of the model’s worthlessness, I argue that the uneasy disconnections between these components of attitude are illustrative of the internal contradictions that characterize the post-modern condition and the complexity of identity. In moving away from empiricism and neat formulations, postmodern conceptualizations of knowledge and identity trouble the desire for reconciliation, and instead turn toward naming tensions and contradictions, and acknowledging complexity and multiplicity. Examining contradictions by naming and engaging them is an opportunity for learning. In the context of this study, this opportunity for learning is in how these elucidate tensions and questions and spaces for possibility toward realizing the potential for schools and education to act as discursive and reflexive sites for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization. The three component model of attitude creates room to consider the relationship between what a teacher believes, feels, and does, and to question the potential (dis)connections between these. I focus on these relationships and what can be learned from them, including what possibilities and spaces they open up, what questions they raise, and what work they point to.

I focus on 4 areas wherein I identified contradiction. Granted, these are not limited to conventional understandings of contradiction that refer to phenomena that are logically incongruous, which tend to be explicitly apparent. Instead, my use of this term, in the context of my critically engaging the insidious power of/in hegemonic discourse and my attention to the need to look closely at the unobvious, aligns more with the meaning of contradiction as inconsistency and its associations with denial (Oxford English Dictionary Online).

**Identity Matters**

In its definition of the law of contradiction, the Oxford English Dictionary makes reference to the axiom that a thing cannot be and not be at the same time. This precisely elucidates the role that I found identity plays in teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues. Although identity was not an explicit focus in teachers’ instructional practice—nor was it
commonly regarded as learning material for teaching and learning with controversial issues—it significantly impacted their pedagogical decision-making (including what not to do).

Both the survey (across Canada) and interview data revealed that the issues teachers found controversial (and why), and the factors that influenced their attitude to teaching controversial issues, as well as their pedagogical decision-making, were concerned with identity and identity related conflicts. Teachers believed that Albertan identity, for example, rendered some issues particularly controversial. Some issues became controversial because of who their students were. Teachers believed that some issues were controversial because of where students lived or what their families’ religious views were or what students’ parents did for a living. Teachers also articulated their beliefs about particular identity groups (e.g. Christian, Muslim, conservative, parents, students, and teachers). Many believed that different categories of students (academic, senior, liberal arts, girls etc.) engaged better and worse with controversial issues and this impacted the opportunities for learning they created for them. Teachers tended to believe that students did not have political identities yet, and so some teachers were under the impression that students frequently uncritically adopted teachers’ and parents’ views as their own. For this reason, teachers felt that they had to be particularly careful when disclosing their views. This also meant that they tried to ensure not to privilege particular perspectives but to instead teach for all.

While several teachers believed that students experienced intra-identity conflicts, they also believed that students either did not know how to articulate them or they preferred to work through them on their own. Some teachers expressed concern over how their students’ cultural and religious identities intersected with controversial issues, and some also expressed concern over the difficulties some students might experience reconciling at-home values with those normalized in Canadian society and schools. These intra-identity conflicts, however, were not regarded as learning material, and in many cases were spoken about only as extra-curricular conversations.

Many teachers, furthermore, felt enabled to teach controversial issues because they felt that they did not have strong religious, political, and/or cultural identities (if at all). They felt that this absence of identity affiliation enabled their capacity to be open to, and teach, multiple perspectives on controversial issues because it meant they did not feel personally implicated in
the ideological conflicts that controversial issues provoke. Additionally, teachers felt some tension about how dimensions of their own identities intersected uneasily with students’ identities. They believed that identity, in effect, was a hindrance, not a resource for teaching and learning with controversial issues.

While identity played a key role informing teachers’ attitudes, including their practices, it was rarely spoken about as explicit material for learning or as part of the formal curriculum, and neither did the majority of teachers seem to be reflexive about how identity formed a component of the hidden and null curriculum of their instructional practice. When I asked teachers’ about their own identities and the extent to which these enabled and hindered their teaching of controversial issues, many appeared to not understand the relevance. One of Ron’s comments most clearly summed up this reaction: “it doesn’t matter - we’re in school, we deal with these issues and great…now I’ll go home.” Their beliefs and feelings about their own and students’ identities impacted their teaching – but not explicitly or reflexively. Certainly, these were *considerations* for instructional practice, but rarely were they material for it. The opportunity for learning that this contradiction raises is consideration for how opportunities to reflexively engage identity, including internal differentiation, might be feasibly, and safely, integrated, and even normalized, into K-12 curricula and teacher education and development.

**Feeling Matters**

All Alberta survey respondents unanimously reported feeling at least relatively comfortable teaching controversial issues, and similarly many of the interviewees reported feeling comfortable, confident, and autonomous. However, a closer look at the findings revealed them to be more complex; when listing factors that informed their attitudes toward teaching controversial issues on the surveys, and when responding to questions pertaining to their own and to students’ identities in the interviews, many teachers disclosed feeling concerned, uncertain, confused, and vulnerable. Many felt unsure about how their teaching might be interpreted, and judged, by others within their professional circles and associations, and by parents and community members. Simon, for example, questioned whether his school administration would support him should a parent issue a concern over his teaching. Sean, similarly, told me that he felt “under the microscope,” adding “you say or do the wrong thing or teach the wrong thing that may not be a societal norm, and then it opens you up to big pressure to
change your opinion.” Richard compared how he felt in his identity as a teacher with how he felt when he was in the military: “you didn’t talk about sex or religion in the officer’s mast.” He also added “you better know where you stand and you better know what you’re doing.” Despite emphasizing the extent to which she felt confident teaching controversial issues, Betty conceded that even in her role as a Principal, she also felt vulnerable. She told me “everybody’s afraid to talk about those big things because they’re afraid to get in trouble.” She implicated herself, adding “there’s always factors that make you more cautious or less cautious on certain things.” Betty was an example of the degree to which teachers’ feelings may overlap or be inconsistent—she simultaneously felt confident and uneasy. Simon further added to this complexity when, after having expressed his own feelings of vulnerability about how others’ might interpret his teaching of controversial issues, he himself expressed concern over how other teachers approached the teaching of controversial issues, adding that he believed it was important that teachers’ practices be monitored. These inconsistencies and tensions across feelings of comfort, confidence, autonomy, and vulnerability, however, were not reflexively engaged by teachers in the interviews.

Additionally, many teachers expressed feelings about their own and students’ identities and elaborated on how these feelings impacted their pedagogical decision-making, as to which controversial issues they taught and how. Some, for example, experienced tension with regard to how dimensions of their own identities intersected uneasily with students’ identities. Some male teachers felt that their gender identity might offend some female students when they taught about sexuality, and so they were either particularly careful with what and how they taught or they invited someone else in to cover these issues. Parents influenced teachers’ pedagogical decision-making as well. Many teachers expressed feeling uneasy teaching about the Alberta tar sands, for example, because they were cognizant of students’ parents’ sources of employment. Teachers, however, tended to unreflexively frame these pedagogical decisions as the result of their concerns about students and parents’ feelings, more so their own feelings (i.e. their own feelings of discomfort).

Teachers also expressed some concern over how their students’ cultural and religious identities intersected with controversial issues, and the difficulties some students might experience reconciling at-home values with those normalized in Canadian society and schools. Yet, again, these looked more like considerations of students’ identities and feelings for their
Some teachers also experienced discomfort and tension teaching perspectives on issues that they themselves disagreed with, and reconciling dimensions of their personal and their professional identities when teaching particular controversial issues (e.g. environmental issues). Mick and Linda, for example, were uncomfortable with their involvement in professional development initiatives on issues whereby vested interests were being privileged. Teachers’ feelings of guilt were also raised in the context of their telling me that they did not regard themselves as global citizens, and their primary reason for this (i.e. their consumer behaviour) had implications for how they conceptualized and taught about citizenship. Inconsistency, here, looked like correlating students’ citizenship identities with their identities as consumers, while at the same time regarding students as citizens-in-training, all the while not regarding themselves as global citizens because of their consumer behaviour. Consumer behaviour, it seems, both makes and breaks citizenship identity affiliation and responsibility. None of the teachers, however, addressed these inconsistencies and tensions with me, nor their effects on their pedagogy.

Similar to identity, then, I found that while feelings were infrequently included as pedagogical content, they were a significant driver of pedagogical decision-making. This finding resonates with Boler’s argument that while we are commonly taught that classrooms are not the place for emotions, or for developing students’ emotional literacy, teachers’ emotional needs in fact are constantly attended to through their curricular decision-making (i.e. inclusions and exclusions; topics that might cause them to feel discomfort), interactions of authority, and/or the effect of power on ego. In her words:

Simply stating that one does not express emotion in the classroom when in the role of authority is a culturally-coded form of denial about what counts as emotion. Even if we are not willing as teachers to risk our own vulnerability, we must re-evaluate what counts as knowledge for our students, and whether or not emotional sensitivity and affective education represent crucial forms of epistemological awareness requisite to a transforming society (1999; p. 147).
In her own classroom research Boler observed persistent patterns of male instructors, in particular, controlling the sphere of ‘rational’ discourse as an arena for their own impassioned emotional articulation. In my study, I heard a similar line of thought, most frequently from Mick, Richard, Stan, and Sean. Mick consistently reiterated his strong feelings against emotion in the classroom, and it was evident that these feelings impacted his approach to teaching controversial issues. Richard, similarly, spoke passionately about his beliefs and feelings about evolution and climate change, and affirmed that he expected “right answers” about these on tests. Stan, moreover, relayed that he felt guilty teaching about the Holocaust to Jewish students because he was of German descent, and in response he invited Holocaust survivors to visit the class via video-conference to engage with him in dialogue about these tensions (“and students could listen”). Sean told me that his gender identity impacted his teaching practice because being male meant having strong opinions, which he shared with students. Under guises of reason, these teachers created spaces for the articulation of their own strong feelings on issues in class and in their teaching. Thus, a further indicator of the extent to which feelings mattered for teachers was not only how they felt about particular issues, but also how they felt about teaching them.

While teachers felt concerned with the potential impacts of discussing particular controversial issues in light of their students’ identities, it was primarily their own feelings that were being attended to in their pedagogical decision-making. Certainly, they were considering students’ feelings (although in some instances via paternalistic assumptions about who students were and what they were capable of), but they were excluded as learning material. Nor did teachers reflexively discuss with students how teachers’ own feelings intersected with controversial issues or with their concerns teaching them (e.g. being transparent with students about their discomfort and talking about some of the underlying tensions and sources of discomfort such as gender stereotypes and/or the notion of political correctness). Teachers’ and students’ feelings were significant drivers of instructional pedagogy, but rarely were they the learning content. Feelings clearly mattered, but a question raised by these inconsistencies is whose? Calling attention to such inconsistencies is an opportunity for apprehending the critical importance of reflexivity in relation to the implicit curriculum of schooling, and for recognizing feelings as a way of knowing and as already impacting teacher pedagogy.
Citizenship Matters

Teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues involved national and global citizenship. The complexity of these implications brings attention to the range of tensions and inconsistencies that pertain to citizenship under conditions of globalization. How teachers talked about the scope of citizenship spaces, for example, sheds some light on these discrepancies—and so does the way they perceived the boundaries of citizenship responsibilities, including those that implicated them. Similarly, in referring to binary oppositions (nations’ capacities as either inward or outward in focus; issues either too close or not close enough to warrant inclusion in the curriculum; citizenship identity as a given or a choice) teachers exposed some of the tensions involved.

As I previously reported, most teachers perceived Canadian citizenship identity as enabling for teaching controversial issues. Consequently, Canada’s internal conflicts or disparities were rarely acknowledged. When teachers did refer to Canada’s difficult history it was only to talk about the residential schooling system. However, seeing it as a thing of the past, teachers did not attend to its impacts on First Nations within Canada today (or other enduring legacies of colonialism, for that matter). In one case, Richard even downplayed the significance of Canadian complicity in the residential schooling system by teaching students that Canada was not alone in its institutionalization of residential schools; it happened in other “developed” nations as well. While teachers acknowledged the privileges afforded by their Canadian citizenship identities they did so by disregarding disadvantage within Canada, and essentialized Canada as a country that was privileged relative to Other countries. Sean, for example, stated that Canadians were "fortunate to not have to deal with the really big issues that are going on in the rest of the world" considering that "we have space here that we can live in, in houses that are big, and we have vehicles.” When teachers compared Canada with other nations, whether “developed” or not, they emphasized Canada’s moral superiority and its material advantages. The majority of them, for example, believed that Canadians were different from Americans because Canadians were more outward focused in contrast to Americans who they believed were more self-interested.

Certainly, teachers were proud of the role of internationalism within Canadian history and within characterizations of Canadian citizenship identity. One of the more common beliefs held by teachers was that Canada was in a comfortable position to help others and to respond to
global issues as a consequence of the resources it had and the geo-political position it occupied. In part, this position was one of comfortable distance (resonant with some of the tensions that arose concerning proximity and distance as both hindrances and enablers of teaching and learning with controversial issues).

However, it was *only* when teachers were outward-focused and spoke about Canada in the world and about global citizenship that they troubled Canadian citizenship identity, and acknowledged conflict as material for learning and opportunities for reflexive work with students. Teachers believed that Canada’s role in international affairs was changing, principally in terms of its participation in conflict. It bothered many of them that their students seemed to hold a romanticized view of Canada’s peacekeeping role in conflict, when teachers themselves believed that Canada’s participation in conflict resembled combat more so than peacekeeping (some teachers were puzzled by their students’ views, despite the prevalence of this master narrative in educational curricula and textbooks). Canadian citizenship identity was thus an exception in terms of teachers’ general inattention to identity as curriculum; they not only included this aspect of identity as learning material, but they did so in a critical way that invited students to re-consider Canada’s peacekeeping reputation in light of contemporary global affairs. However, this involved distancing *themselves* from the actions of the Canadian government. Rather than regard their national identities as a resource for fulfilling international obligations (Byers, 2007; Held 1997, 2000; Beck 2000; Kymlicka, 1995; Bhabha, 1990; Habermas, 1992), they saw that role played by the state. They created opportunities for students to be critically reflexive about their government, but not necessarily about their own identities as Canadians, and the potential implications of their agency in their identities as citizens who live in a democratic country.

That teachers felt comfortable troubling Canadian identity only in terms of its role in international affairs is significant seeing that, as I reported, more than half of the teachers did not consider themselves to be global citizens. Many teachers interpreted the meaning of global citizenship as given and knowable, but not the identity associated with it, which for them was deeply embedded in discourses of morality, and like entrance into heaven, had to be earned. As a result, many chose to align global citizenship identity and responsibility with the Canadian government. By troubling Canadian identity only through the lens of Canada in the world, they were not troubling their own identities or selves, nor were they confronting their own complicity.
They troubled a dimension of Canadian identity (i.e. global citizenship) from which they disconnected themselves and their own citizenship responsibilities. They believed that their identities as Canadians were disconnected from the actions of the Canadian government.

Many teachers confessed that while they were aware of global issues and while they valued social and environmental justice, their actions (primarily their consumer lifestyles) frequently did not align with the awareness or these values. Global citizenship identity stirred feelings of guilt, not agency, for teachers and they were not comfortable living with contradiction. Instead, their response was to not consider themselves global citizens. In this way, they regarded global citizenship identity as a choice. At the same time, however, the principal obstacles teachers’ identified as standing between them and global citizenship were their consumer lifestyles. While consumer decision-making, certainly, is a manifestation of choice, several teachers believed that this lifestyle happened to them more so than their having chosen it. They described themselves as being locked in to these lifestyles as an inevitable outcome of having grown up in North America during a particular time. The associations that teachers made between global citizenship identity and consumerism elucidated the extent that hegemonic discourses manufacture consent, in this case by manufacturing peoples relationship to consumer goods as inevitable and given, and doing so in ways that create complex conflations between consumerism and citizenship.

While teachers sometimes implied that students still had a chance to be global citizens, they believed it was too late for them. They considered global citizenship identity a choice in some ways, but not in others. While teachers disconnected their consumer behaviours from their cultural identities—which, again, they purported not to have—they aligned them with citizenship, but not democratic citizenship responsibility. This illustrates the extent to which culture intersects with teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues. Unless teachers are critical and reflexive about how and why controversial issues implicate them (and their cultural identities) their teaching for critical democratic global citizenship education will be wanting.

The opportunity for learning these inconsistencies point to is the risk that unless Canadians attend to and trouble the ways that our identities are complexly implicated and complicit in Canada’s difficult history and in historical and contemporary conflicts within
Canada and elsewhere, we will also be complicit in future harm as it manifests as exclusions, inactions, participation in international conflicts, and neo-colonial attitudes and behaviours.

**Curriculum Matters**

Lastly, a further area of inconsistency that I noted in teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues pertained to their beliefs about the curriculum and the impact of those beliefs on their practice. It was evident from both the survey and interview findings that curriculum played a significant role informing teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues. In the surveys, for example, nearly 20% of all the teachers named the inclusion and/or exclusion of controversial issues in the curriculum as a factor that informed their attitude, although very few indicated in the fixed-choice question that they believed that “students should not be exposed to controversial issues in school except when they are included in the approved programs of study and/or learning resources”. The open-ended responses to the survey question about factors informing teachers’ attitudes however suggested that many teachers will only teach what is explicit in the curriculum expectations. Teacher’s responses, for example, included: “is it part of the curriculum? An issue must have a curriculum tie-in for me to initiate” (Yukon Female T of J/I Science, teaching 7 years), “whether or not they are in the curriculum documents” (Ontario Male T of P/J Sciences, teaching 17 years), “not in curriculum” (Nova Scotia Female T of P/J, teaching 8 years), “our Alberta curriculum is inquiry-based so we are obligated to teach controversial issues” (Alberta Female T of I/S Social Studies; Teaching 29 years), “few issues within our curriculum seem to be controversial” (Manitoba Female T of J/I Social Studies; Teaching 15 years). A few teachers, moreover, referred to the power of curriculum by indicating that they believed what made an issue controversial was its exclusion from curriculum policy. One teacher’s response from British Columbia, for example, was “the fact that they are not given equal weight, if any, in curricula – they are in the “hush” category” (Female I/S T of Social Science; Teaching 30 years).

The vast majority of teacher interviewees named the curriculum as a primary reason for teaching controversial issues because they believed their inclusion in curriculum policy rendered teaching controversial issues a professional responsibility. Several secondary social studies teachers, including Mary, Charlie, and Ron, all spoke about the new social science program of studies and its issues-based approach, which for them meant that they also had to teach controversial issues. Charlie recognized the old program of studies as quite Eurocentric, in that
its definition of what it means to be Canadian was narrowly defined. And yet, despite his opposing beliefs, he adhered to the curriculum, until a newer and more nuanced version was created. When describing their teaching practice, teachers drew on the curriculum as a primary resource for the opportunities for learning they created. More importantly, however, curriculum influenced how they thought of topics such as: meaning of theory in science, nationalism, globalization, ideology, the political spectrum, tolerance, and most commonly, multiple perspectives in social studies. Teachers’ emphasis on these topics—the attention and importance they ascribed to them in their instructional practice—were in direct line with the policy, from the words they used to the degree of importance they assigned them. For this reason, I could not help but pay attention to what topics consistently underscored in the social studies policy did not seem to be translating from policy to practice. Most notably, these were democracy and deliberation (and identity, which I have already reported).

Only 1 teacher interviewee named democracy as a learning goal of his teaching practice of controversial issues, and this was the teacher who contributed to writing the curriculum. None named democracy when asked why they believed that controversial issues are an important component of public education. In fact democracy or democratic citizenship were hardly referred to at all. When Gary spoke about democracy as a learning goal and motivation for his teaching of controversial issues, his objective was not for students to understand the varied meanings, practices, and tensions that are involved in either understanding or enacting democracy. Instead, he treated democracy as something that was already understood and established rather than complex and messy. In this way, he did not treat democracy as the content for students’ learning, but rather acknowledged it as the context for their engagement with controversial issues in school.

When I probed Ron about the significance of democracy, he looked bewildered and responded that democracy was not a motivator of his practice because “we have democracy already” (i.e. the end of history). Deliberation, too, features prominently in the social studies curriculum policy, and as early as grade 1 students are expected to be engaging in deliberative inquiry. This strand is also intended to be consistent through grade levels. Yet not a single teacher either used this term or described teaching practice that resembled anything like a structured deliberation exercise. Although democracy and deliberation have a strong presence in curriculum, they clearly were not part of how teachers thought about controversial issues. This
was in line with how they talked about being disconnected from the Canadian government. These findings, combined with related considerations pertaining to “citizenship matters,” raise questions about the extent to which Canadian teachers may be taking democracy for granted. The opportunity for learning this inconsistency points to is how democracy may be principally being interpreted as the context for learning rather than also its content, method, and motivation

Inconsistency and Contradiction across Teachers’ Beliefs, Feelings, and Practices: Concluding Comments

Herein I called attention to some of the areas of inconsistency and contradiction across multiple dimensions of teachers’ attitudes. Like engagement with controversial issues, examination of inconsistency and contradiction provides a valuable opportunity for learning, and transformation in terms of their implications for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization. Teachers’ own attention to the contradictions, which they confronted with discomfort with regard to their consumer and citizenship identities, is a vivid example of why paying attention to these *contras* is so important. Teachers’ feelings of discomfort resulted in them finding refuge in dominant discourses that tell them things should reconcile, be cohesive, align, get along, and meet. Rather than engage these tensions, they therefore avoided them altogether by opting out of global citizenship identity, similar to Alberta parents who can opt out their students from learning about difference and views that challenge their comfortable norms rather than have them participate in “courageous conversations” (Singleton, 2005; Singleton and Hays, 2008). Instead of withdrawing from (e.g. denying, opting out of) these opportunities for learning and deepening democracy under conditions of globalization, I argue that these contradictions and controversial issues are necessary in that they make room for the articulation of difference, feeling the difficulties and tensions, and engaging what’s behind them (e.g. values, assumptions, attitudes etc.). As is the case with critique, this is where the hard and uncomfortable work lies but also where possibilities can be realized. Contradictions and critique are not valuable for their own sake but for the possibilities they offer. As seen earlier, absolute reconciliation between teachers’ knowledge, values, and behaviour was unattainable; the same holds for their beliefs, feelings, and practices. It is important to call attention to how under post-modern conditions of globalization, these tensions exist (as well as name to what they are and under what conditions they arise). Critical attention to these tensions and the questions and considerations they provoke—rather than pretending they do not exist or using them as an excuse to not change attitudes or behaviour—provides an immense opportunity for learning. This future
work, I argue, needs to center principally on increased normalization and institutionalization of opportunities for critical reflexivity in teaching and learning.

8.3 Questions Provoked by the Discussion and Consideration of Potential Implications: Canadian students' Critical Democratic Global Citizenship Education

As I stated earlier in this chapter, a vital practice of critical theory is to question common answers and not generalize toward universal presumptions. It is in its capacity to question common answers that critique can begin to point to vital areas for transformative possibility and interruption. My engagement with the research findings gave rise to the following questions:

- While controversial issues and the inter-identity conflicts they raise are commonly understood (by curriculum writers, educational researchers, and teacher educators, at least) to be an important component of students’ democratic citizenship/education, to what extent does democratic citizenship/education require acknowledging and critically engaging internal conflicts across multiple dimensions of individuals’ identities? Democracy is about learning to live together, but how much should the work involved in learning to live together involve critical engagement with multiple dimensions of the self? What impact might opportunities for students and teachers to discuss their own intra-identity conflicts have on their understanding of inter-identity conflict in their interpersonal relationships?

- What would politics look like if everyone adopted all perspectives?

- What would the implications be of applying the agreeing-to-disagree principle to democracy more broadly?

- How do you experience, and teach, engagement with intra-identity conflicts when you believe your own identity is neutral (and significantly singular) and your students’ identities are predetermined and closed? If you presume to know who your students are, what identity conflicts might you imagine your students confronting?

- What does it mean for students and their critical democratic global citizenship education if their teachers do not think of themselves as global citizens, or playing a part in the actions of
the Canadian government? Are students being taught to leave global citizenship up to the nation-state? Without the pressure from Canadian citizens, what incentives does Canada have to act as a social and ecologically justice-oriented global citizen?

- How are teachers teaching for democracy if they believe that democracy is achieved and given? What are the implications for democratic citizenship education?

- If global citizenship is being understood and taught as an ultimate (and significantly unrealizable) ideal, and neo-liberal market globalization as given and inevitable, what are the implications for teachers’ and students’ agency toward deepening democracy under conditions of globalization?

- Since when does democracy mean neutrality and the adoption of all perspectives, and how did this discourse become so engrained in teachers’ thinking and pedagogy for teaching controversial issues? If students are taught to defend all perspectives equally, when do they get the chance to form opinions and to take committed positions on issues? What might be the implications of students learning that their goal should be to see from every perspective, rather than to critically and reflexively engage their own perspectives and those of their peers (fellow citizens)?

- In this study, some teachers told me that as long as students can back up their views, *what* they think is not important. How can the content of what students think *not* matter? How much sense does it make to give preferential status to *how* to the exclusion of *what*?

- *Whose* feelings matter in schools and in teaching and learning with controversial issues? Teachers’? Parents’? What about students’?

- How can schools be regarded as places for students to learn to make identity choices when schools and teachers significantly regard students’ identities as knowable and done?

- How can teaching for uncertainty be operationalized in a positivist-oriented institutional context?
Why is the curriculum focus on democracy and identity not reflected in teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues? What are the implications of this for students’ democratic citizenship education? How do Canadian teachers understand the meaning of democracy, and how do they understand its relationship to schooling and education? How does democracy figure in their instructional practice?

How do teachers conceive of the relationship between colonialism and globalization?

If those teachers interested in and committed to teaching for social justice are not thinking about how power mediates unequal social relations and identity locations, what inferences might be drawn about teachers who are not interested in social justice education at all?

An overarching aim of this study was to critically assess the implications of the research findings for the critical democratic global citizenship education of Canadian students. Next, I consider the question: how do the research findings and the questions they provoke inform an understanding of how students are being prepared for critical democratic global citizenship in Canadian public school classrooms? I identify a range of implications that may be at stake in terms of students’ critical democratic global citizenship education by underscoring the insidious power of the hidden curriculum and its potential impact on student’s learning:

If discourses of sameness are being reproduced through a hidden curriculum of assimilation, students may learn that status quo perspectives are norms they should conform to, not question.

If students are taught that it is the multiple in multiple perspectives that is important more so than critical engagement with difficult tensions across perspectives that implicate power and exclusion, and if they are being taught that all views are valid, they may be learning to evade the political dimensions of difference.

If students are taught to hold multiple positions on issues they may be learning that “sitting on the fence” and remaining neutral are appropriate ideals.
- By drawing on generalized perspective positions for role-play activities and applying them to multiple controversial issues rather than delineating perspectives relative to specific issues and particularized contexts, students may learn to tokenize and essentialize the identities and interests of particular stakeholders.

- Teachers’ generalizations of identities (describing Albertans as rednecks, conservative, anti-environmentalist, homophobic, etc.) may lead students to conclude that stereotyping is acceptable. Students may also learn to align themselves with these stereotypes (i.e. who they are expected to be).

- If teachers and curriculum policy make generalizations about students’ gender identities, age, cultural, religious, or academic identities relative to their interest in and engagement with controversial issues, students may learn that only particular kinds of students are “potential” democratic citizens, and this may affect their sense of political efficacy and interest.

- If they are being taught to agree to disagree, students may learn that there is only value in resolving conflict, not engaging it.

- If students are taught that global citizenship necessitates travel abroad, students not privileged to travel or volunteer abroad may not consider global citizenship a component of their identities or spheres of civic rights and responsibilities. Moreover, disproportionate attention to helping Others in terms of what they learn about global citizenship may reinforce contemporary civilizing missions that exacerbate inequity in social and global relations. Students may learn that they are responsible for helping and lifting up those less fortunate than them without also understanding how it is human-constructed barriers to equity that impact people’s experience of disadvantage and these are neither about fortune nor good genes.

- If discussion of intra-identity conflicts are avoided in school, students may learn that, like their teachers, they can turn their identities on and off rather than acknowledge, confront, and engage difficult tensions across multiple dimensions of their identities.
• If students are taught that it is more valuable to learn to see from every perspective than to critically engage multiple perspectives, including the composition of their own perspectives, students may learn that strong opinions or beliefs are undesirable, and that, in turn, the ultimate goal is to free oneself of identity or perspective altogether. If teachers are simultaneously regarded as models but also blank slates, students may learn that a blank slate is indeed ideal.

• If students are taught that all views are valid they may hesitate to name and interrupt xenophobia (including, for example, homophobic, racist, sexist, comments and attitudes) when they hear or see it. Relatedly, if students are taught that it is not ‘what’ they think that matters but only what they say and do, they may interpret that to mean that xenophobic beliefs may be acceptable, so long as these are not voiced.

• If their teachers are emphasizing sameness and cohesion despite difference and not attending to how these discourses can ignore and exacerbate the politics of difference, students’ may learn that sameness (or universalism) are ideals without thinking critically about whose versions of sameness (or universalism) are presumed and taken for granted as neutral and as the norm (within classrooms and the world). Further, they may not learn how treating everyone the same does not account for how people experience the same in different (often inequitable and uneven) ways.

• Teaching students that differences should not matter is not the same as calling attention to the important ways that differences do matter. Disacknowledging of differences may lead students to ignore race or gender or class, and not view them as social constructs that have been institutionalized as relations of subordination and that have lasting psychological, cultural, and material consequences for people. The we-are-all-the-same view may contribute to students’ failure to recognize, name, and respond to instances of racism, homophobia, sexism or other forms of xenophobia.

• If teachers equate cultural identity with “Other,” and fail to recognize consumer behaviour, as a manifestation of culture, students’ notion of cultural identity, and what it means to be reflexive about it, will be equally limited.
If students are taught that globalization is principally connected to consumerism (more so than colonialism), and that globalization is given and inevitable, they may believe that globalization and consumerism are both given, inevitable, and phenomena that happen to them rather than phenomena that they can effect. If their teachers are feeling guilty about their consumer behaviour and do not challenge students’ comments about “just wanting the jeans” because they feel similarly, students may learn that it is okay not to question how they are implicated in child labour practices or complicit in other forms of oppression and exploitation.

If their teachers disconnect themselves from the policies and practices of the Canadian government, students may learn that their own relationship to the Canadian government and to democracy is passive and removed.

These preceding points elucidate a range of potential implications for the critical democratic global citizenship education of students in Canadian public school classrooms. While I am not arguing that these are in any way given, they do provoke vital considerations for thinking about and responding to the insidious ways that dominant discourses of schooling and dominant conceptualizations of equity education may be reproducing difference-blind and blank-slate ideals within the broader context of Canadian education, and beyond. Teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues point to both areas of critique and possibility when considering the critical democratic citizenship education of Canadian students. The considerations, questions, and potential implications of these point to vital areas for transformative possibility and interruption that can contribute toward realizing the promise of education as a site for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization. In the final concluding chapter, I identify recommendations toward that end, and articulate possible areas of future research.
Chapter 9

Conclusion

In history, in social life, nothing is fixed, rigid or definitive. And nothing ever will be. Common sense is not something rigid and stationary, but is in continuous transformation. 

Antonio Gramsci, 1985; p. 421

9.0 Introduction to the Chapter

I begin this conclusion chapter with a brief overview of the study. Next, I respond to the research questions and summarize the research findings. From there, I advance my thesis and affirm the significance of the study and the research findings. I also elaborate on specific recommendations as well as areas for future research, and I conclude with a further anecdote and re-afferentation of my belief in the power of education to realize more deeply democratic futures under conditions of globalization.

9.1 Brief Synopsis of the Study

The foci of this dissertation study were teachers’ attitudes towards teaching controversial issues in Canadian classrooms and the range of factors that inform them, including how teachers’ and students’ multiple identities figure in teachers’ attitudes. I zeroed in on teaching controversial issues and on identity because a vital component of critical democratic global citizenship education involves explicitly addressing the political dimensions of public education and curriculum as learning material, and this means teaching and learning with contentious issues and identity conflicts. A principal aim of the study was to consider the implications of the research findings for the critical democratic global citizenship education (CDGCE) of Canadian students.

I conducted this research as a multi-phase sequential multiple-method research study that involved 202 K-12 public school teacher participants from across Canada. The data collection process consisted of two principal phases. In the first phase of the study I administered an on-line survey on the topic of “Attitudes toward Teaching Controversial Issues” to 99 public school teachers from across Canada. In the second phase of the study I travelled to Alberta where I personally administered a survey on the topic of “Attitudes toward Teaching Controversial Issues” to 103 teachers. I conducted 16 semi-structured interviews with Social Studies and Science teachers about their attitude toward teaching controversial issues and how their identities
and the identities of their students intersected with their attitudes. Research findings were reported against the backdrop of the literature review (chapter 2), which concentrated on 4 overlapping areas: 1) Reconfigurations of Citizenship, Identity, and Democracy in the (Post) Modern Era: Shifting Constructs 2) Critical Democratic Global Citizenship Education 3) Teaching Controversial Issues and 4) Teacher Attitude.

Critical theorists have asserted that praxis and theory, following the dialectical method, should be interdependent and should influence each other. While theory must inform praxis, praxis must also have a chance to inform theory. Theory is not a neutral instrument for passively disclosing reality, but the lens through which agents actively analyze their world and propose alternative ways to shape and re-shape it. In my methodology chapter I elaborated on my experience with this process work, which involved framing research questions, designing a study and collecting and analyzing data. Then it involved re-visiting the theoretical parameters in light of what I had heard from teachers and re-articulating additional questions. My findings stayed, yet what I learned from teachers then shaped how I read and engaged with critical theory. It was at this point that I more purposefully investigated the specific intersections across critical theory of democracy, globalization, and education – and I identified a range of indicators against which to consider the findings. In discussing the research findings in chapter 8, I responded to additional questions provoked by my re-engagement with the theory based on what I heard from teachers, with the aim of articulating implications that I hope will inform future practice. This process has been central to my understanding of the meaning of the dialectic and of the interdependent relationship between theory and praxis. In the conceptual schema that follows, I offer a visual representation of how the conceptual foci intersected with the theoretical framework (CDGCE) and the research methodology.
9.2 Responding to the Research questions & Summary of Key Findings

The principal research questions guiding this study were: *What are teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues in Canada? In what ways do the attitudes of a group of Alberta public school teachers’ intersect with their multiple identities?* Subsidiary questions included: *What issues do teachers consider to be controversial and why? What is the range of factors that impact teachers’ attitudes? In what ways do students’ identities impact teachers’ attitudes (beliefs, feelings, practices) toward teaching controversial issues?*
Teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues in Canadian classrooms

Survey results indicated that 81% of the teachers surveyed believed that controversial issues were an important component of public education, 62% felt comfortable or very comfortable teaching controversial issues, yet only 37% reported teaching CI “often/very often.”

The most common category of issues that teachers named as controversial were environmental issues, sexuality and sexual orientation, and war and conflict. When asked what makes an issue controversial, teachers most commonly responded that these were marked by ideological conflicts (implicating strong and/or extreme views, opinions, beliefs, and values). Many teachers responded to this question in terms of what makes an issue controversial to teach, as evident in the common response “parents’ views on issues.”

The predominant factors that influenced Canadian teachers’ frequency of practice included many of the challenges already identified in existing educational research on teaching controversial issues conducted mainly in the US and the UK (concerns about parents, teacher confidence and grasp of subject knowledge, and supportive school administration). However, the data also illustrated unique considerations that reflect Canadian teachers’ attitudinal, philosophical, and ideological feelings and beliefs. These include, for example, feeling that teaching controversial issues was a professional responsibility and that it reconciled with Canadian values.

The survey findings pertaining to infrequency of practice suggest that these factors may be overruling teachers’ beliefs and feelings about the importance of controversial issues in/for education.

Intersections between Alberta teachers’ attitudes towards teaching controversial issues & considerations of identity

Teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues intersected with their identities, and those of their students, in complex ways. While it was evident how much teachers’ beliefs and feelings about who they and their students were, impacted their instructional decision-making, neither discursive nor reflexive engagement with identity or identity conflicts were commonly enacted as material for teaching and learning with controversial issues. Some of the effects of teachers not being reflexive about this manifest as hidden curriculum in the form of
essentializations, exclusions, reinforcement of dominant identities and norms, and the reproduction of discourses of neutrality and universalism that exacerbate unequal power relations (in the classroom and beyond).

Teachers believed Canadian identity reconciled with and enabled teaching controversial issues because they believed Canada to be safe, free, and accommodating of diversity and difference of opinion. They also believed that Canada was in a comfortable (because removed) position to help others, respond to global issues, and enact global citizenship identity. At the same time, teachers believed that global citizenship identity was an unrealistic ideal for them as individuals because they believed that global citizenship was an identity expressed through travelling abroad and/or doing humanitarian work overseas and through absolute reconciliation between knowledge, values, and behaviour. Because their consumer behaviour hindered this reconciliation, teachers felt that global citizenship identity stirred feelings of guilt, not agency. They nevertheless believed that globalized conditions invoked global citizenship responsibilities for Canada. Thus, they also felt enabled by their Canadian identities to the extent that they could critique Canada’s participation in international affairs as material for learning. Through this focus, teachers created some opportunities for students to reflexively engage their Canadian identities.

Teachers believed that proximity and distance between students' identities and controversial issues both impeded and enabled teaching of controversial issues. For some teachers, the closer an issue was to students' identities and personal experiences, the more they believed that students found the issues relevant and were interested in talking about them. Others, however, believed that some issues were “too close” to students’ identities and experiences, which would often lead teachers to modify their lessons, or sidestep the issues altogether. By contrast, when students were not "close enough" to controversial issues, they were not as engaged in learning about them because there was too much distance between them. Some teachers took comfort in this distance; they believed that being removed from the issues enabled students to discuss the matter more dispassionately and less emotionally. This, teachers believed, was a positive thing, because the proximity of students’ identities to some controversial issues might generate emotional and extreme responses (which they preferred to avoid). Few teachers were interested in evidence of affect and emotion as a learning outcome. Instead, they were interested in students’ application of academic reasoning, including their ability to articulate,
defend, and support views on issues through the provision of evidence and respect for facts. Teachers did feel that their own and students’ identities as Albertans enabled teaching and learning with controversial issues because these issues were *right in their backyard*, which meant they could *draw on personal experience and industry expertise in the areas of renewable energy*, for example. In turn, they created some opportunity for students to reflexively engage their identities as Albertans. At the same time, teachers felt uncomfortable teaching about the Alberta tar sands because they were cognizant of students’ parents’ sources of employment. They did not want to offend students (or their parents), which is why they tread more carefully than they otherwise would.

Teachers believed that some categories of students engaged better than others with controversial issues. When speaking about their students’ identities as both hindrances and enablers for teaching controversial issues they were frequently essentializing the students. They commonly described, for example, what they assumed could be “known” about particular categories of students based on their age, gender, geography, ethno-cultural identities, religious affiliations, and locations within educational streams (applied, International Baccalaureate, academic). More than that, they *drew associations between these categories and students’ engagement with controversial issues*, which in turn impacted how they taught. This was similar to how the curriculum policy for social studies frames learning expectations for applied students as binary questions, as opposed to inviting complexity of understanding (as they do for academic students). Teachers described *more opportunities for engagement with multiple perspectives for academic students, in contrast to more visits from celebrities and movies for applied students.*

Teachers frequently believed that students did not have political identities or opinions *yet*, which meant that students often uncritically adopted teachers’ and parents’ views as their own. Teachers believed that students’ actions were primarily informed by decisions regarding consumption and convenience because they were self-interested, and because the scope of the identity interests that they considered relevant to them was narrow. While teachers believed that some students experienced intra-identity conflicts, they believed that students either did not know how to articulate these or that they preferred working through them on their own. They expressed some concern over how their students’ cultural and religious identities intersected with controversial issues, and over the difficulties some students might experience reconciling at-home values with those normalized in Canadian society and schools. Consequently, students’
intra-identity conflicts were rarely taken up as curriculum content by teachers. Teachers believed that students were more likely to tell teachers what they wanted to hear and to uncritically accept their parents’ values and beliefs as their own than to form their own opinions, values, and beliefs on issues.

Teachers did not feel that they themselves had strong religious, political, and/or cultural identities and some felt that this enabled them to teach controversial issues. Most teachers felt their political identities were either “always changing” or non-existent, few felt strong religious affiliations, and only a small number felt they had a cultural identity at all. Teachers felt that this lack of identity affiliations enabled them to be more open to multiple perspectives on controversial issues and to being unbiased. Some teachers felt that their gender impacted their teaching of controversial issues, yet in different ways; male teachers felt their gender identities impeded them when teaching about sexuality, and some female teachers felt that their gender identities enabled them because they were perceived by parents and administrators as non-threatening, or because they felt that they could be a positive model of “female empowerment” for students.

Teachers felt discomfort and tension reconciling dimensions of their personal and their professional identities when teaching some controversial issues. Examples included: feelings of discomfort contributing to biased curriculum and participating in professional development offered by the oil and gas industries, feelings of tension with regard to how dimensions of their own identities intersected uneasily with those of their students (resulting in strategies like inviting guest speakers or colleagues to teach particular aspects of curriculum), and feelings of discomfort teaching perspectives that they themselves did not agree with.

Opportunities for discursive and reflexive engagement with identity were limited primarily to teachers’ and students’ identities as Albertans and Canadians. While teachers were mindful of some contradictions and tensions across multiple dimensions of their own identities, they were not reflexive about how these impacted their teaching practice.

Teaching for Sameness: Reproduction of the Difference-Blind Ideal and Discourses of Universalism

Rather than engaging with multiple perspectives through a critical approach that attends to the politics of difference and identity, all teachers spoke about teaching and learning with
multiple perspectives through discourses of neutrality centered on learning that multiple perspectives exist and that all views are valid. Similarly, some teachers talked about equality and inclusion through discourses of assimilation. This demonstrated to me that teacher interviewees were reinforcing the difference-blind ideal of liberal pluralism. Teachers taught what I called the *fact of multiple perspectives* in very much the same way as liberal democracy attends to the *fact of pluralism* by treating all people, and in this case, perspectives, the same. Attending to difference though does not mean attending to different perspectives in the same way. In much the same vein as liberal multiculturalism emphasizes equal respect for different and multiple cultures (connoting harmony and cohesion)—without adequately attending to the politics of identity and the ways that differences do matter and have material consequences because people experience the *same* structures, systems, laws, and institutions *differently*—teachers may have been teaching about different and multiple perspectives, but it is less evident that they were teaching about the politics of *difference*. Rather than valuing equity in terms of creating opportunities for students to critically engage with difficult tensions within and across perspectives that implicate power and exclusion it was the *multiple* in multiple perspectives that was being most valued as the opportunity for learning and as the indicator of equality that teachers were interested in. Teachers were interested in introducing students to as many perspectives as possible with the intention of broadening students’ views on issues beyond those they might have heard at home or in the media. In these ways, teachers affirmed discourses of neo-liberalism that underscore values of accumulation and choice over and above consideration of harm, oppression, and asymmetrical social relations.

**Teaching for Neutrality: Refutations of Post-Modern Conceptualizations of Identity and Citizenship and Reproducing a Blank Slate Ideal**

I discussed four manifestations of teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues that suggested teachers’ predominantly affirmed liberal and modernist conceptions of identity and reproduced dominant paradigms of schooling that discount teachers’ and students’ identities as valuable material for learning. These included the ways that teachers a) presumed teacher identity as a neutral norm b) reinforced belief in a blank slate ideal, c) essentialized identities, and d) denied and trivialized intra-identity conflicts. I found that rather than taking up intra-identity conflicts as explicit material for learning, many teachers denied experiencing these types of conflicts themselves, and many downplayed students’ experiences with them. This trivializing of intra-identity conflicts, however, was at odds with teachers’ responses to my interview
questions about their attitudes, where indeed they cited numerous examples of intra-identity conflicts that they personally felt and believed their students experienced. Teachers reinforced discourses of liberal multiculturalism that assert that individuals belong to singular and readily identifiable cultural groups that predetermined their behaviours, beliefs, and orientations toward institutions like schools, and thus their (in)ability to succeed. It was also evident that teachers perceived their own teacher identities to be similarly readily identifiable and predetermined – only the key characteristic defining them was neutrality. This was most elucidated through the ways that teachers asserted a blank slate ideal of teacher identity as an enabler for teaching controversial issues. When teachers positioned themselves along the political spectrum, they tended to position themselves as moderate (in the center), thus further reinforcing neutrality. I also heard teachers affirm not only their belief that they were neutral, but also their presumption that their racial and religious identities were the norm. Neutrality seemed to be interpreted as a goal for both teaching and learning with controversial issues.

**Interruptions to Dominant Discourses of Schooling, Citizenship, and Identity**

I also reported some examples of how teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues did suggest some interruptions to dominant discourses of schooling, and in particular to hegemonic discourses of neutrality, universalism, citizenship, and identity, which commonly operate within these. I identified four aspects of teachers’ attitudes that more commonly elucidated some interruptions to the hegemonic foundation of dominant discourses of schooling, as well as several individual examples that were unique to particular teachers. The four categories of teachers’ attitudes that evoked some interruption included 1) teachers’ consideration of the hidden and null curriculum: seeing through and beyond the texts of word and world, 2) teachers’ views about the role of consensus and resolution as unimportant learning outcomes of discussion of controversial issues, 3) teachers’ positioning themselves on issues rather than asserting their neutrality, and 4) teachers’ practices of troubling Canadian identity as curriculum content.

**Contradiction and Tensions Pointing to Areas of Transformative Possibility**

**Identity Matters**

Teachers’ beliefs and feelings about their own and students’ identities significantly impacted their pedagogical decision-making (including what not to do), yet identity was not an explicit focus in teachers’ instructional or reflexive practice and was not regarded as learning material for teaching and learning with controversial issues. Both the survey (across Alberta and
other Canadian provinces/territories) and interview data found that the issues that teachers believed were controversial, the reasons why they believed issues were controversial, the factors that impacted their attitude to teaching controversial issues, their pedagogical decision-making were all concerned with identity and identity related conflicts (inter and intra). When asked about the role of identity in the classroom and in discussion of controversial issues, however, teachers frequently stated that they rarely “go there” or “get that far.” Students’ identities mattered, but not in a way that teachers noticed.

Feeling Matters

While feelings were infrequently included as pedagogical content, they were a significant driver of pedagogical decision-making. Under guises of “reason,” some teachers created spaces for the articulation of their own strong feelings on issues in class and in their teaching. While they felt concerned about the potential impacts of teaching and learning with controversial issues in light of their students’ identities, it seemed to be primarily their own feelings that they attended to in their pedagogical decision-making. Teachers also had strong feelings about the importance of emotion being left out of discussion of CI. Feelings clearly mattered – but the question is whose?

Citizenship Matters

Teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues implicated national and global citizenship in complex ways that underscored a range of tensions and inconsistencies pertaining to citizenship under conditions of globalization. Foremost, these concerned teachers’ inconsistencies in how they talked about the scope of citizenship spaces and their perceptions of how the boundaries of citizenship responsibilities were being reconfigured. When looking internally—Canadian identity enabled teachers because of associated ideals of multiculturalism, pluralism, and peace; when focusing on Canada in the world, Canadian identity enabled them because it provided material for critique. However, opportunities for critiquing Canada’s actions in the world manifest as opportunities for teachers and students to be critical of their government and less as opportunities to be reflexive about their own identities as Canadian citizens who live in a democratic country. The troubling of Canadian identity occurred only at a level that teachers disconnected themselves from: global citizenship. Global citizenship was for the Canadian government to enact, not them. While they regarded national citizenship identity as a given, they viewed global citizenship identity as a choice. Citizenship discourse was intimately intertwined
with neo-liberal and neo-colonial emphases on the presumably inevitable forces of consumerism, globalization, and universalism.

Curriculum Matters

It was evident looking at both the survey and interview findings that curriculum was a significant factor informing teachers’ attitudes towards teaching controversial issues. The open-ended responses to the survey question about factors informing teachers’ attitudes, however, suggested that many more teachers will only teach what is explicit in the curriculum expectations. The vast majority of teacher interviewees named the curriculum as a primary reason for why they taught controversial issues; what is more, they believed their inclusion in curriculum policy rendered teaching controversial issues a professional responsibility. Teachers drew on the curriculum as a primary resource for the opportunities for learning they created to teach topics like the importance of understanding the meaning of theory in science, and topics including nationalism, globalization, ideology, the political spectrum, mutual respect, classroom climate, tolerance, and most commonly, multiple perspectives in social studies. Teachers’ emphases on these—the attention and importance they ascribed to them in their practice—resonated directly with the policy, from the words they used to the degree of importance they assigned to them. For this reason, I could not help but pay attention to what topics from the social studies policy did not seem to be translating into teachers’ instructional practices. Most notably, these were democracy, identity, and deliberation. These findings raise questions about whether, and if yes to what extent, democracy is being taken for granted in schools and may be principally being interpreted as the context rather than material, method, and motivation for learning.

Implications for the CDGCE of Canadian Students

These findings have implications for understanding of how students in Canadian classrooms are being prepared for critical democratic global citizenship education. The findings suggest that hegemonic discourses of neutrality and universalism are being both reproduced and interrupted in complex ways that affirm, but mostly refute, the promise of education for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization. In chapter 8, I delineated a range of potential implications, including the extent to which students may be learning a) that status quo perspectives are norms they should conform to, not question, b) that it is the multiple in multiple perspectives that is important, more so than critical engagement with the difficult tensions within
and across perspectives that implicate power and exclusion, c) that all views are valid and that neutrality and blank slates are ideals, d) that there is only value in resolving conflict, not engaging it, and/or e) that cultural identities are something that only Others have.

9.3 Advancement of the Dissertation Thesis

Hegemonic discourses of neutrality and universalism are being both reproduced and interrupted in schools in complex ways that affirm, but mostly refute, the promise of education for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization. These refutations are being reproduced in the form of difference-blind and blank slate ideals, and these need responding to. Despite the misguided emphasis on the danger of teachers’ expressing extreme views in dominant discourses of education that question the place of controversial issues in school, I argue that a curriculum and teachers who do not question familiar views constitute an even greater threat to deepening democracy under conditions of globalization; likewise, attitudes and instructional practices that do not question status quo perspectives, common sense, ways of thinking about and relating to Other, presumed ideals of universalism and neutrality, or discourses of neo-liberal market globalization that narrate the purported inevitable fact of consumerism. This is where most work for deepening democracy needs to be done if we want education to contribute toward that end. By limiting opportunities for learning to understanding that multiple perspectives exist and that all views are valid, and that strong senses of identity or strong positions on issues are hindrances, and that “action” is what is required without critically and reflexively engaging with assumptions, intra and inter-identity conflicts, what we think we know and how, or thinking about ways of thinking, these discourses will quietly continue to be reproduced through schooling. Schools will act more as instruments of hegemonic reproduction than as promising sites of interruption for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization.

These reproductions are not easily detected, which is how hegemony works, how discourses get reproduced, and how consent gets manufactured. What teachers told me they believed, felt, and did sounded intuitively positive (e.g. fairness is important, segregation is wrong, all views are valid etc.). However, critical aspects of teachers’ attitudes may be perpetuating inequity through explicit and hidden words, messages, and practices surrounding these beliefs. That is why unearthing these reproductions is difficult work because it requires deep and careful probing, and attention to the specific and subtle ways these discourses are
articulated and perpetuated. Through this dissertation study I was able to learn in what ways this is occurring by focusing on the particularized context of Alberta. I conducted this work with teachers who were *already* committed to critical thinking and social justice. I conducted this study in a country that has institutionalized multiculturalism and that prides itself on inclusion. The findings from this study raise the following questions: what about teachers who are not already interested and committed to critical thinking? What lessons are students being taught about sameness, blank slate ideals for identity, about the compartmentalization of their identities and the denial of complexity, contradiction, conflict and discomfort, about the relationship between their consumer behaviour and citizenship and culture, about who is and is not a global citizen, and why? What about contexts where these conversations are not already happening? Until discursive and reflexive engagement with these hegemonic discourses and with identity and feelings become more normalized practices in K-12 schools and Faculties of Education, education and schools may not only fail to realize their potential as sites for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization, but they also may have the precise opposite effect. Discourses about controversial issues in school need to shift from focusing on the dangerous potential of extreme views in teaching to responding, instead, to the inequitable implications of familiar views. Schools and education are political. The people in them have complex identities. These impact how schools are organized, how students are clustered, and what and how teachers teach. These considerations should not be denied or continued to operate as hidden curriculum, but need to be engaged as material for learning.

### 9.4 Significance

Public school classrooms are commonly regarded as inappropriate spaces for doing politics, or for having opinions on issues that challenge established stories (contra-verse). Paradoxically, public education is at the same time regarded as a critical mechanism for strengthening democracy (thus serving a political function), and for instilling values inherent to citizenship, *because* of its public nature. Teachers occupy a precarious position. This study found that many of them believe that controversial issues are indeed an important component of public education; however they often choose not to include them due to their potential repercussions. Moreover, the findings demonstrate how when controversial issues are taught in schools, regardless of the underlying conflicts, the notion of identity is conspicuously absent from teachers’ pedagogy and reflexive practice. It was evident, nevertheless, how much students’ identities implicitly impact teaching controversial issues. It is vital that students’ global
citizenship education include opportunities to explicitly recognize and engage with identity conflicts because identity-related conflicts today are not only experienced between individuals, but also within them. This was made most clear to me by the teachers themselves, when describing the struggle they experienced identifying as global citizens.

Certainly, nation and citizenship are contested and shifting terms, and the contemporary prevalence of discourse on *global* citizenship further elucidates this point. National identity, however, prevails in important and meaningful ways — including those that are in tension with ideals of global citizenship. These tensions create opportunities for teaching controversial issues in that they draw on students’ multiple identities as resources, and as central components of students’ democratic and global citizenship education. The importance of *Canadian* national identity in this study is paramount. To date, there has been scarce research conducted on teaching controversial issues in Canada. With Canadians popularly considered conflict-avoiders but also international and home to an abundance of natural resources that are predicted to be a source of considerable future conflict in global politics (fresh water, oil, minerals, and forestry), it is vital that educational research in Canada look more closely at what role conflict and difference are playing in how teachers and students understand, and critically and reflexively engage, negotiate, and enact their multiple civic identities. Both the contemporary geo-political context and the increasing presence of global citizenship in Canadian curriculum policy command and create these opportunities.

Earlier in this dissertation I argued that the popular metaphor of Canada as a multicultural mosaic provokes questions concerning the symbolic emphasis in this metaphor on multiple identity groups being held together. I asked: What is understood to be the glue that holds these disparate pieces together? Moreover, distinct from being narrowly interpreted as the glue that connects them, I asked: How does this glue also act to keep these pieces apart, and separated, from one another? Following from my findings of this study, I now propose that that glue is composed of discourses of neutrality and universalism. If one attends only to the surface these discourses seem to hold everything and everyone together in sameness, unity, harmony — similar to the outcomes the teachers were interested in when teaching multiple perspectives and teaching that all views are valid. Yet, these discourses at once separate, fracture, and avoid conflict, power, and difference, and consequently reproduce inequitable social relations. The desire for harmony and absolute reconciliation often results in denying complexity and contradiction.
Rather than choosing only to see, or be in, harmony, deepening democracy, and deepening democratic citizenship education, requires paying attention to, and responding to, these tensions and inconsistencies.

The research findings should be regarded in their dual function as obstacles and as resources, “as problems that also old out the conditions that make transformation of the situation possible” (Dewey 1986, p. 399-400). Critical theory of globalization holds that however entrenched, the social fact of globalization still remains open to democratic reconstruction. It holds that the mere fact of the wider scale of interaction in global relations is inadequate on its own and does not capture what role globalization may play as a problematic situation for the emergence of new democratic possibilities. The material realization of this project implicates democratic and global citizenship education occurring in schools, which will be approached through individuals’ national identities and contexts. In an era of increased consciousness of individuals’ multiple identities and spheres of obligation and avenues for civic participation, the findings point to the need for careful consideration of how conflict, difference, controversial issues, and identity are included and discursively addressed in contemporary curriculum and teacher development, educational policy, and in the curricula of teacher education programming.

Global citizenship, like citizenship, is a contested and controversial construct, yet this characterization is meaningful to the project of educating for democratic global citizenship in that it acknowledges its ideological nature and draws attention to the need for thinking critically about the implications for power relations and equity in decision-making processes on global public issues. Curriculum shares this characteristic in that it is constructed and political text; despite how much these features tend to remain hidden (Jackson, 1968). Indeed, what global citizenship/education, controversial issues, and curriculum all have in common is that they are and/or they deal with contested and constructed concepts, issues, and texts, which when handled should be recognized for their ideological nature and critically interpreted through a lens filtered by questions of power, justice, and equity. The controversial and political dimensions of each of these need not be treated as obstacles to overcome in classrooms, but instead as opportunities for learning, and for preparing students to experience and enact critical democratic global citizenship in the public space of the school classroom, as well as in local, national, and global public spheres – not only in the future but right now.

Since Hodgetts’s report, no follow-up empirical research with Canadian teachers has been conducted to assess the degree to which a) controversial perspectives, b) the in-depth study
of issues, and/or 3) opportunities for informed, co-facilitated deliberative dialogue (his overarching recommendations) are today enacted in the subject-matter content and pedagogy of contemporary civic education in Canada. Now, more than 40 years later, not only was this undertaking valuable for understanding what teaching and learning Canadian identity and democratic civic engagement might look like in Canadian public school classrooms, but also for understanding and critically engaging what teaching and learning for global citizenship and global democratic civic engagement might look like. In the 21st century’s geo-political context wherein complex tensions proliferate with regard to considerations of democracy in global politics — including the associated risks of new imperialisms and neo-colonial projects — the research problem at hand was learning about Canadian teachers’ attitudes towards teaching controversial issues that implicate their own and their students’ multiple identities, including their identities as Canadians in the world, and assessing what role conflict and contra-verse were playing in how teachers understand, negotiate and enact their multiple identities as Canadian and global citizens (among other identity locations) and create opportunities for their students to do the same. In an era of increased consciousness of individuals’ multiple identities, and by extension multiple spheres of obligation and avenues for democratic participation, these are timely issues.

In this study I was able to learn how teaching and learning with controversial issues as a component of students’ democratic citizenship education looks today under conditions of globalization in Canadian public school classrooms. What I found was that since Hodgetts’ study, while the curriculum today may include more recognition of post-modern conceptualizations of identity by acknowledging identity as evolving and multiple, and teachers today may be emphasizing more opportunities to learn with multiple perspectives on issues, the extent to which conflict or opportunities for co-facilitated deliberative dialogue are present in Canadian classrooms remains questionable. Foremost, the findings from this study suggest that if a principle goal of teaching and learning with controversial issues is to prepare students for democratic citizenship, much closer attention needs to be paid to the hidden curriculum. This includes hegemonic discourses of neutrality and universalism and how they are reproduced through current discourses of teaching controversial issues that not only position teachers and students as blank slates, who may be able to defend — though not necessarily be affected by or recognize how their identities are implicated in, multiple perspectives on controversial issues — but that also convince them that these are in fact ideals. These discourses sustain the illusion of schools as apolitical spaces and have detrimental implications for teachers’ and students’ agency.
and the transformative possibility they hold as creative and powerful authors of more deeply
democratic communities capable, and well-positioned, to articulate contra-stories to complement
meta-narratives, and to re-story what it means to be Canadian as *lived stories*.

Through investigation of teacher attitude, this study situates Canadian education in
existing international education research on the challenges of, and potential for, teaching
controversial issues. In its attention to the complex overlay between the operation of hegemonic
discourses of neutrality and universalism and citizenship education (democratic, global) in
Canadian classrooms, the study contributes to understanding how prevailing discourse around
teaching controversial issues itself requires critical reflexive engagement (including in
educational research). It also attends to what the global dimension of citizenship identity might
mean for existing theory on teaching controversial issues (and vice versa) and to the significance
of intra-identity conflict for democratic and global citizenship education. Finally, it points to four
areas for transformative possibility for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization
through education in Canada (identity, feelings, citizenship, and curriculum). Together, the
findings contribute a range of considerations for policy and practice and the discourses these
reproduce. These include critical discursive and reflexive attention to the hidden curriculum.
Foremost, I want to underscore the vital importance of *reflexive* practice here. As Howard
Gardner addresses in his work *Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing our Own and
Other People’s Minds* (2004), “minds, of course, are hard to change” (p. 1). Yet, he
optimistically reminds us, “of all the species on earth, we human beings are the ones who
specialize in voluntary mind change: we change the minds of others, we change our own minds”
(p. 199). This statement, to me, is an affirmation of Paolo Freire’s attention to the relationship
between conscientization and praxis, and his statement that “only beings who can reflect upon
the fact that they are determined are capable of freeing themselves” (1985, p. 68). Human
consciousness, he asserted, although conditioned, can *recognize* that it is conditioned. This
work, I believe, is the principal domain for enacting the pedagogical response that is required for
interrupting the reproduction of hegemonic discourses of neutrality and universalism in schools
and society, and for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization.

9.5 **Recommendations & Areas for Future Research**

Certainly, theory is not a neutral instrument for passively disclosing reality, but the lens
through which agents actively analyze their world and propose alternative ways to shape and re-
shape it. To an extent, the indicators of CDGCE that I advanced from my interrogation of the relationship between critical theory of democracy, globalization, and education (i.e. the theoretical framework) are themselves recommendations for teaching and learning practices. Now I add to these by identifying practical proposals for social transformation (Horkheimer, 1982) following from what I learned from participating teachers. I offer these as an assertion of my belief in the possibility of schools to function as hopeful and transformative discursive and reflexive sites for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization in Canada, and as an assertion of my commitment to participating in praxis toward that end. These implicate, and are targeted at, Department of Education policy directives and Ministry of Education curriculum documents, Canadian public school teachers and their instructional practice, pre-service teacher educators and their instructional practice, school administrators, and educational researchers. The question I respond to here is: Based on the research findings, what are some conditions for emancipation from the reproduction of hegemonic liberal discourses of neutrality and universalism in schools?

1. Differentiation between sensitive and controversial issues so that neither emotion nor power is excluded from teaching and learning

Understanding the difference between sensitive and controversial issues, matters. If using these terms interchangeably, teachers may marginalize attention to feelings and emotions and the affective dimensions of teaching and learning in classrooms. By subsuming sensitive issues under the umbrella of dominant discourse about controversial issues that reinforce avoidance and the marginalization of conflict, the emotions that accompany sensitive issues (hurt, anger, confusion, guilt etc.) can be similarly avoided and marginalized in schools.

Relatedly, it is also vital that careful attention be paid to which issues are named as controversial in policy and practice, because this designation communicates that an issue is open to question. With the topic of sexual orientation, for example, if homosexuality is named as a controversial issue to students, there is a particular view being taught that other than status quo hetero-normative identity is contra to the dominant verse. If this is not explicitly and reflexively taken up with students, such practice can contribute to reproducing status quo interests and the normalization of heterosexual identity as the neutral base from which Other sexual orientations deviate.
Additionally, it is important that controversial issues not be discursively or pedagogically treated as general topics (e.g. sexuality) but instead be framed as specific tensions and conflicts. By naming topics instead of issues, teachers and policy avoid the political dimensions of difference. It is also important that issues are not framed as simplistic binaries that imply yes/no, either/or responses. Instead, questions can be posed that invite consideration for the range of specific tensions in question (e.g. What range of issues are at stake when considering whether or not Catholic schools should be publically funded?). In order to challenge positivist paradigms of consensus and predetermined answers, we need curriculum and textbooks that do not presume or delineate limited perspectives or answers to controversial issues material but that affirm the pedagogical value of opportunities for questioning and contest.

2. Opportunities for understanding why teaching for equity does not mean teaching that all views are valid, and opportunities for understanding that this need not compromise respect for freedom of expression

Findings from this study suggest that one specific discourse operating in schools that implicates the teaching of controversial issues is the notion that teaching with multiple perspectives also means teaching students that all views are valid. Yet, by failing to name homophobic, racist, Eurocentric, sexist, or other xenophobic perspectives for what they are—for fear of compromising freedom of expression—teachers promulgate the validity of those views. Views that reinforce relations of subordination and structural inequity are not acceptable and the reasons for this should be named and engaged explicitly as important material for learning. There is a difference between compromising freedom of expression (shutting down the conversation, expelling a student from a classroom or school) versus enacting the responsibility to pedagogically respond to hatred and xenophobia in ways that recognize these views as indicators for opportunities for learning and for engagement with difficult issues. Respect for freedom of expression is not the same as respect for all views. Relatedly, teaching for democracy and equity means more than teaching students to defend their opinions and respect all views. The content of views (and not only the capacity to defend them) does matter, and so does critical and reflexive engagement with it. What individuals and institutions say matters (as communicated through the formal, hidden, and null curriculum). Neither words nor silences are neutral.

Relatedly, it is important that the pedagogical potential of teaching and learning with multiple perspectives not begin and end with emphasis on the multiple. There are important
differences between teaching for equality and teaching for equity. The value of teaching with multiple perspectives lies in the opportunities to name areas of conflict and deconstruct what factors, assumptions, values, interests, and beliefs impact distinct perspectives, and where these bump up uneasily with one another. If these specific tensions across multiple perspectives are not attended to as much as the point of the mere inclusion of multiple perspectives, the political dimensions of difference and identity may be lost, and this could result in the exacerbation of exclusion, and inattention to power and subordination. Stressing the inclusion of multiple perspectives may connote equal respect and treatment but such discourses of harmony and cohesion can mask how difference matters in material ways, because people experience the same structures, systems, laws, institutions, and rules differently. This will mean not only distinguishing between equality and equity, but between diversity, different, and difference. Acknowledging that we are different and diverse is not the same as acknowledging the politics of difference and the ways that people experience the same things in different ways. These conflations need to be untangled clearly and explicitly.

This will mean paying careful attention to whose norms, values, religions, race, cultural priorities, and ways of knowing are presumed as neutral, given, or global, and why, and thinking critically about the implications of this for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization. Critical democratic global citizenship education underscores relationships, including those that invoke privilege, power, and complicity in harm (i.e. through ways of thinking and speaking, and acting). This requires learning to be critical of discourses of globalization that presume liberal market values and charity-based models of social justice grounded in particularized values and worldviews guised as universal norms.

3. Opportunities for leaning that cultural identity is an identity location that all teachers and students have as something that all teachers and students have, and for understanding that culture does not only mean Other

Speaking about Stuart Hall’s contribution to post-war thinking, Procter (2004) argues that for Hall, “culture is a critical site for social action and intervention – where power relations are both established and potentially unsettled” (Procter, 2004; p. 1; Hall, 1996). I agree that culture is a site for critical transformation, and am concerned that the majority of the teacher interviewees in this study did not see themselves as having cultural identities. Unless more explicit attention be paid to cultural identity and opportunities for teachers and students to
critically and reflexively engage their cultural identities, this vital aspect of identity may be taken for granted in ways that implicate the reproduction of Othering and apathy, and that leave inequitable practices and habits of mind unquestioned, as though these were naturally occurring norms rather than social constructions. Concerning the question of deepening democracy under conditions of globalization via teaching and learning for critical democratic global citizenship education, in particular, opportunities for learning are required that address the relationship between culture, globalization, and consumerism, and that name and engage the underlying cultural values and assumptions that mediate individual’s relationship to consumer goods, charity, and Others.

4. Opportunities for normalizing the understanding that nobody is neutral and saying that we are does not make it so: peoples hold multiple identity affiliations with concomitant interests.

Identity today is increasingly acknowledged as complex and multiple, shifting and unstable — individuals occupy a range of identity locations. To presume that individuals are entering deliberation on controversial issues with others from a stable position whereby their beliefs, values, interests, and biases are fixed, understood, and neatly reconciled with one another (i.e. “this is who I am”) is misguided. Policy and practice require normalizing space for acknowledging that both teachers and students have complex identities, and understanding that these are not simplistically pre-formed and given but are impacted by forces including schools and education. In turn, identity interests will not always harmoniously reconcile, but will live in tension with one another – not only between individuals and groups, but within them as well. These tensions, including intra-identity conflicts, need be regarded as material for learning and for democratic citizenship education, specifically. This reflexive work need not be regarded just as an individual endeavour. Critical discursive engagement with others, including engaging in inter-identity conflict, is opportunity for self-work too. This would mean moving from having students (and teachers) clarifying their beliefs and values as preparation for discussion of controversial issues that narrowly focus on inter-identity conflict so that participants know where they stand, and instead moving toward questioning these beliefs and values and engaging “where they are speaking from” reflexively and discursively as the material for learning.

Drawing on and engaging diverse social identities in schools can be more than responsive pedagogy; it can and should be regarded as a primary resource for teaching, and as a source (not
only motivation) for strengthening democratic community in schools. Saying that we are neutral does not make it so. In this study, I heard this assertion foremost as teachers’ belief in the blank slate ideal. Relatedly, it is common within discourse on teaching controversial issues to hear reference to the notion of striving to be bias-free or to get rid of bias. Teachers frequently want students to learn to identify bias in text, but it seems there may be less opportunity for them to learn how *they* are biased and for being reflexive about how their biases operate and when. Escaping bias should not be the goal, nor could this ideal ever be realizable. The important thing is that students learn to pay attention to them, to critically engage them, to look underneath and around them, to observe how they impact how they think and what they do and say and how they see, to feel tensions they provoke across their multiple identities, and to ask questions about the foundations of their assumptions and worldviews. Rather than avoidance or pretence of neutrality, what is required is attention and engagement with identity and its concomitant interests. Discourses that invoke the importance of neutrality and bias-avoidance can have detrimental effects; they can be used as reasons for avoiding controversial issues in teaching and learning and for *not* participating in difficult discussion.

This work will also require opportunities for understanding that schools and education are necessarily political. While dominant discourse on teaching controversial issues frequently emphasizes the capacity for teachers to indoctrinate students, schools and the curriculum are rarely thought of having the same potential. Paradoxically, it seems sometimes to be the case that it is when teachers raise questions and critically engage with hegemonic discourses of neutrality and universalism and challenge status quo perspectives — by introducing multiple and contra perspectives rather than accepting a single perspective as truth and official knowledge — that they are accused of indoctrination. If everyone acknowledged schools as political spaces, teachers and teachers-in-training might feel more comfortable raising political and controversial issues and engagement with identity without fear of repercussion.

5. **Developing teaching and learning strategies for reflexivity (engagement with identity) as a key practice of democratic and global citizenship education**

It is not uncommon for the curriculum of teacher education programs and K-12 instructional practice to include opportunities for reflection. Reflection, however, is different from reflexivity. Whereas reflection invites thoughtful engagement with the material of life but frequently ends up looking more like recounting of events, reflexivity emphasizes critical
engagement with material, events, interactions, and texts (among other things) against one’s own identities, experiences, social identity locations (privilege, disadvantage), assumptions, and complicity in harm. It differs from reflection in its explicit focus on power, conflict, tension, and identity. Reflexivity is important for teachers to enact in that it has implications for their pedagogical decision-making; it allows them to think about why they do what they do (or not) under particular circumstances, in relation to particular material, and in classrooms with particular students. In this study, for example, I encountered a degree of white privilege heteronormativity from some of the teachers. Some reinforced gender stereotypes, and others attended to their own emotions at the expense of students’ learning. All of this is material for critical reflexive practice. Teachers and students need to learn to be reflexive about the power vested (or not) in their multiple identity locations, and to reflexively engage with privilege and the hegemonic and normalizing practices that sustain it. Unless we learn to voluntary respond and engage our involuntary responses (what we take as given, habitual ways of thinking and speaking) we run the risk of reproducing habits of mind and behaviours that reinforce privilege, essentializing practices, and exclusion, and that promote new civilizing missions. It is common within theories and practices of citizenship education to emphasize opportunities for students to engage local politicians. What I propose, in addition, is asking them to engage their own complex selves in ways that invite consideration of the ways that they reproduce and interrupt hegemonic discourses in their everyday life.

The self-perception of nations and national identity can also be reflexively engaged, and difficult history and its enduring legacies named and discursively engaged. Reflexivity has implications for agency in that it can be a practice for uprooting what we take as given and common sense. Regarding reflexivity as a practice of global citizenship could have implications for teachers’ and students’ global citizenship identities too, in that this practice need not involve the various forms of capital involved in travelling abroad. More than that, it could impact individuals’ understanding of the vital difference between charity and justice, and the implications for personal agency, including where and how it can be enacted. Undoubtedly, this will necessitate more explicit attention and space for feelings in schools and classrooms. It is important not only that students’ feelings be attended to in classrooms and schools as part of the formal curriculum, but also that teachers be reflexive about how their own feelings intersect with their pedagogy in complex ways (what they do and do not teach and how). Moreover, it is important that the established discursive binary between reason and emotion be more
purposefully interrupted. The *Heart of the Matter* curriculum (2005) in Alberta is an example of how policies targeted more explicitly at feelings through what is commonly called character education can disproportionately focus on students’ learning to conform rather than to question (even under guises of citizenship education). There is an important difference, for example, between learning *that* it is important to be compassionate, and learning to engage questions about structures and values that undergird and sustain the prevalence of homelessness. This is where feelings intersect with power. Teaching with heart *and* politics need not be treated in isolation. Passion is a vital part of politics and democracy, and discourses that silence emotion and feelings in schools teach students that their feelings should be checked at the door. Creating opportunities for students to feel and love, and combining these with critique and dialogical engagement, can be powerful experiences for them, and have powerful outcomes on the communities in which they live.

This is difficult work that will require the development of educational methodologies to facilitate it. These might also involve elaborating specific strategies for teaching with and for structured discussion that moves away from mere classroom talk, and conversations roaming at will (see Hodgetts, 1968). While the notion of discussion is prevalent in educational discourse, it is frequently used interchangeably with talk, conversation, and de-brief sessions that follow a model of question/response. Yet discussion connotes and requires more than this: complex and difficult questions must be articulated that invite thoughtful exchange using a structured format, and indicators of desired outcomes must be anticipated, looked for, and facilitated. Planning for discussion involves the articulation of goals, specific questions, facilitation that attends to power dynamics, and critically and thoughtfully relating ideas, questions, and views to one another in ways that invite more questions.

6. **Increased attention to understanding that democratic education entails content, method, motivation, and context for learning. Utilizing schools as powerful places for cross-cutting political talk amongst students, teachers, parents, and community members**

In order for more teachers to make connections between teaching controversial issues and teaching for democracy, it is important that the attention to democracy in curriculum front matter translate to the learning expectations; democracy is not only context for learning but should be content, and method, and motivation. As was the case for most of the teacher interviewees in this study, rather than regard the location of controversial issues in schools and curriculum as a
question, it need instead be recognized as a responsibility. The focus on democracy in curriculum (with the exception of Civics or Political Science curriculum etc.) is frequently located in the foundation statements of curriculum located in the front, but is much less evident in specific learning expectations. In turn, students and teachers may get the impression that democracy is finished and achieved, and not an ideal that needs to be consistently strived for. Yet, spaces can be more and less democratic; simply declaring them to be democratic does not make that so. Not only that, merely saying that they are can also result in less democratic and less safe spaces because it may result in the evasion of power and difference.

Relatedly, it is important that teachers be prepared to learn to read curriculum critically and creatively. A key finding in this study is that curriculum matters for teaching controversial issues. Teachers pay attention to which controversial issues are in the curriculum (and excluded) and how they are framed, and in this study they believed that their presence in curriculum made teaching them a professional responsibility. It is important that these consequently be not only explicit but that teachers be prepared to read and interpret the curriculum critically and creatively – to learn to look not only for what is included, but also to think differently and broadly about content themes raised in policy, to read the curriculum for silences and possibilities, to see through and beyond the text and the limited ‘verse’ they narrate. An issue that occurred yesterday may not be in the curriculum, and yet there could be innumerable possibilities for raising it in class while grounding it in curriculum policy.

To illustrate the understanding of the relationship between democracy and education, schools can also be utilized as spaces not only for learning about, but doing democracy – in classrooms, in the school, and with the community. Schools could be sites for courageous conversations about difference, they could be regarded as spaces where multiple stakeholders, including teachers and parents and community members, could discuss issues that affect them. This would mean conceptualizing schools as spaces for learning not limited to children. At the same time, it will also mean regarding children as members of deliberative communities, and as citizens of effecting change and re-storying their worlds now. Teachers, and society at large, often talk about children and youth as though they do not yet live in the real world. Instead, the world is regarded as a place that they will soon be in, or that they will inherit. Yet students are in the world now and it is already their world. Students experience racism now; they experience homophobia now; they make purchasing decisions and vote with their dollars now; they
reproduce and interrupt hegemonic discourses every day through speech and behaviour; they participate in clubs, community, and advocacy organizations now. The world is not a place the students will soon be in – they are in it and their perspectives and agency need to be accounted for. Students do not only become citizens when they can vote. If democracy is understood as a way of life and living together, this has implications for children of all ages.

**Areas for Future Research**
The following are areas for future research provoked by the findings from this study:

- Investigating the relationship between the planned, enacted, and experienced curriculum for teaching and learning with controversial issues in Canadian classrooms. This work may involve inquiring into sources and resources for teaching and planning lessons on controversial issues, observing lessons, speaking with students about how they experience and interpret these, and interviewing them about what they are learning.

- Interrogating in more depth how teachers’ and students’ gender identities, specifically, affect teaching and learning with controversial issues, and investigating this through theories and pedagogies of emotion.

- Inquiring into how curriculum and teachers create differential opportunities for learning with controversial issues across academic and applied levels of students, analyzing the underlying assumptions, observing classroom teaching, and analyzing the implications for which students are being prepared for what kinds of democratic citizenship in schools through an equity-oriented lens.

- Purposeful attention to teachers’ understanding of their cultural identities analyzed through post-colonial criticism.

- Probing the relationship between novice teachers’ and experienced teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues and what beliefs, feelings, experiences, and factors affect these.

- Research that attends specifically to the teacher/parent relationship, including tensions across raising children and teaching them. This could involve facilitating focus groups and
deliberative dialogues with teachers and parents on the topic of controversial issues in schools

- Research on teachers’ beliefs, feelings, and practices about the residential schooling system in Canada and how teachers’ and students’ identities intersect with these; particularly in light of recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (June, 2012) that each provincial and territorial government in Canada undertake a review of the curriculum materials currently in use in public schools to assess what, if anything, they teach about residential schools

- Investigating how Canadian teachers understand the meaning and practices of democracy and how it figures in their instructional practice

- Investigating how elementary teachers teach about colonialism (in units, for example, on early contact or settler societies)

- Research investigating the relationship between the location of controversial issues in teachers’ philosophies of education and how these translate (or not) into their pedagogical practice

9.6 Concluding Anecdote

I began this dissertation with an anecdote of an experience that I had had in 2007, and I would like to conclude on this note as well by briefly sharing some additional experiences that have informed my thinking about and my commitment to teaching and learning with controversial issues and critical global citizenship education. The first has to do with how my understanding of global education has changed over the course of my graduate studies and what I have learned along the way. Next, I talk about excerpts from a film that I recently saw that raised many similar themes and questions raised in this dissertation study. I do so as a prelude to sharing a comment I heard by one teacher while conducting this study, and the response it generated, as a means of affirming my belief in the importance of this work.

Over the years, I have frequently changed my mind about my comfort level with the term global education, and this has aligned with my shifting understanding of the meaning and scope
of global education and the tensions the term provokes between notions of the universal and the particular, between cohesion and conflict, between unity and diversity, between proximity and distance, complicity and agency, and between self and other. When I began doing this work, my understanding was that global education involved teaching about Other – other cultures, other values, other worldviews, other relationships to the planet; it was teaching about the world out there. Like the teachers I interviewed in Alberta, it was about providing students access to opportunities to learn about perspectives that they might not otherwise encounter. It was about broadening their perspective.

When I first moved to Toronto, I worked with a non-governmental organization that focused on children’s rights and agency, and I entered this work with this view of global education in mind. One spring we took a group of 75 high school students from across Canada who were exhibiting leadership in global education, to Ottawa for a conference called Just Act! It was there that my understanding of global education started to shift. At this conference, we showed the students a video about the experience of Canadian musicians who visited the Congo during a time of conflict. This video aligned with my understanding of global education at the time - I did not question it or its implicit messages. The high school students attending the conference, however, did. As we watched the video, some of the students began leaving, some got emotional, and some got angry. While I did not immediately understand, and it took me a long time and a lot of learning after this incident to even begin to, these students were responding to and interrupting discourses of neo-colonialism and meta narratives that tell the adventure story of brave and compassionate white North American celebrities who put themselves in harm’s way in their plight to understand and help the Other, while completely disregarding the story of the history of the place, the peoples who live there, or the range of circumstances and events that render the conflict and the issues being faced complex and difficult. These students and their reactions to this video taught me a few things: 1) that global education implicates power, 2) that the types of learning opportunities we create and the types of questions we ask, and do not ask, matter to our students and convey messages and lessons to them, and 3) that students are teachers and their experiences and identities (including values, assumptions, beliefs, biases), as well as our own as educators, are vital material for learning global education. Sometimes, we may convey/teach things that we do not intend – sometimes we do not even know when this happens. In this case, we showed a video that was more about the safety of the band members than it was about the conflict in the Congo. The students found it offensive. They found it othering. At the
time, my critical approach to the film was not as developed as that of the students – I did not entirely understand why they were so upset. What I would take issue with today, but failed to do so back then, is the theme of the conference itself: *Just Act!* Too much global education focuses on taking action without critically engaging with ways of thinking and perceiving. This, to me, is why reflexivity is so important. When we act without critically engaging our assumptions – about who we are and who Others are, about what needs to be done and why, and about our complicity in harm, we risk reproducing hegemonic discourses that exacerbate oppression and exclusion.

Today, following from my experiences engaging in these ideas over the course of my graduate studies, my thinking about global education looks different. Rather than presuming that such a thing as global citizenship is knowable and an identity that is shared, I regard it as a term that is useful for provoking questions about deepening democracy under conditions of globalization – in local and global public and political spheres. Global citizenship education is not about learning about and helping Others – it is not about new civilizing missions. It is about being reflexive about how we construct Others, how culture and discourse construct our identities and ways of knowing and thinking about the world and our relationships in it. It is about troubling taken-for-granted truths, and about interrupting rather than reproducing inequity. It is about recognizing how identities and social relations are constructs mediated by power. For these reasons, it is not learning about Other or only about issues that appear to be explicitly global in focus. Post-modern conceptions of identity under conditions of globalization agitate hegemonic binaries between self and other, and between here and there. Global citizenship education as *deepening democracy under conditions of globalization* is not about Others over there but is about being reflexive about relationships, identity, difference, and equity, generally.

‘That’s a pretty long hug there guys, you don’t want us to get the wrong idea!’
(Teacher MC, Social Studies Council Conference Banquet Dinner)

On the last evening of the Social Studies Council conference in Jasper, Alberta I attended a banquet dinner and awards ceremony at which several teachers were being honoured. This comment (above) was publicly made by a teacher while on stage introducing a male award recipient being handed an awarded by another male teacher. It was met with a room full of laughter. This is an example of the power of hegemonic discourses of sameness and the ways
that these get reproduced in schools and society. It is also an example of the vital importance of teaching and learning with controversial issues not just for students’ education but also for teachers, parents, and community members. Jokes like this are too frequently accepted, because they either affirm someone’s beliefs or because people do not want to disrupt feelings of cohesion and comfort.

I experienced something similar while teaching recently. A student was telling the class about an incident that occurred while he was on his practicum when a male student of his articulated a series of sexist arguments against women’s rights. My student was charismatic and told the story in such a way that everyone was engaged: “and then I realized,” he said, “this was one of those guys that was not going to make things easy on me.” He said this with a smile, and everyone in the class laughed. My instinct, too, was to laugh – and it was only mid-way through my laugh that I abruptly stopped laughing because it occurred to me that by laughing I was making light of the seriousness of his student’s views, and his pedagogical response. I was participating in reproducing this kind of response. This is how discourses of neutrality and cohesion that mask and fail to interrupt power get reproduced. It’s hard to pay attention to this, and a lot of it has to do not just with the what but with how we learn about ways of being together. We want to avoid being uncomfortable. We want to avoid asking difficult question because we worry others will think of us as too serious or too critical. This work is so hard because it is about what we know and take as given and it is about challenging not just views, but people around us – including those we care about. Engaging difference is difficult. Yet, the more we pretend like we have got it all figured out the greater harm we do because it means we are not doing this work, and instead are choosing to avoid it, cover it up, and ignore it with a master narrative blanket of cohesion. This has material consequences for people. Yes, it is important to celebrate diversity but it is also vital that we acknowledge that engaging difference is difficult, and that we commit to undertaking the work involved in understanding, and feeling, this.

Dominant discourses about the location of controversial issues in school themselves contribute to the ways that neutrality and sameness are reproduced through them. These normalize beliefs that teachers are not expected to have identities, that students are not expected to have opinions or agency, and that schools are apolitical spaces. Discourse on controversial issues in school need to shift from focusing on the dangerous potential of extreme views in teaching to attending instead to the inequitable implications of familiar views. This requires
critical and discursive engagement with discourses of schooling, identity, citizenship, neutrality, universalism, sameness, and controversial issues. Just as schools and education are power-full in their capacity to reproduce what we take as given, they also hold immense power for interrupting this. In their potential to create space for engaging with contra, teaching and learning with controversial issues can be a vital instructional tool for this work, and critical reflexive practices by teachers and students can be an important pedagogical approach to all teaching as a response to, and not only acknowledgement of, inequity and exclusions in schools and beyond.

The students in Chicago and in Ottawa taught me that children are not only capable of confronting difficult questions and tensions that implicate power and equity, they are critical educators prepared to raise them and insist that these be attended to by adults. It is not only the promise of schools, education, and teachers that I want to affirm, it’s the promise of children. Education, as formation, refers to what is in process, unfinished, complex, multiple, and dynamic, not to what is established, finished, or fixed. If “common sense, too, is in continuous transformation” (Gramsci, 1985; 421), I choose to believe that what today’s children and future young children could take as given is the importance of being critically reflexive. What if uncertainty, critique, and a difference-engaging ideal themselves became common sense? This is necessary for deepening democracy under conditions of globalization, and I believe that it is possible. In line with critical theory’s dual perspective affirming critique and possibility, it is my hope that in their capacity to inform praxis, these research findings and recommendations can themselves be critically and discursively engaged, and contribute to realizing this great promise.
References


for Canada's role in the world. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre.


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Appendix A

Survey: Teachers’ Attitudes toward Teaching Controversial Issues in Canadian Classrooms

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. This survey consists of a combination of 15 open-ended and multiple choice questions. It will take you approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Please answer as many questions as possible but do not feel obligated to respond to all questions should they not apply to you or should you feel uncomfortable answering them.

You may decline to answer any question that you do not feel prepared to answer or comfortable answering. This survey is intended to learn about Canadian public school teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues in school. It is also intended to learn what sources of support and contextual considerations impact your attitude and teaching practice of controversial issues.

The intention of this survey is not to judge your attitude or your teaching practice, but instead to understand the complex interplay between Canadian identity, teaching controversial issues and democratic/global citizenship education. For this reason, I sincerely appreciate your honesty in responding to the proceeding questions.

By completing and submitting this survey, you are giving consent for the inclusion of your survey responses in this research study. Participation is completely voluntary, you are free to take your time in deciding whether to participate, you are free to refuse (without any kind of problem or penalty), and you are also free to withdraw from participation in the study at any time should you change your mind at any point in the research process. Your participation in this study will remain confidential. Details that identify you will be carefully disguised. You will be assigned a pseudonym for the duration of the study.

1. Please indicate your gender:

2. What Province or Territory do you teach in?

3. For how many years have you been teaching?

4. Please indicate the teaching level that is your predominant teaching assignment:
   
   Primary (K-6)
   Junior/Intermediate (4-10)
   Intermediate/Senior (7-12)

5. What are 3 main subject areas that you currently teach?
   1.
   2.
   3.

6. Are you currently teaching social studies and/or sciences?
   Yes
   No

7. Please indicate the type of community your school is located in:
   Rural
   Small Town
Large Town
Metropolitan Urban Center

8. How often do you teach controversial issues in your classes?

Never
Not Very Often
Relatively Often
Often
Very Often

9. If you answered "relatively Often", "Often", or "Very Often" above, please specify which controversial issues you have taught/teach (Open-ended):

10. In your view, what makes these issues controversial? (Open-ended)

11. If you answered "Never" or "Not very often" in question #9, please indicate why not (Open-ended):

12. What are your beliefs about teaching controversial issues in school? Please indicate all the statements below that apply to you:

I strongly believe that students should NOT be exposed to controversial issues in school

I believe that students should NOT be exposed to controversial issues in school except when these are included in the approved programs of study and/or learning resources

I believe that students should be exposed to some controversial issues in school, but their exposure should be regulated and monitored

I believe that controversial issues are an important component of public education

I am impartial concerning the question of teaching controversial issues in school

Other

13. If you answered "other" in the previous question, please elaborate (open-ended):

14. What factors affect your attitude toward including or excluding controversial issues in your classroom teaching? (Open-ended)

15. Overall, how comfortable are you exposing students to controversial issues in your own classroom teaching?

Not at all comfortable
Relatively Comfortable
Comfortable
Very Comfortable
Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. This survey consists of a combination of open-ended and multiple choice questions. It will take you approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Please answer as many questions as possible but do not feel obligated to respond to all questions should they not apply to you or should you feel uncomfortable answering them. You may decline to answer any question that you do not feel prepared to answer or comfortable answering.

This survey is intended to gage Alberta public school teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues in school. It is also intended to learn how you approach these issues in your teaching practice, and to learn what sources of support and contextual considerations impact your practice.

The intention of this survey is not to judge your teaching practice, but instead to understand the complex interplay between your identity as a Canadian teaching in the province of Alberta, teaching controversial issues, and democratic/global citizenship education. For this reason, I sincerely appreciate your honesty in responding to the proceeding questions. The findings from this study are intended to support the work of pubic school teachers in Alberta.

By completing and submitting this survey, you are giving consent for the inclusion of your survey responses in this research study. Participation is completely voluntary, you are free to take your time in deciding whether to participate, you are free to refuse (without any kind of problem or penalty), and you are also free to withdraw from participation in the study at any time should you change your mind at any point in the research process. Your participation in this study will remain confidential. Details that identify you will be carefully disguised. You will be assigned a pseudonym for the duration of the study.

*Signature __________________________ Date: __________________________
TEACHING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES SURVEY

1. Indicate your gender: Check (✓) Male □ Female □

2. How many years have you been teaching? __________________________

3. Check (✓) the one grade level that is your predominant teaching assignment.
   Primary (K-6) □ Junior/Intermediate (gr. 4-10) □ Intermediate Senior (gr. 7-12) □

4. Three main subject areas you currently teach: 1._________ 2._________ 3._________

5. Are you currently teaching social studies/social sciences? Check (✓) Yes □ No □

6. Check (✓) the type of community your school is located in.
   Rural □ Small town □ Large Town/small city □ Metropolitan centre □

The following questions ask you to describe your overall attitude toward teaching controversial issues.

7. How often would you say that you teach controversial issues in your classes?
   □ Never □ Not very often (1-2 times/year) □ Relatively Often □ Often (Monthly) □ Very Often (Weekly/Daily)

8. If you answered “Relatively Often, Often or Very Often” above, please specify which controversial issues you have taught/teach.
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

9. In your view, what makes these issues ‘controversial’?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

10. If you answered “never” or “not very often” above, indicate why not.
11. What are your beliefs about teaching controversial issues in school? Please check (√) all the statements below that apply to you.

- I strongly believe that students should not be exposed to controversial issues in school.
- I believe that students should not be exposed to controversial issues in school except when these are included in the approved programs of study and/or learning resources.
- I believe that students should be exposed to some controversial issues in school, but their exposure should be regulated and monitored.
- I believe that controversial issues are an important component of public education.
- I am impartial concerning the question of teaching controversial issues in school.
- Other: __________________________________________________________________________

12. What factors affect your attitude toward including or excluding controversial issues in your classroom teaching?

________________________________________________________________________________________

13. Overall, how comfortable are you exposing students to controversial issues in your own classroom teaching?

- Not at all comfortable
- Relatively Comfortable
- Comfortable
- Very Comfortable

14. To your knowledge, does your school board have a controversial issues policy? If yes, please describe your interpretation of the general intent of that policy.

________________________________________________________________________________________

15. Does the school that you currently teach in support the teaching of controversial issues? Check (√) Yes  No

What gives you that impression? ________________________________________________________________
16. Does the school that you currently teach in have a controversial issues policy?

Check (✓)  Yes  ☐ No  ☐

If yes, please describe your interpretation of the general intent of that policy.

17. Bill 44 came into effect in Alberta on September 1, 2010, requiring teachers to provide advance notice to parents when they will teach controversial issues, and allowing parents to withdraw their children from classes in such cases.

Are you aware of Bill 44? ________If yes, what is your opinion of this bill?

________________________________________________________________________

In addition to this survey on teaching controversial issues, a further component of this research study is interviews with teachers. The interview will address similar questions as those raised in this survey, but will focus more specifically on identity and on instructional practice.

☐ Yes, I am interested in being interviewed (Contact email)_______________

☐ No, I am not interested in being interviewed

Thank you for completing this survey.
Dear *Teacher*,

Thank you for completing the survey and for agreeing to participate in a follow-up interview for the research study I am conducting aimed at learning about Canadian public school teachers’ attitudes toward teaching controversial issues in school, and how teachers’ identities influence these attitudes and influence how they teach controversial issues. Your participation is an opportunity for the international educational research community to learn from you about how you teach controversial issues in your classroom practice, including how you understand the influence of your multiple identities, what challenges you confront, and what support resources do and could facilitate your work. By sharing your perspective and experience, you will contribute to informing work being done on how to improve the ways that Faculties of Education, Ministries of Education, School Boards, and schools across Canada prepare and support teachers for teaching controversial issues in school. Ultimately, it is my intention that the perspectives that you are able to share with me will help facilitate other Canadian public school teachers’ work in this area, and hence contribute to a more collective effort geared to preparing Canadian youth for critically informed global citizenship participation.

The follow up interview for which you are hereby consenting is focused on your attitude and practice for teaching about controversial issues with your public school students, and the influence of multiple dimensions of your personal, professional, and civic identities on your attitude and practices. This interview should take approximately 45-60 minutes.

Participation is completely voluntary: you are free to take your time in deciding whether to participate, you are free to refuse (without any kind of problem or penalty), and you are also free to withdraw from participation in the study at any time should you change your mind. Your participation in this study will remain confidential. Details that identify you will be carefully disguised. At no time will you be evaluated. You may decline to answer any question that you do not feel prepared to answer or comfortable answering.

You will be assigned a pseudonym for the duration of the study. I may use quotes from your interview but they will never be attributed to you explicitly and only I, and my supervisor, Dr. John Portelli, will have access to the raw data. While I will request that interviews be digitally audio recorded with your permission, you are free to decline or ask me to turn off the digital recorder at any point during your interview. Digital recordings and field notes will be kept locked and will be made accessible only to myself and to my supervisor Dr. John Portelli. All digital recordings and field notes will be destroyed within 5 years following the completion of the study. Within 2 months following the interview, you will be provided with an opportunity to review the transcript of your responses to the interview questions and you will have the opportunity at this time to retract and/or edit statements that you do not feel adequately reflect what you intended to communicate. I will email this transcript to you and will ask that you please review it and email it back to me with any concerns or changes within 3 weeks. During the data analysis phase of my research study, I will also email you draft copies of portions of the dissertation findings that are relevant to your interview, in order to provide you with the opportunity for feedback on my interpretation of your contribution. You will also be emailed a link to the electronic thesis when the study is completed (2011). Throughout the research process and following the submission of the thesis to the University of Toronto, I will be actively seeking opportunities to publish portions (or all) of the dissertation research, as well as present this data and my study findings at Canadian and International educational research conferences. Your identity will remain confidential in each of these publications and presentations, and your pseudonym will be consistently used when describing your contributions. To further ensure your anonymity, you may wish not to discuss your participation in this study with others.

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This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Boards of the University of Toronto. If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study, or if you have any complaints or concerns about how you have been treated as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Ethics, ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416.946.3273.

Please sign this letter below, and also print your full name, if you consent to participate in this interview. Below this, please indicate whether or not you give your permission for this interview to be digitally audio recorded and transcribed. Finally, please indicate whether you would like to request a copy of an executive summary of the research findings and include your contact information so that I can forward these to you. Please ensure that you do provide me with your email address in order that I can also email you the link to the electronic version of the completed dissertation.

Please retain a copy of this consent form for your records.

With sincere gratitude for your time and participation,

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Dr. John Portelli, Professor & Associate Chair
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Participant Signature & Contact Information

I have read and understand the above information. I understand that participation in this research project involves my consenting to a 90-minute interview. I understand that I am free to choose not to answer any particular question and to withdraw from this research project without negative consequences.

Name (Please Print) ___________________________ Signature ______________________________________ Date _____________

I hereby give my permission for the interview to which I am herein consenting to be digitally audio-recorded (if yes, please sign here) ______________________ and transcribed (if yes, please sign here) ______________________.

I would like to request that a copy of the executive summary of the research findings be sent to me (please sign if yes) ______________________. These can be sent to either of the following:

Email address (Please provide to receive link to electronic dissertation): ______________________

Mailing Address: ______________________
________________________________
________________________________
________________________________
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

*The interview questions are broken down into 3 categories focused on your attitude and practices for teaching controversial issues in school and on the influence your own and your students’ multiple identity locations (for example, as public school teachers, as Albertans, as Canadians, as global citizens etc.). Please do not hesitate to tell me if you are not comfortable answering any of the following questions or if they are not relevant to you; we will move on to the following question. I would like to remind you that your responses will not be evaluated, and that neither your name or any information that would compromise the anonymity of your participation will be included in this study.

As per the consent form that you signed, I will be audio-recording this interview through the use of a digital recorder. If at any time you would like me to turn off the recorder, please do not hesitate to let me know. Do you have any questions before I Begin?

Part I: Attitude Towards Teaching Controversial Issues in School

You indicated on the survey that you believe controversial issues are an important component of public education and that you teach controversial issues. Can you tell me why you believe controversial issues are an important component of public education? Why do you teach controversial issues?

What are some issues that you consider to be controversial and why?

Are there any environmental issues that you consider to be controversial? Which ones?

To what degree do you feel comfortable teaching controversial issues in school? Why? Why not?

What types of factors impact your attitude toward, and how, you teach controversial issues in school?

Part II: Teaching Practices: Controversial Issues in School The ‘HOW you teach’ questions

Can you please give me a range of issues that you consider to be controversial that you teach?

In your view, what makes these issues controversial?

And what about controversial environmental issues, more specifically – which, if any, do you teach and what makes them controversial in your view?

What controversial issues are dealt with in the curriculum policy of the subject areas and grades that you teach?
Could you please give me some examples of the types of opportunities for learning you create when teaching about controversial issues (types of activities or assignments etc.). What are your learning objectives around these?

What about controversial environmental issues?

Do you teach about any controversy surrounding the oil and gas industries in Alberta and the Alberta Tar Sands?

- If yes, do you teach this *as* a controversial issue? Why / why not?
- How do you create learning opportunities (e.g. activities, assignments etc.) for your students about this issue?
- What are your objectives?
- Do you have any concerns when you teach about this issue? If yes, what are they? If no, why not?

Are there any teaching strategies that you prefer when teaching about controversial issues? (e.g. discussion, debate, role play, guest speakers etc.)

Do you let students know where you stand on controversial issues in the classroom? Why / why not?

Do you facilitate discussion of controversial issues in the classroom? How?

How do you facilitate conflicts and disagreements across students’ perspectives and opinions on these issues?

Could you give me an example?

Is it important to you that students reach a consensus as an outcome of dialogue and deliberation of controversial environmental issues? Why or why not?

*Part III: Identity - Personal, Professional, & Civic*

How, if at all, does the concept of ‘identity’ fit into what and how you teach your students about controversial issues?

What does it mean to you to be Canadian?

What role, if any, does conflict play in how *you* understand what it means to be Canadian?

How does the notion of conflict figure into how you understand democracy?

Would you describe yourself as a global citizen? Why / why not? What does that mean to you?

I’m going to list a number of identity roles and I will ask you to please tell me, which of the following roles *enable, hinder* (or neither) - you in your teaching practice of controversial issues in school.

- Your identity as a public school teacher?
- Your identity as a member of the Alberta Teachers Association?
- Your identity as a resident of, and teacher in, Alberta?
Your political identity? (you are not obliged to identify what that identity is)
Your gender identity?
Your cultural identity?
Your religious identity?
Your identity as a Canadian?
Your identity as a global citizen?

Are there any other particular dimensions of your own identity that you believe influence your attitude toward and how you teach controversial issues in school? Which dimensions of your identity, and why?

Conflicts of Interests: Self and Students

Would you say that you ever experience any conflicts of interest across different dimensions of your identities (e.g. as a public school teacher and Christian, or as an Albertan and an environmentalist etc.)? Please elaborate. If yes, do you believe that this influences how you teach about particular controversial issues (the types of learning opportunities you create, how you position yourself etc.)? In what way/s?

Would you say that you provide opportunities for your students to engage with potential conflicts of interest across their multiple identities as they pertain to controversial issues (i.e. as sons and daughters of oil and mining workers and as global citizens, as new Canadians relative to existing cultural and religious identities, etc.)? Why / why not?

Please provide examples of how you create these opportunities and what learning outcomes you hope to achieve through these opportunities. What, if any, concerns do you have around teaching students to think about these conflicts?

Bill 44 came into effect in Alberta on September 1, 2010, requiring teachers to provide advance notice to parents when they will teach controversial issues, and allowing parents to withdraw their children from classes in such cases.

a. What is your opinion of this bill?
   i. As a teacher?
   ii. As an Albertan?
   iii. As a canadian?
   iv. As a global citizen?

b. Do you feel that your teaching practice will be impacted and/or compromised in any way?

Reminder: Participation is completely voluntary: you are free to withdraw from participation in the study at any time, without consequence, should you change your mind at any point in the research process. Neither your name or information that could identify you will be used in this study.

Your participation in this study is sincerely appreciated - Thank You!
Dear _______ Teachers Association,

My name is Angela MacDonald and I am a PhD Candidate studying at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). My dissertation research is in the area of global citizenship education, and is focused on the topic of teaching controversial issues in Canadian public schools. I am writing you to request your assistance in extending an invitation to public school teachers in _______ to complete a short on-line survey questionnaire.

The survey consists of 15 questions and will take teachers approximately 10-15 minutes to complete (on their own time). The survey and the study have been approved by all necessary Ethical Research Boards (ERB?s at the University of Toronto; individual school board permission is not required because teachers are being asked to complete the survey on their own personal time). I have attached the University of Toronto Ethical Approval, for your reference. Teachers’ participation in this study will remain confidential, and at no point are they asked for their name or the name of their school boards or schools.

I would be sincerely grateful if your association would be willing to advise members of the opportunity to participate in this study and send them the survey link, and/or if you could post the following link and short description to the on-line survey on your website for a 2 week period.

The website: www.angelamacdonald.ca
The website description: Survey: What is your attitude toward teaching controversial issues? Please access this link if you are interested in having your views included in this nation-wide survey of Canadian public school teachers conducted by OISE/University of Toronto

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study that you would prefer to discuss before posting the survey link I would be very happy to arrange a time to call you to address these. I would also be very grateful for any feedback or suggestions you might have for me in terms of facilitating my capacity to reach a broad spectrum of ______ teachers in order to represent their perspectives in this study.

With sincere thanks for your attention,

Angela MacDonald, PhD Candidate
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