Teaching Local and Global Controversial Issues in the Social Studies Education: A Comparative Study of Kenyan and US High Schools

Dissertation

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored teachers’ construction of ideas about controversial issues in the United States mid-West high schools and in Kenyan high schools. Apart from examining teachers’ controversial issues pedagogical practices, I explored teacher perceptions and construction of ideas about local and global controversial issues. This study investigated the connections between teachers’ ideologies and their teaching practices. Also, I examined how teachers’ ideology and practices impacts the development of democratic, local and global citizenship education.

Theoretical frameworks of critical theory and postcolonial theories informed this study. The works of postcolonial scholars were discussed in view of how they spoke to the research as well as how these theories inform and are informed by controversial issues pedagogy in the two regions. These theoretical frameworks were utilized because they are derived from the marginalized perspectives within which critical controversial issues pedagogy lie, as opposed to the mainstream canon that is advanced in the public conception of controversial issues.

A decolonizing research framework was adopted. Decolonizing research practices are grounded in “culturally responsive research practices” and seek to empower the knowledge of marginalized communities (Denzin et.al. 2010, p.6). Therefore this methodology intended to bring to the fore practices and philosophies of the marginalized and to deconstruct the imperialist notions that have for centuries described those on the
periphery. It sought to understand the epistemologies, experiences, their way of knowing, and activities of participants in my research regions (Smith, 1999). I employed qualitative research approaches since such approaches tend to give voice to and reclaim the marginalized discourses, in an attempt to liberate themselves from Western research frameworks. Western frameworks have been problematized for prescribing the indigenist in popular anthropological ways that inferiorize those in the margins. Moreover, the Western canon in the US has veiled and fractured counter arguments on hot-button issues further marginalizing those maintaining non-popular viewpoints and orientations. Thus as I engaged in this qualitative study, derived from subjugated ways of knowing, this inquiry shed light on the experiences of participants in both regions.

I collected data through interviews of eight social studies teachers’ classroom observations and document analysis and triangulated findings to generate theory. One of the major findings was that teachers’ epistemology and conception of effective controversial issues pedagogy did not always translate to reality in the classrooms. Another finding revealed that teachers avoid teaching controversial issues that are considered extremely touchy issues in their community. It was apparent from the study that when teachers receive training in teaching controversial issues they were more confident in their practices. Therefore, this study suggests a need for teacher education programs to facilitate training in controversial issues pedagogy.
This study is significant because it departed from simply examining teaching practices to looking into teachers’ epistemologies and ideologies as an important part in why and how they do what they do in social studies classrooms. Significantly, teachers’ pedagogical practice through controversial issues explicated possibilities and hope for a transformative democratic and citizenship education.
Dedication

To my mother and father who were my first educators and my grandmother, Rosina Mapinga whose example has always inspired me.

To my husband, Ken,

I just do not have words to express my appreciation for your sacrifices, unwavering support, and enduring love in this academic journey. I will be forever grateful to you for your support and your inspiration.

To my beautiful daughters,

I owe you a basketful of gratitude debt that I cannot repay. Sheila, I appreciated your understanding, trust and unfailing love throughout this journey. Katila, you bring me immeasurable joy, even when things were tough, you illuminated my life with your abiding love and hugs. Thank you both for being there for me, living and dreaming this dream with me.
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Field Of Study

Major Field: Education

Social Studies and Global education
Multicultural and Equity Studies
Qualitative Research
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the problem

In this chapter I provide a brief background of the research study. I discuss teachers’ perceptions and interpretation of controversial issues and how their ideas impacted their pedagogical practices. Also I present a brief discussion of the research contexts, that is, the United States and Kenya, and the methodological premises employed. But I first begin by the statement of the problem that necessitated the research study. I use a number of quotes and anecdotes from the teacher participants and the society to set the stage for an understanding of the nature and impact of controversial issues discussions in the society and in schools. I begin with the story of a Mid-West United States teacher:

In the social studies classroom we were discussing about freedom of speech as a controversial issue and we referred to statements made by Ward Churchill (2001) in his article “On the justice of the roosting chicken” a controversial piece that was basically faulting the United States as carrying out a genocidal form of foreign policy. So when the twin towers were attacked, Churchill’s explanation of it was that it was because of the US’s unlawful foreign policies. So we began by talking about the freedom of speech issues and Mr. Churchill’s statements, and if he should make such problematic statements. The next thing I know a parent
called the superintendent and complained about my discussion of Mr. Churchill’s controversial statements in the classroom. (Interview, November, 2010 Mid-West US Teacher)

Next there was the Cable News Network (CNN) that featured Dr. Joycelyn Elders, the first African American United States surgeon general who openly promoted masturbation and the teaching of human sexuality in schools as a way of preventing young people from engaging in riskier sexual activity. When asked about her controversial position she maintained that teaching about human sexuality “allowed us to talk about sexuality more openly and honestly. We are sexual beings, from birth to death, and we never feel that we can talk about sexual health. You can't be a healthy, well-adjusted human being without a healthy sexuality.” Her controversial position led to dire consequences. Because of advocating for masturbation as a way of protecting the youth from engaging in other perilous sexual activity in the 1994 United Nations Conference on HIV/AIDS, she was forced to resign from her position as US surgeon general (CNN.com/TRANSCRIPT, July 3, 2001).

Then there is the case a history teacher in Kenya who reveals her fears on teaching controversial issues, she stated:

A controversial topic such as tribalism is a sensitive topic because of the election violence in Kenya in 2007. So even in my classroom, when we come across such a topic we teachers have to tread carefully. First off, you do not want to publicize
your ethnicity especially in a community where the majority of the people are not from your ethnicity. You never know what will happen; many people died because of their ethnicity. The 2007 chaos in Kenya is still fresh in peoples’ minds and we have wounds from it, so why should I get myself into problems by teaching about tribalism? (Interview, July, 2010, Kenyan Teacher).

In yet another news, the October 10, 2010 issue of *The Standard* newspaper featured Esther Murugi, a Special Programmes Minister in the Kenya government who made a statement that gay and straight people in Kenya should co-exist together peacefully. Her statement irked a sizeable portion of the Kenyan conservative public. Many thought she had terribly erred for uttering the word “gay” and appearing in public with openly gay people. The word gay in the Kenyan context is a taboo and is often not mentioned, at least not in public. There calls for the minister to resign for her statement and open association with openly gay Kenyans.

The above stories emblematize the problematic nature of some of the socially, culturally and politically sensitive controversial issues in which the two regions find themselves engulfed. As seen above, the mid-West US teacher’s job often hang in the balance when a parent reported about his controversial issues teaching to the superintendent of schools. Similarly in the US a surgeon general lost her job for explicitly sharing her views on masturbation and suggesting that education on sexuality should be taught in schools. In Kenya a teacher feared for her life if she engaged in discussions on
ethnicity, while a minister in the government was inundated with calls to resign for mentioning the word gay in her speech and appearing in public with openly gay individuals. These cases exemplify the undercurrents at play in the teaching of controversial issues. These undercurrents, ranging from political, social, cultural or to religious impact the type and nature of discussions of controversial issues in class.

Quite appropriately scholars in the social studies field propose the need for finding ways counteracting feelings of apathy, suspicion, and anger through engaging in fruitful and informed arguments of controversial issues in classrooms that do not have to result in conflict, wars, and death. The core rationale behind controversial issues discussion is to develop informed and active democratic citizens (Hess and Posselt, 2002; Westheimer and Kahne, 2006). These scholars believe that students who are democratically trained are better equipped to live and survive in the present world. Furthermore, the enactment of best practices in controversial issues pedagogy needs students to be informed about their rights as citizens so they can respect the rights of others as equal citizens living in the same world. Therefore living in such an interconnected world, we cannot escape dealing with controversial issues, which make the news every day locally, nationally and internationally. The ubiquitous nature of controversial news events and realities underscores the need for teachers to be equipped with tools for engaging their students in an effective classroom conversation for the purposes of developing informed democratic citizens.
This study explored teachers’ conceptualization and construction of ideas on controversial local and global issues and how their ideas influence their pedagogical practice. I examined the teaching of these hot-button local and global issues in the social studies education context within a transnational context in the United States and the Eastern African country of Kenya. This study was developed within a citizenship education framework, which has been closely connected to the development of democratic citizens (Asimeng-Boahene, 2007; Dube, 2009; Ouilton, Dillon & Grace, 2004).

Many research studies in controversial issues discussion have expended time and energy in examining pedagogical practices and resources (Hess, 2004). However, this study goes beyond investigating teachers’ pedagogical practices to further investigate teachers’ definitions, conceptualization, and constructions of ideas about controversial issues, their attitudes and beliefs towards these sensitive issues and how their attitudes, beliefs, lived experiences, and ideology influenced and impacted their teaching of the local and global sensitive issues. In this study, I argued that teachers’ attitudes and beliefs inspired or discouraged their use of controversial issues in their classrooms as well as their pedagogical practices. Research has indicated that there is a tendency to ignore or avoid “burdening students with these weighty problems to avoid controversial issues that might bring concerned parents and others to principal’s door” and thereby denying students an opportunity for active democratic engagement (Wetsheimer and Kahne, 2006,
The development of critical democratic citizenship education has been attributed in part to the controversial issues pedagogy (CIP) in social studies education. Other underlying reasons and opportunities that CIP presents are; the promotion of healthy democracies as it engages students in quality conversations (Hess and Posselt, 2002); encourages participation in humane civic action (Banks, 2001); enables youths to be good decision makers, who can solve problems of the future, promote understanding of people in the world, as well as commit to the global village (Gaudelli, 2003); contributes to social justice efforts, peace and political stability (Waghid, 2004); and works towards moving beyond ethnicity and ethnic affiliations (Kubow, 2007). Given these factors, it is apparent that critical understanding of citizenship education through controversial issues discussions is important in developing active democratic local and global citizens. In the United States, citizenship education has evolved overtime to incorporate new knowledge and contemporary issues in education. Much has been done in the US concerning the teaching of controversial issues (Hess & Posselt 2002; Hess, 2004; Graseck 2009). With a great deal of research published in the US, more reforms in education have taken place even though teaching of controversial topics is still engenders endless and sometime furious debate within the school environment. In the mid-West US schools where this study was done, social studies teachers aligned themselves with the state and national
curriculum standards. These standards encouraged citizenship education and democratic learning. For example, the mid-West social studies content standards advocate for knowledge that will prepare “young citizens to develop civic responsibility” and develop in them problem solving skills as well as ability to understand how their local and international societies interact and function. Similarly, the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (NCSS) insist on infusing “experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic” (NCSS, 2010). It is apparent that these standards advance the inclusion of citizenship education and democratic skills in social studies education.

In Kenya citizenship education is conceived and practiced differently. Firstly, the concept of citizenship education was a hazy concept among teachers even as the findings of this study revealed. This haziness seemed to be due to the fact that citizenship education is a newly introduced concept in the curriculum. However, the education goals have always included citizenship goals. For example, some of the goals of education were in tandem with citizenship education goals, reported by the commission of inquiry called the Ominde Commission (1964) immediately after Kenya’s independence. The commission recommended education for Kenyans with objectives such as: education that fosters “a sense of nationhood and promote[s] unity; promotion of social equality and removal of divisions caused by race, religion and tribe; education ... serve[s] the needs of the people and of the country without discrimination; the promotion of social equality
and removal of divisions caused by race, religion and tribe” (Sheffield, 1971). Put differently, education was intended to develop national unity, nationhood and citizens who respect the “democratically constituted authority” (Sifuna, 1975, p.xvii).

However, education since pre-colonial period has still been invested in vocational training. After independence in 1963, the new ruling elite who took over from the British colonial regime continued promoting the same colonial goals of education while at the same time restructuring the system to provide free education for all. Therefore, the nitty gritty of citizenship education was not looked into. But, as recently as 2007, according to the findings of this research, the government was taking baby steps towards citizenship education by incorporating content on citizenship and democracy in the social studies curriculum.

Secondly, the idea of democratic teaching and learning was unfamiliar to the teachers. The reason for the teachers’ insufficient understanding was their very notion of democracy itself. Participants of this study perceived democracy as a preoccupation of the elite, by the elite, and for the elite, and therefore alienated and alienating. In such contexts then the average Kenyan could not comprehend what democracy really entailed. The participants of this study revealed that the government’s practices had not been known as “democratic” therefore they did not know the nature of democracy, its practice, and how to enact it in the classroom.
The global allure of democratic learning underscores the necessity of the teaching of contentious issues. Conversely, using controversial issues in teaching social studies was not openly stipulated in the objectives of social studies education in Kenya. But the findings in this study indicated that teacher participants incorporated contentious issues in their history classrooms, even though some of them only did it to a small extent. Nonetheless, it is important to note that several constraints deterred their effective presentation of these local and global issues. First, teachers in Kenya had very little support from the Ministry of Education when it came to providing training in general, and training in teaching about contemporary local and global issues in particular. Secondly, the examination-centered curriculum did not allow teachers ample time to engage in issues. Thirdly, the tensions in the society, values and customs and even politics as described in the preceding statements might and do deter teachers from tackling some controversial issues such as sexuality (Kiragu, 2007). However, it needs to be noted that despite the peculiarities of the Kenyan situation there are certain unfavorable contexts and realities of the Kenyan society that present tensions that could be applied to other countries as well, including the United States (Mathews & Dilworth, 2008). For that reason, investigating how teachers went about counteracting the tensions and pressures in teaching controversial issues extended the conversation in citizenship education studies in Kenya and in the United States.
In general, teaching contentious topics in schools can be in itself a delicate issue that may jeopardize teachers’ relationship with the community (Bryford, Lennon & Russell, 2009). For, teachers, teaching controversial issues may cause “risk, criticism and sanctions” (Hess, 2002, p.6). Amidst the apprehension towards the teaching of controversial issues, research still emphasizes on the promotion of discussions on contentious issues in classrooms as a powerful tool in developing democratic citizenship skills (Hess & Posselt, 2002). That is the reason why several researchers and research organizations in the social studies field have recommended and included the teaching of controversial issues both local and global in the social studies curriculum in many parts of the world (Asimeng-Boahene, 2007; Dube, 2009; Oulton, et al., 2004; NCCS, 2001). Scholars in the social studies field have asserted the significance of educating students to be democratic citizens (Banks, 2004; Gaudelli, 2003; NCSS, 2001) because teaching approaches tend to focus on covering content in the mandated curriculum with little or no attention given to present day societal problems (Merryfield, 1993). Such an approach is detrimental to democratic thinking and engagement. Rather this study examined how teachers through controversial issues engaged in critical oppositional teaching while analyzing the controversial issues (Giroux, 1996), or critical global perspectives when analyzing controversial local and global issues (Subedi, 2010) among other critical pedagogies.
Some of the controversial topics discussed range from, abortion, ethnicity, HIV/AIDS, immigration, racism, sexuality, 9/11, to ethnic conflicts and war (Graseck, 2009; Hess, 2002; Kiragu, 2007; Mathews & Dilworth, 2008). For its part, this project aimed at not only extending conversations in citizenship education through teaching controversial issues, but also investigated how the society, and the curriculum impacted teachers’ ways of knowing and their construction of ideas about controversial topics. This study contributes to the social studies field in both regions and internationally. For Kenya, a country still with burgeoning democratic citizenship education, this study sheds light upon ways of reforming the education system, for which calls for change have increased exponentially in recent times. Furthermore, discussions on democratic citizenship education opened conversations about critical local and global issues that are often marginalized and seldom studied and in the field. In a sense, this research study engages critical issues that are in themselves social justice issues such as race and racism, ethnicity, culture, and sexuality as well as best practices that promoted understanding and appreciation of diverse peoples and cultures.

**Context for the study**

My engagement in education began long before I embarked on this study. Since I was in school as a student I have been fascinated by issues that seemed controversial in nature. I always participated in school and class debates where we discussed simple debatable issues such as “a teacher is better than a farmer” or a “doctor”, or “mothers are
better than fathers” to complex issues as “traditional indigenous education vs. formal Western education.” However, when I became a teacher in Kenya I realized how difficult it was as a teacher to incorporate social issues and more so controversial issues because the issues would illicit controversy. I knew from the outset that it was such debates that made me enjoy being in school and trained me to be not only a good speaker but also a reflective speaker. So when a student brought up a question on sexuality issues, I felt it was my duty to engage in the discussion and to encourage the students to speak their ideas because I believed that my classroom may be the only venue for such talk. The reason for engaging the issues was because sexual matters had been considered taboo topics in the society.

Teaching in Kenya, made me question the nature of a truly democratic education. This is because after independence most of what was taught perpetuated the former colonial interests and knowledge, which did not serve the interests of the Kenyan people. In reality the situation in Kenya somehow exemplified most post independent African countries (Asimeng-Boahene, 2007; Woolman, 2005). Teaching in the US led me to think intuitively of how the Kenyan context can be improved to incorporate democratic citizenship learning. Also, my living, studying, teaching and researching in the US, introduced me to new discourses in education that promote best teaching practices. This newfound knowledge translated to a commitment to critical democratic learning practices through use of controversial issues. I feel committed to ensuring that conversations on
controversial issues are treated with utmost respect and with an open mind. Likewise, as a transnational researcher, this also has translated to a commitment to local and global social justice concerns for all humanity. For instance, my commitment has pushed me to participate in educational and social activities geared towards awareness of controversial issues that impact the society in both regions. I have engaged in activities that promote HIV/AIDS education through, teaching and writing, counseling and facilitating workshops on the issue. I believe that increased knowledge on HIV/AIDS is the best way to curb the increase of pandemic. My lived experiences in the United States brought a new dimension in my educational and career pursuits. For instance, I have regularly interacted and conversed with teachers in the US mid-West region during professional development workshops on effective ways to engage issues of race in their classrooms, a pursuit that has made a difference in those teachers’ practices. Recently, my pursuits gained more significance after reflecting seriously on the possibilities and limitations of teaching controversial issues in both the United States and Kenyan high schools. All these endeavors to find solutions to societal problems through education have been part and parcel of my engagement, which afforded me the opportunity to undertake a comparative transnational research.

**Research Questions**

The research questions emerged from my experiences as a teacher and in interacting with teachers. My argument that teachers lived experiences and background
influenced and problematized their teaching and teaching practices as they use controversial issues was the major motivation for this study. Thus this comparative research study focused mainly on the following questions:

1. How do teachers construct or interpret the idea of controversial issues?
2. How do teachers teach about controversial issues?
3. How do teachers’ ideas or situatedness impact or complicate their teaching local/global controversial issues?

**Theoretical Underpinnings**

I undertook this study from multiple paradigmatic positions. Greene (2010) clearly explicated my predicament, she says: “I remain a novice in these paradigms because my loyalties are troublesomely divided …. because each time I chose to focus on one paradigm the other seems more fitting” (p. 64). To explain my experiences as described above by Green, I can say that on the one hand, I have been influenced by imperial discourses which compelled me to examine this study from a postcolonial framework. On the other hand my experiences and beliefs as a teacher in the US and Kenya propels me towards critical theory, a theoretical framework that spoke to pedagogical practices. I drew from works by scholars such as Giroux, Freire, Smith, and Ngugi. I have included these theoretical paradigms for heuristics purposes. These paradigms provided insight into discourses that spoke to, and with the marginalized populations, and discourses that spoke to ways in which to engage critical hot-button
issues in the society and in the world. Utilizing one school of thought would have limited the study, yet the goal of this project is to open up dialogues and conversations with/in the transnational contexts of democratic citizenship education.

Furthermore, because of engaging in a transnational research, there was need to look at paradigms that spoke to the individual people and society in those contexts as well as paradigms that inform and are informed by both educational spaces. Therefore, I found the postcolonial and critical theoretical paradigms as appropriate spaces and places to interrogate teachers’ definitions and ideas on local and global hot-button issues. In the next section, I examine the historical and ideological concepts in the postcolonial discourses and later in critical theory.

**Postcolonial Theory**

Postcolonial frameworks have been selected for this study because it spoke to my experiences and heritage ascending from a formerly British colonized country. Also postcolonial theory appropriately explained the experiences of the research participants and their communities in the Kenyan context and problematized the experiences of teachers in the US who have been implicated by the EuroAmericentric discourses. In postcolonial discourses, I chose to focus on indigenous and decolonizing methodologies that spoke directly to my own practice and to those I worked with in the study.

Tickly (2004) explains that postcolonial theory as a framework useful in interrogating the “continuing legacy of European imperialism and colonialism and to
uncover the oppositional discourses of those who have struggled against its lingering effects” (p.147). Here, Tickly posits that postcolonial discourses emerge as a result of a continued legacy of colonialism and imperialism even after the former colonized nation, or nation-states have been declared “independent.” It is critical therefore to understand what the term postcolonial really means. Mbembe (2001) states that the postcoloniality may indicate both a period on the one hand, or experiences of societies emerging from colonization on the other. To emphasize the colonial experience Loomba (1998) asserts that it was manifested through “exploitation, expropriation, conquest and control of people and goods,” a practice that is still in place today by the imperial metropole (p.2). Moreover, Ngugi (1986) adds about the colonial experience of Africans as the “cultural bomb” which ensured annihilation of names, languages, cultures of African people (p.3). Therefore as Mbembe observes, the postcoloniality may be regarded as the period and the experience after colonialism.

Colonialism in Africa began with the exploration and discovery of Africa in the 1800s. This was followed by the scramble, partitioning and naming of these portions of Africa by the Europeans. As described above colonization of Africa began under the guise of the “civilizing mission,” but in reality the hidden agenda was to exploit Africa’s raw materials and goods for the industrial developments in the West (Mills, 1997). The result was the devastating. In actuality, the “civilizing mission” did not have a “single human value” (Cesaire, 1972, p.34), rather African people found their “mental universe”
attacked and controlled, that is their thoughts, ways of perceiving themselves was destroyed (Ngugi, 1986, p.16). This colonial experience was a cultural, and mental assassination of the African peoples and way of life. For a period of about a hundred years Africans suffered under brutal colonial rule and exploitation, which prompted rebellion and the struggle for liberation. In the 1900s’ most Africa countries became ‘liberated’ or independent from the colonial regimes.

Nevertheless, the ‘liberation’ or ‘independence’ took another twist. Tikly (2004) argues that new forms of colonization or the “new imperialism” still flourishes today. Specifically, Tickly focuses on new forms of imperialism in the education context which is a focus of this study. Tickly explains that neocolonialism is “the new imperialism based on a notional recognition of the sovereignty of former colonized nations” (p. 175). New imperialism in educational contexts implies that formerly colonized states are still dominated and controlled directly or indirectly by their former colonial masters. It is from this juncture that scholars from formerly colonized countries have tried to explain the very foundations of colonization and colonialism that have continued to be evident in the world. Furthermore, these scholars have also called for a reclaiming and visibilizing of the marginalized knowledges.

Batiste (2008) explains that, “a postcolonial framework cannot be constructed without indigenous people renewing and reconstructing the principles underlying their own worldview, environment, languages, communication forms, and how these construct
their humanity.” (p. 508). In this manner then the marginalized are able to reconstruct their own worldviews to operate in ways that benefit them and their society despite years of disruption and interruption of their lived realities. As a result in an attempt to bring to light knowledge of the marginalized, postcolonial scholars have utilized decolonization frameworks. Decolonization can be described as “a process that critically engages, at all levels, imperialism, colonialism, and postcoloniality” (Denzin et.al, 2008). It appears then that applying decolonization frameworks, marginalized populations are able to reconstruct and uphold their being as humans and their epistemologies as indigenous peoples. In the next section I examine critical theory which is closely related to postcolonial paradigms and how it informed this study.

**Critical Theory**

Critical theoretical framework speaks to experiences of both the West and the non-West populations. This is because of the center-periphery power relations that have been made more complicated by the imperialistic discourses. In other words, a critical inquiry problematizes the colonial and imperial discourses that promote mainstream ideologies in an effort to construct democratic and socially just discourses. One of the proponents of critical theory Paulo Freire (2000) takes issue with the traditional education system that promotes the development of passive learners and the teacher whose work is to “fill” or “bank” or “deposit” information to students. He proposes the training of students to be critical thinkers. In the same vein, Henry Giroux (2004) another proponent
of critical theory advocates for education that “acts upon what it means to live in substantive democracy, to recognize anti-democratic forms of power and fight deeply rooted injustices in society and [the] world” (p. 35). This means that students are taught to question belief systems, and official knowledge in an attempt to understand the underlying meanings of information. Giroux notes that this would be the only way to “counter global capitalism” and to “depoliticize and disempower” mainstream discourses. Furthermore, besides disrupting global capitalism, Collins (1991) observes that the critical paradigm offers possibilities and hope for the local and global community.

Critical theory in education is closely connected to critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy advances values of “critique resistance, struggle, and emancipation” which promotes and upholds epistemologies that are derived from the margins (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.8). However, Denzin and Lincoln further state that even though critical pedagogy has served to disrupt and liberate the discourses on the periphery, feminists have criticized it for not sufficiently explaining sexual politics, gender, patriarchy, life stories, indigenous epistemologies and history and at the same time create an elitist political language that alienates it from education. Nonetheless, when critical theory is localized to encourage and promote indigenous and non-indigenous pedagogies as well as offer tools to confront challenges in the community and resist imperialistic tendencies it engages concerns of the marginalized (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Therefore critical pedagogical frameworks are the means within which to interrogate, question, disrupt
hegemonic power structures. It is a framework that can be incorporated within marginalized discourses for the purposes of emancipating discourses at the margins and subaltern populations.

Both the paradigms discussed here, that is postcolonial and critical theory shed light onto the experiences of people in both the US and in Kenya. They are two major critical paradigms that inform and are informed by this study.

**Methodology and Research design**

**Decolonizing Research Inquiry**

I approached this research from a decolonizing framework, which presupposes that research which does not examine the experiences, way of knowing and way of life of the marginalized peoples in the society, advances Western imperial interests. I utilize Tuhimai Smith’s and Ngugi wa Thiongo’s work, who discuss the damaged and fractured experiences of the indigenous populations due to colonial and imperial experiences. Smith (1999) reminds us that research done in non-West contexts where the people have been for years known and learnt themselves from the Western lens need an opportunity to describe themselves from their own eyes. Such kind of study should bring to the fore experiences of those in the periphery, and their subjugated knowledge to the fore dismantling the Western discourses that prescribed their position as inferior, barbaric and uncivilized. Ngugi (1986) asserts that the colonial experience served to crush the knowledge, the culture, the beliefs, the values and even the voice of the indigenous
peoples. Thus such a study requires a research methodology that disrupts the common anthropological perspective of the indigenes. A decolonizing methodology seems to perfectly describe the experiences of the research contexts. Likewise utilizing qualitative research methods and the naturalistic inquiry will provide the necessary avenues for engaging this research. In line with the key elements of decolonizing qualitative inquiry, I spent exhaustive time and rapport with the research participants and secondly collected in-depth information from the participants all of which was paramount for the decolonizing framework. I attempted to understand how participants played a role in the decolonizing work, that is, for Kenyan’s how they interrupted the colonial mentality that had infiltrated the education system since after British colonial experience as well as how they advanced indigenous knowledges. While in the US the decolonizing methodology looked at practices that participants utilized to decolonize the minds of their students from mainstream and Euro/Americentric knowledge.

**Qualitative Inquiry**

In qualitative research, the investigator attempts to discover, explore, and question social phenomena (Patton, 1990). Thus in qualitative inquiry, just as in decolonizing research the major concern is on providing rich detailed description behind numbers as well as an in-depth analysis of how teachers constructed, and perceived teaching of controversial issues. Billings (1995) asserts that “the place to find out about classroom practices is the naturalistic setting of the classroom and from lived experiences
of teachers” (p. 163) Qualitative inquiry provided the natural settings as well as opportunities for the participants to be researched in their respective environments where the researcher records events as they occur naturally so as to develop a grounded theory resulting from the phenomena observed (Ary et al., 1996). Interpretive approach and grounded theory were utilized in both research regions. The former explored reality as the participants perceived it and the way research perceives it, by observing participants interactions and constructions of ideas and meanings about the research topic. The later focused on the emergent themes arising from the participants’ narratives and their interactions in their environment.

Grounded theory was relevant and fitting in this study because theory was generated from the data and not vice versa (Creswell, 2009, p.193, Corbin & Holt, 2006, p.49). Approaching the research with apriori design opened room for emergent frameworks. Qualitative researchers state that “theory emerges from inquiry for the naturalist” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Since my research had not been investigated as a comparative study in the two regions, allowing data to generate emergent new theory was a useful contribution for the field, as well as generate basic concepts as a stepping stones to developing or updating a body of knowledge (Somekh & Lewin, 2006, p. 51).

Consequently, Kaomea (2000) explains that the interpretive method serves as a “bricolage, an emergent construction that changes and takes new forms as different tools, methods and techniques are added” (p. 321). She adds that in analyzing documents and
texts, it reveals emergent themes from the data as well as confirms and disconfirms findings. Therefore interpretive approach was critical for understanding participants’ experiences in this study.

**Participant Selection**

The selection of participants was through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is the “handpicking of cases” for particular purposes which provides most information and understanding of the group discussed (Lewin, 2006, p. 219). Willing participants’ were interviewed about their engagement in controversial issues in their social studies classrooms so as to select the teachers that will be most useful and also provide meaningful data. Flick (2009) further adds that at times sample selection should consider “a politically important or sensitive case in order to present positive findings” (p. 122). Thus, my sample selection took into account the cases that would offer most fruitful findings for the study.

The teachers were considered for selection through the following criteria:

i). Teachers had taught social studies at least for two years,

ii). Teachers who perceived controversial issues discussion as an integral part of their teaching,

iii). Teachers who showed evidence of their engagement in controversial issues in their classrooms
iv). Teachers who were willing to participate in the study and accepted to sign the informed consent form.

The above criteria used helped select the teachers who greatly informed the study.

**Case Selection**

The selection of the regions for the research was mere interest of the researcher. The two regions the US and Kenya symbolize a “home” for the researcher, therefore educating some level of curiosity to explore teacher practices in the regions. First and foremost, the US has been my home since I began graduate studies, during which period I came to develop an interest in exploring how teachers teach contentious issues especially those contentious narratives of the Other. I discovered that it takes a truly audacious teacher to tackle such hot-button issues such as racism, gay/lesbian rights, HIV/AIDS, Abortion and apartheid. Secondly, Kenya where I was born and bred, presented similar challenges to teachers when it came to teaching about the hot topics mentioned above. It was even more challenging in Kenya because social studies teachers had not been trained to teach for democratic or citizenship learning, therefore it would be interesting to see from what lens teachers’ approached those hot topics. Thus a comparative study seemed sufficient to understand the experiences of teachers in the two contexts.

Data was collected from four high schools, two in each region. Eight teachers in total were observed and interviewed. Two high schools were selected in each region with similar criteria such as all being public government funded schools. I incorporated
multiple methods of data collection such as interviews, classroom observations, conversations, participant observations, document analysis, and grounded survey and my own daily reflexive notes. These interviews were semi-structured and mainly dwelt on teacher’s background information, experiences in teaching controversial issues, their teaching contexts and settings. Documents were collected from public records, teaching tools/guides, the curriculum, lesson plans, hand outs, copies of students work, assessment materials, websites, pictures, charts, texts books, and documents that teachers provided. My reflective notes and daily journals also informed the data.

**Data Analysis**

In this research project I utilized a constant comparative analysis of case studies in each school, region and in each of the countries. Miles & Huberman (1994) observe that when several cases are compared and contrasted, it increases possibilities in “strengthening the precision, the validity and the stability of the findings” (p.29). Similarly, Charmaz (2010) illustrates that a constant comparative case study should be approached, by comparing individual participants views, values actions, accounts and experiences then comparing these individuals with other participants in the same context and then with others in other contexts and finally compare the emergent categories from these individuals with other categories. Other strategies employed were those developed by McMillan and Shumacher (2001):
1). Writing of “observer comments” form field notes, interview transcripts and observations to identify possible themes.

2). Writing summaries of observations and interviews through questions such as; what did I learn about controversial issues (CI)?

3). Developing initial categories of themes and concepts

4). Explored literature to see how it backs up or contrasts with observations

After studying preliminary data analysis in each school and region, I then compared the cases. Comparative case studies, hopes to explore in-depth understanding of a phenomena within its real life contexts, and in this case the classroom environment as regards to the teaching of critical local and global issues (Yin, 2008). Yin further adds that case studies endeavor to answer the “why” “how” and “what” research questions so as to contribute to the extensiveness and knowledge of social phenomena (p.9). Similarly, Erickson (1986) posits that “studying a specific case in great detail then comparing it with other cases studied in equally great detail” will achieve greater discovery of the phenomena studied. Thus I coded the data in topics or themes. McMillan & Schumaker (2001) describe coding as the process of classifying data into different sections. Utilizing McMillan and Shumaker’s idea, I coded the data then, categorized the codes to emergent themes. I repeatedly categorized, re-categorized and re-organized them to see if any new themes would come up, which they did, and then I came up with distinctive features that illuminate and explain the research questions. Data analysis was done for a period of
nine months, from April 2010 to December 2010. During this time I traveled to the research regions, back and forth to the schools to collect data through individual interviews participant observation, document analysis and field notes for analysis from the eight teacher participants.

Relevance of research study

The earlier narratives from the teachers and from the media suggested that controversial issues are deeply entrenched social political contestations that are not well received by members of the public even political leaders. Such heated positions described on the outset demand a critical examination in the classrooms to enable students to better analyze the issues thus preventing future conceited arguments. This research on controversial issues and its influence in developing democratic citizens is one of its’ kind in Kenya. There seems to be little or none that had examined controversial issues in high schools and let alone citizenship education in social studies. In the US this study added the body of knowledge in social studies education especially within the growing research emphasis for social studies educators to develop effective citizens who are better prepared for the global age (Banks, 2004; Banks & Nguyen, 2008; Myers, 2006). The social studies field has been at the forefront in analyzing and reforming the field to incorporate contemporary national and global issues. Citizenship education scholars and researchers have been at the forefront of social studies in providing ample theoretical tools and strategies to fostering democratic needs of the students to be good citizens.
locally and globally (Banks, 2004; Myers, 2006). However, these scholars have noted underlying problems especially in teacher’s interpretation and the teaching of contentious issues, which may lead to misunderstandings and lack of balanced evidence-based arguments (Hess, 2004). Understanding teacher’s ideological construction of controversial issues served to “limit teachers in developing and teaching controversial issues” or promoted dialogues on controversial issues (Bryford, Lennon & Russell, 2009). Therefore, this study investigated how teachers construct their ideas about controversial issues and how it impacted and complicated their teaching and teaching approaches as well as impacted their students learning and understanding of controversial issues.

On the other hand, besides limitations in teacher’s development of critical issues, the social studies curriculum and content has been problematic (Apple, 1996; Dei, 2008; Levistik, 2008; McLaren, 2003). Apple (1996) states that what has been perpetuated in social studies classrooms is not an engagement with democratic citizenship skills but a perpetuation of “official knowledge” which is seemingly problematic. Apple explains that official knowledge is determined by mainstream curriculum developers. These curriculum developers stipulate what is taught in schools, which most often are mainstream ideologies and a continuation of the grand narratives that promote certain mainstream interests. Therefore this research project interrogated the “official knowledge” to identify how teachers promoted these knowledges or disrupted these
“hidden curriculum” in their classrooms (McLaren, 2003). It is necessary therefore to consider critical approaches to research to make this qualitative and interpretive research more meaningful and transformative by critiquing discourses that promote certain ideologies that sustain domination of the marginalized and mainstream interests.

**Limitations of the Study**

Several factors limited my study in both regions. In Kenya, I was limited in five ways. First, the study was not funded compelling me to use my own limited family resources and thereby necessarily reducing the amount of time I spent collecting data in the region to be seven weeks. Similarly, the lack of institutional or outside funding placed constraints on the resources that would aid in the study such as buying of equipment. The second limitation was the political situation in the country especially after the contentious general elections of 2007 because this study attempted to investigate how teachers taught controversial issues such as ethnicity. Most of the participants were weary to speak about the ethnicity issues in the classrooms because of their past experiences in the society in the aftermath of the election violence which was seemingly an unfavorable and fearful moment due to the voting of a new constitution. (See chapter two for an in-depth discussion of the political context). Thirdly, only four teachers participated in the study who spoke from their own individual experiences, limiting a generalization of the research project to speak to experiences of all social studies teachers in Kenya. The forth limitation was how the teachers perceived my presence. They saw me as one of the
school inspectors of schools and for most time denied me their real experiences. Lastly, some of the teachers in Kenya were preparing the form four (twelfth grade) students for the mock examinations which are representative of the final Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations that determine the eligibility of students for enrolment to universities. Therefore, I did not get an opportunity to sample these teachers before I selected the appropriate group to participate in the study.

In the US, the insider-outsider perspective was a limitation because I brought to the study my biases as an African ascendant Black woman from a former colonial country, which problematized the lens through which I approached the study. (See chapter three for further discussion the researcher’s situatedness in the study). Also, by adopting a qualitative inquiry, I had only four participants whose experiences cannot be generalized to speak for the experiences of all social studies teacher in the United States.

**Defining Key Terms**

In this study I frequently used the term *citizen* to refer to a member of a nation or a state. A citizen could be a member of a nation, country or the world. Nation in this study will represent a member of an “imagined community” that is a socially constructed and where its members are affiliated to a certain group or community (Anderson, 1991). Also used in the study is the term *citizenship* that denotes a citizen’s affiliation/s or membership to a nation or a nation-state through rights and responsibilities and
participation. While the term *global citizenship*, expanded the conceptions of citizenship to the global implying that citizenry or membership and participation is on the wider global world. Closely related to global citizenship is, *democratic citizenship*, which is described in this work as a citizen who participates as a member of a democratic society. Another term used in this work is *critical democratic citizenship*. In this context the term denoted an active engagement and problematizing of anti-democratic education in an effort to fight social injustices for a better society and world.

Another commonly used term in the study is *controversial issues*, which denotes issues that cause differing opinions and thoughts, and have conflicting explanations based on individual worldviews. Other interchangeable terms used for controversial issues are contentious, hot-button, touchy, sensitive, and delicate issues. Lastly, in the study *Indigenous knowledges* will mean knowledge banks and ways of knowing of the indigenes or local people in indigenous communities.

### Overview of the Chapters

This dissertation has five chapters. This first chapter presented the ideas behind the study, that is, the teaching of controversial local and global issues in developing effective and active democratic citizenry and described the context within which this study was situated and why this study should be conducted. I have also briefly analyzed the frameworks within which the study was based on and explained the reasons for grounding the study on those paradigms.
In the second chapter, I review relevant literature in historical conceptualization of social studies, citizenship, and global education in both the United States and in Kenya as they appertain to the teaching of controversial local and global issues. I also examine in details the theoretical frameworks and literature that speak to this project. However, there are certain areas that required more emphasis in one region than the other. For example, in Kenya indigenous issues are more emphasized in literature because of its profound significance to the education system and society and shed light to the study while in the US indigenous issues did not contribute to the study.

In chapter three, I provided my research journey from the moment I arrived in the field sites to the analysis and write up process. I discussed the research methodology, methodological issues, my position and role in the study, research strategy and process as well as the ethical premises in the research. Chapter four presented the major findings emerging from the data collected. Lastly in chapter five, I discussed the emergent findings, analyzed the implications of the study and presented ideas for further research.
CHAPTER 2

Introduction

This chapter is a review of literature that contributes to the issues and tensions surrounding the study of teachers’ construction of ideas about critical local and global controversial issues. I focus mainly on literature that spoke to the experiences of social studies teachers in the United States and Kenya. This chapter will include a discussion of the theoretical frameworks within which this study was situated and explicated how these underlying theories have influenced and transformed social studies education, particularly citizenship and global education. Lastly, I consider a brief historical context of social studies in the two research sites to help understand the background of the research contexts, as well as discussion of controversial issues pedagogy.

Theoretical Frameworks

In this study, I utilized a number of theoretical frameworks that shed light on the issues surrounding the teaching of local and global controversial issues in high schools in Kenya and in the US. The frameworks that inform this study are postcolonial, critical theoretical paradigms. Extensive research had to be done to identify paradigms that articulate the experiences of teachers in the so-called “First World” country and the “Third World” country. I found that these theories overlap in many ways in explaining
and speak to the worldviews of teacher participants in this study, as well as in explicating local and global social justice issues. The paradigms selected, emerged from the perspectives of the marginalized peoples, and fully articulate the discourses in the periphery or in the non-West and in the West. Also these theoretical frameworks provided counter discourses that challenged and disrupted mainstream discourses in an effort to transform pedagogy and training of active democratic citizens of the world. Furthermore, Smith (1999) asserts that when there is a sharing of language and knowledge of colonization then there is the struggle, to resist colonization. In this study’s context the participants in the US engaged in the struggle to decolonize the minds of students from EuroAmericentric worldviews while those in Kenya engage in decolonizing the students mind from the effects of former British colonization.

**Postcolonial Perspective**

Postcolonial frameworks have been selected for this study specifically because first, they explain my experiences as a Black woman from a formerly colonized nation. Secondly, postcolonial theory will properly explain the experiences of the research participants and their communities in Africa and describe the power relations as it affects discourses in the west (Subedi & Daza, 2008). To understand how this framework applied to this study, I first examined the historical and ideological concepts in the discourse. Postcolonial theory is a framework used to interrogate the “continuing legacy of European imperialism and colonialism and to uncover the oppositional discourses of
those who have struggled against its lingering effects” (Tickly, 2004, p. 147). On the other hand, the postcolonial period is described as “specifically a given historical trajectory – that of societies emerging from the experience of colonization and the violence which the colonial relationship, par excellence, involves” (Mbembe, 2001, p. 3).

It is important, however, to note that the two definitions distinguish the postcolonial theory and the period. Loomba (1998) affirms Tikly’s remarks that the postcolonial period can be manifested through exploitation, expropriation, conquest and control of people and goods, a practice that is still in place today by the imperial metropole. Therefore, as Mbembe observes, the postcolonial period may be regarded as the period and experience after colonialism.

Colonialism in Africa began in the 1800s with the exploration and discovery of the unknown territories of the world. This was followed by the scramble and partitioning of Africa by the Europeans into smaller territories. One of the major driving forces for colonization of Africa was the guise of “civilizing mission,” but in reality the hidden agenda was to exploit Africa’s raw materials and goods for the industrial developments in the West (Mills, 1997). The result was the dehumanizing nature of colonization, certainly, the “civilizing mission” did not have a “single human value” (Cesaire, 1972, p. 34). For a period of about a hundred years Africans suffered under brutal colonial rule and exploitation, which prompted rebellion and the struggle for liberation. Finally in the mid-1900s most countries gained their independence from colonists.
Nevertheless, Tikly (2004) argues that new forms of colonization also referred to as the “new imperialism” or what Willinsky (1998) aptly refers to as the legacy of imperialism still flourishes today even in the field of education and one cannot help but acknowledge its appropriateness in this discussion. Tickly explains that neocolonialism is “the new imperialism based on a notional recognition of the sovereignty of former colonized nations” (p. 175). This new imperialism then implies on the one hand, that formerly colonized states are still dominated and controlled directly or indirectly by former colonial masters. On the other hand, as Willinsky opines, content in schools about the non-West has been overwhelmingly advancing Euro-Amercentric perspectives, in other words perpetuating the imperial legacy in schools. It is from this standpoint that scholars from formerly colonized territories have tried to explain the very foundations of colonization and colonialism that have continued to manifest itself in the world and more so in the education.

The foundations of colonialism have been founded on what Mills, (1997) aptly mentions as race and racism, which have informed the nature of the systems of power and privilege. Thereby, conceiving of the non-West as inferior, barbaric, “uncivilized” and without history as Hegel (1956) had described of Africa and Africans in contrast to the superior and civilized Europe and Europeans. African backwardness has therefore been touted as the excuse for Europe’s colonial intervention. Yet one may also say that race and racism were at the very core of the colonial encounter, a consequence of what Mills
has aptly described as the one-sided “Racial Contract” (Mills, 1997, p.11). In other words, colonialism positioned Africans to “perpetual Otherness” (Loomba, 1998).

To counter Eurocentricism, some scholars have engaged in decolonization frameworks, elsewhere referred to as anti-colonial epistemologies to reclaim the cherished past, their sense of humanity, culture and identity. In the US, Willinsky’s (1998) research postulates that the colonial legacy of imperialism is manifest in the curriculum and instructional resources. In the African context, Fanon (1963) indicates that independence from the Europeans did not mean liberation for Africans because the elite bourgeois, who were educated in the Western academy, continued or substituted the European systems of leadership, education and mentality.

Thus postcolonial theory seems to be a force in both the US and African contexts of education. The paradigm opens conversations and dialogues on pertinent local and global issues. It constitutes a critical critique of Western forms of power, because it challenges, problematizes, and destabilizes the dominant discourses of the imperial West (McEwan, 2001). Simply put, postcolonialism theory in itself has been critiqued as an “anti-American” since it allows room for challenging discourses of the imperial West (Rizvi et. al., 2006; Subedi & Daza, 2008).

Moreover, there has been an emphasis on reconsideration and revisioning of the ongoing narratives of colonization that are perpetuated in school systems. New forms of imperialism have become “the practice, theory, and the attitudes of dominating
metropolitan center ruling in a distant territory” (Said, 1979, p.8). What happens is that Western discourses that are at the center of classroom discussions describe the Third World subject from the metropole position thereby reinscribing White rationality at the center and decentering everything else (Spivak, 1988). Hence, one could say, the kind of knowledge students are receiving in the US or the Kenyan curriculum is indeed a perpetuation of the educational “legacy of imperialism” (Willinsky, 1998, p.4). It is education that furthers the colonial project and continues to degrade, inferiorize and even “thingify” the Other (Cesaire, 1972). Moreover, the curriculum that is taught and texts used in US schools all promote stereotypes of the Other (Merryfield & Subedi, 2006) and in Kenya alienates the African from their indigenous epistemologies and making them to aspire to be European (Freire, 2000; Fanon, 1963). In this regard, Subedi & Daza (2008), have demonstrated that postcolonial discourses are best suited to analyze educational contexts to understand the play of imperialism and provide a space for transforming education to be more nurturing to non-West discourses.

To further interrogate discourses of the West, a decolonizing inquiry seem fit as a lens through which to scrutinize mainstream educational discourses especially in the West and in the non-West context. Decolonizing inquiry emerges from postcolonial paradigms. Its core purpose of inquiry is the deconstruction of dominant narratives where a narrative is interrogated and troubled and then the marginal narratives or indigenous epistemologies are given a voice (Smith, 1999). These indigenous epistemologies, Smith
describes are “derived from the immediate ecology; from peoples experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and memory, including experiences shared with others” also they are derived from the “spiritual world discovered in dreams, visions, inspirations and songs interpreted with guidance of healers or elders” and one can benefit through “personal and intense interaction with the spiritual world” to understand the core foundations indigenous knowledge” (p. 499). In sum then, indigenous knowledges can be described as indigenous peoples way of knowing, experiences and activities within their local environment. Therefore Batiste (2008) asserts that decolonizing inquiry attempts to protect the indigenous and marginalized knowledges and heritage from annihilation by the overwhelming imperial narratives. In the face of annihilation, then it is the work of the advocates of postcolonial theory to seek curriculum content reforms in ways that respects complex, cultural linkages and associations that exist among all human groups, which acknowledge their many sources of knowledge (Mc Cathy, 1998). Another framework that interrogates discourses of the West from the margins is the anti-racist framework.

**Anti-racist Education**

Anti-racism emerges and draws from multicultural theory to specifically challenge the racist and Euro-Amercicentric underpinnings in education in the US. Just as postcolonialism, anti-racist education is founded on the premise of race as a social construct that attempts to divide people along racial lines (Winant, 1994, p.24). Race and
racism has continued to manifest itself directly and indirectly in all systems including educational institutions today (Tickly, 2004). Rains (2006) observes that race matters today as it did in the past because the present is much connected to the past. Rains adds that in education, “Whiteness of social studies works to subordinate the proverbial Other/s, and perpetuate status quo, while appearing politically correct” (p.138). For example, in the Canadian context Dei (1996) observes that Canadians are “facing the rigid usually silent norms of mainstream hetero-patriarchal” education. Thus pushing for an “an action-oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression (Dei, p.25). This study sought to advance anti-racist education by analyzing how teachers disrupt systemic racisms. In the US, several scholars have presented differing ideas about the constituents of an anti-racist education. Some have pointed that anti-racist education should be connected to multicultural education, while others emphasize its separateness from multicultural education (See Sleeter &Bernall, 2004). However, Sleeter &Bernall, (2004) identify central principles for an anti-racist education; first, that antiracist education focuses attention on White supremacy, how it functions and who maintains it, and how it can be challenged; secondly, it questions school structures of inequality such as tracking, or special education for students of color which serve to discriminate students along racial lines; thirdly, it analyzes issues of culture in relation to power; fourthly, it calls for the disrupting of White
domination in traditional education discourses (p.250-251). Sleeter and Bernall imply that anti-racist education disrupts systems of power that discriminate and involves the community part of the education system. In Kenya, systemic foundations of race in its education have slowly been disrupted by equalizing public schools and allow access to all races. However, some pockets of private schools were still divided within race and class (Eshiwani, 1990). With these said, even though anti-racist education has attempted to improve the education of minority people and of former colonized populations, it has not been left without criticism. It has been criticized for subsuming other kinds of oppressions such as class and gender and giving more attention to race. Also, anti-racist education has been critiqued for its tendency to pay less attention to culture instead of making connections between race and culture (p. 252).

 Nonetheless, anti-racist education is seen as geared towards providing “therapeutic environments” for students of color (Dei, 1996). Rethinking US education to incorporate antiracist education will go along way in overhauling traditional education that ignores the needs of underrepresented minority students. Dei further argues for an inclusion of multi-centric or “others-centric” knowledge that should be made part of the curriculum. Education should therefore connect students to their cultures, values, histories, and personal knowledge derived from their family and communities. Since anti-racism has often been associated with multiculturalism, it is important to consider multicultural studies as well.
Multicultural studies emerged from the civil rights movements in America in the 1960s, which was the turning point for social change among minorities in the US. Multiculturalism is a field of thought that has been defined as cultural pluralism especially concerning educational programs that respond to student diversity (Banks, 1994). Struggles for equity, equality, social justice and human rights in United States resulted in the construction of multicultural frameworks of thought. Multicultural education can be described as “education built on the importance of developing trusting relationships and understanding the social cultural context of learning. It is a relationship centered and a culture-centered framework in education” (Pang, 2001). Thus, this field calls for a holistic perspective in teaching whereby a whole person is developed to work towards social, political and economic justice as Pang further notes. Focusing on the culture of individual students represented in classrooms seems to be the center of multicultural education.

Facets of multicultural education such as the forwarding of culturally relevant teaching have been fundamental in promoting the shift towards justice and equity in education. Culturally relevant teaching was developed from multicultural education in the 1970s and was basically formulated for African American children but now has been relevant for all minority cultures in the US (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Especially important is a culturally relevant teaching approach that has proved effective in improving the quality of education for children from non-dominant societies (Ladson-billings, 1994).
defining culturally relevant teaching, Pang (2001) identifies it as “an approach to instruction that responds to the socio-cultural context and seeks to integrate the cultural content of the learner in shaping an effective learning environment” (p.192). This was the missing factor in education in American schools that has contributed immensely to the poor performance of the minority groups of students. Integration of learner’s social cultural context to learning has proved effective in studies done (Ladson-Billings, 1994). This pedagogical approach is based on theory and practice geared towards maximizing academic achievement of minority students. Since issues of culture are prominent in this study, knowledge of culturally relevant education is useful in understanding how teachers teach certain culturally sensitive issues such as racism in their social studies classrooms.

**Critical theory**

One of the proponents of critical inquiry theory is Paulo Freire. He advocated for the framework as a basis for problematizing and transforming traditional and imperial cannon in the education systems. To explicate the breath of imperial education, Apple (1996) opines that “official knowledge” taught in schools in the US is mainstream European and American ideology. In Kenya research done has proved that even after colonization from the British, education in Kenya has continued to promote colonial education n and interests (Higgs, 2008). That being the case, it is necessary to examine why critical theory is the paradigm within which to situate my study in both research contexts.
Critical theory emerged in the 1960s with an aim of disrupting and deconstructing imperialist academic discourses of “power and knowledge” as well as “raised questions on the injustices failure of education, democracy and research to deliver social change to the oppressed” (Smith, 1999, p. 165). Smith posits that, postcolonialism not only attempts to problematize Western discourses but also looks for ways to transform experiences of the oppressed. One way that critical theory transforms experiences of oppressed is that it “conceives human agent in active terms” as opposed to seeing humans as passive agents (Swadenner & Mutua, 2008, p.8). Human beings in this case are empowered to actively participate in their society. Therefore, there is need to examine education institutions to see wether they promote active participation in the society.

Critical of the education institutions, Freire troubles schools as spaces for training passivity and disempowerment and not spaces for empowering students. Freire (2000) recommended a transformation of schools to teach for critical thinking skills as opposed to depositing or narrating information to students’ minds. He illustrates his views about the advancement of critical inquiry and elucidates about the problem of relying too much on the teacher as the “knower,” he says:

Education is suffering from narration sickness. The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized and predictable…He expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to ‘fill’ the students with the contents of his narration-contents, which are detached
from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give
them significance. Words are emptied of their correctedness and became a
hollow, alienated and alienating verbosity (p.51).

Freire here asserts that the traditional education system did not allow students to think
critically on their own. Rather, in agreement with Dewey (1916) earlier ideas, Freire
proposes critical thinking skills and reflective reasoning. Living in the age of
globalization, it is necessary that students are educated in ways that provide them with
tools to survive in this global age. As Freire(2000) denotes, depositing information in
students’ minds will not give them the skills to engage “reality” but it would only
promote their alienation from reality. Closely related to critical inquiry is critical
pedagogy which cannot be ignored when speaking about critical theory.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical theory aligns itself with critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is an
approach to education that seeks to educate students about social justices issues,
encourages students to appreciate, understand and work with other people in the local
society and the world, disrupt Western imperial agendas that work against concerns of
marginalized peoples and encourages critical thinking skills and multiple perspectives on
local and global peoples and cultures (Freire, 2000; Gaudelli, 2003; Giroux, 2003;
Merryfield, 1998; Subedi, 2006). The purpose of incorporating critical pedagogy is
because of its power to transform pedagogy and develop active democratic citizens. Thus,
moving from a teacher-centered education to a learner-centered education (Dewey, 1916). Critical theorists have proposed some approaches towards reaching the learner-centered instruction. One of the approaches promoted by critical pedagogy is the need for education to question the belief systems, dominant structures of power, knowledge itself and authority and to “act upon what it means to live in substantive democracy, to recognize anti-democratic forms of power and fight deeply rooted injustices in society and [the] world” (Giroux, 2004, p.35). This means that students are taught to question official knowledge in an attempt to understand the underlying meanings of information. Giroux notes that allowing critical inquiry would be the only way to “counter global capitalism” and to “depoliticize and disempower” the mainstream discourses. In countering global capitalism, Giroux (2004) proposes that classroom discussions should take a global perspective and provide counter narratives to counter dominant discourses. In a similar vein, Collins (1991) aptly states that a critical global approach is a theoretical framework that provides possibilities and hope for the local and global community a tool needed for training students who will be active participants in the world. Thus controversial issues and social injustice issues that emerge in classrooms today such as sexism, racism, ethnicity, and classicism need to be analyzed in the light of critical pedagogy. In incorporating critical global perspectives in education, teachers will be involved in the making of a critical global citizen who is trained to live comfortably in the overwhelming global village (Nyambe & Shipena, 1998).
The second approach in making, global perspectives in education meaningful for the students is described by Merryfield (2001) who suggests the need to globalize global education through rethinking of postcoloniality in educational discourses. In rethinking postcoloniality, Willinsky (1998) argues for a reconceptualization of global education in order to “globalize global education through literature, theories, and diverse perspectives that reflect the complexity of the planet …to decolonize social studies content and prepare young people to interact in a variety of contexts with people different from ourselves” (Merryfield, 2001, p.180). Furthermore, Merryfield & Subedi (2006) assert the need for incorporating “contrapuntal or opposing histories and literature” which provide counter stories to the existing knowledge (p. 289). In relation to contrapuntal or subaltern perspectives, these are perspectives that postcolonialists promote to elevate and give voice to non-West cultures and peoples (Spivak, 1990).

Lastly, another approach to critical theory is the conception of it as “political and moral,” and that which “embraces emancipatory, and empowering values of critical pedagogy” (Denzin, et.al, 2008, p.5). This statement implies that the “emancipatory” aspect of critical theory should be the teachers’ focus in order to not only prepare students to engage in questioning discourses and their narratives but also in encouraging them to get involved in emancipatory activities. In the same vein Subedi (2009) adds that issues of social difference should be the lens through which global issues are examined in the classroom in order to open spaces for transformative practices. Also, Jaramillo and
McLaren (2008) insist that for education to be transformative it should be “theme driven,” “students-centered,” and incorporate humanizing experiences (Jaramillo & McLaren, 2008, p.193). For education to be theme driven denotes utilization of issues that open up critical discussions in the classroom such as controversial issues. In student-centered activities it implies that teachers will avoid practices that align to traditional teacher centered forms of teaching. To elaborate critical pedagogy should involve “classroom conditions that provide the knowledge, skills, and culture of questioning necessary for students to engage in critical dialogue with the past, question authority and its effects, struggle with ongoing relations of power, and prepare themselves for what it means to be critical, active citizens in the interrelated local, national and global public spheres (Giroux & Giroux, 2008). Therefore, it can be said that critical pedagogy is concerned with the quest for social justice, troubling of imperial ideologies and the empowering of learners to be active participants and citizens of their society and the world.

**Citizenship Education**

The discussion of these two paradigms, namely postcolonial and critical theory points to their centrality in educational contexts. Postcolonial theory and critical theory are conceptual paradigms that support citizenship education. Recently scholars in the social studies field have pushed for the teaching of global perspectives and global citizenship education (Alger, 1986; Becker, 1979). Scholars also perceive that
incorporating global perspectives in teaching is the only strategy to move the center of the curriculum from the American epicenter to a world-centered curriculum (Merryfield & Subedi, 2006). Therefore, this section will focus on global perspectives and global citizenship and how postcolonial and critical theory influences and expands global citizenship and global perspectives. In what follows, I will first highlight the trajectory of the conceptualization of global perspectives and global citizenship and their limitations and possibilities. Let me begin by explicating how global perspectives became the foci in the social studies education.

The field of global education developed from and within social studies field to counter the dominant American-centered knowledge and curriculum (Alger, 1986, Becker, 1982; Hanvey, 1976; Kniep, 1989; Myers, 2006; Trofantenko, 2005; Wilson, 1993). These mentioned educators indicated the need to infuse global perspectives in the educational system to prepare students who can effectively live and survive in the 21st century. In support of their ideas, National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) which is the umbrella organization that prepares social studies standards has reiterated that social studies should include experiences that prepare students to examine the past, present and the future of global connections in the world and their benefits and consequences of interactions (NCSS, 2010). Following all these calls for global education, the development of and content for global perspectives was formulated.
A global perspective is a concept that is founded on the works of Robert Hanvey (1976) *An attainable global perspective*, where he identified elements of a global perspective. Other works have expanded Hanvey’s notions of a global perspective and its relation to teaching and learning (Anderson, 1982; Kniep, 1989; Tye, 1990, p.163). For instance, Roland Case summarized the contributions of Hanvey and others by identifying two underlying tenets of global perspectives as the “perceptual dimension” and the “substantive dimension” (Case, 1993, p.318). Case includes attributes to the perceptual dimension such as open-mindedness, anticipation to complexity, resistance to stereotyping, inclination to empathize, and non-chauvinism while the substantive dimension should involve universal and cultural values and practices, global interconnections, present worldwide concerns and conditions, origins and past patterns of world affairs and alternative future directions in worldwide affairs (p. 320). This was a significant contribution to critical global perspectives since he argues that global perspectives on its own cannot achieve the goal. Rather, it has to include thoughts of the mind or cognitive skills for an effective change in students’ awareness of the world.

Global education has been closely linked to multicultural education and at times the differences between the two, appears narrow (Merryfield, 2004; Myers, 2006; Zong, et al., 2008). Zong, briefly summarizes, the focus of the two fields as based on concepts of culture and cultural differences; the recognition of the importance of knowledge; the inclusion for and a call for action, and an emphasis on the humane connection. Both
fields emphasize the developing of multiple perspectives and multiple loyalties to strengthen cultural consciousness and intercultural competence, respecting human dignity and human rights, and combating prejudice and discrimination (Zong, et.al., 2008, p.202). Merryfield (2004) adds that both fields “promote environments of mutual respect and understanding of others guided by democratic principles” but when it comes to scope, the two fields differ.

In different regions of the world citizenship education carries different meanings as it evolves through time. Earlier constructions of citizenship in the 1800s and 1900s concerned itself with race which classified people into social, economic, and political groups and determined who was a citizen and who was not, based on their color (Nguyen& Banks, 2008). Thus the foundations of US institutions were theoretically rather than realistically, based on equality, freedom, and justice for all humanity.

Scholars in the US demanded for change if the country was to live up to its ideals because structures of racism and all kinds of oppression are deeply rooted in the systems of operation (Banks, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2004). Ladson-Billings laments that the formations of citizenship in America deny people of color full citizenship and are geared towards assimilating them into the mainstream culture. This type of citizenship was criticized because it was driven by political interests and that restricted basic rights to minority racial and ethnic groups (Banks &Nguyen, 2008). Increasing diversity and nation-states led to rethinking of the meanings of citizenship in America and in the world.
To achieve the ideals of citizenship, one proposition was to introduce an anti-oppressive citizenship education, which emphasized citizenship knowledge and citizenship action (Ross, 2006, p.67). As a result, there emerged anti-oppressive discourses such as civic oriented education (Dewey, 1916), cosmopolitan citizenship (Appiah, 2006, Kymlicka, 1999), multicultural citizenship, (Banks, 2001) and world citizenship and global civics (Gaudelli, 2003; Merryfield, 2001; Pike &Selby, 1995; Pike, 2009). The following section considers one the above aspects of citizenship education that that this work was grounded on.

**Global Citizenship Education**

In promoting global citizenship, Pike (2009) advocates for the “reconstructing of a new legend,” whereby educators challenge the prevailing dominant legend. Pike insists that without a new legend it is impossible to go beyond the “imperial show and tell” narratives, even if global perspectives are infused in the dominant stories (Willinsky, 1998, p.55). What needs to be done as Pike observes is to deconstruct the deeply embedded stories of the Other within the social and institutional structures of education (p.230). Hence, a sizable circle of scholars have envisaged the need for reconceptualizing citizenship education in the US and an overhaul of the traditional assimilationist ideologies of citizenship. It would seem that such a global view of citizenship would transcend the cultural diversities within nation-states and at the same time enable students to participate locally, nationally, and globally. Myers (2006) similarly states that because
global citizenship “is a more accurate curricular frame for social studies” because it “accounts for changing nature of citizenship in the context of globalization,” therefore there is an immediate need for “revamping the national approach to citizenship education in the US classroom” (p.371).

Gaudelli (2003) aligns his views to the rest of the social studies scholars and suggests the looking into the future of the world, advocates for global civics that emerges from a consideration of the conversations with global youth which he believes is a vital means to help them solve problems of the future (p.175). Ultimately, global perspectives and global citizenship education should be geared towards responding to “deeply racial, ethnic, cultural, language, and religious diversity in nation-states” and citizens to “maintain attachments to their cultural communities as well as participate effectively in the national civic-culture” and the global community (Banks& Nguyen, 2008, p. 149). This discussion illustrates the significance of educating students for active global citizenship role as the only means towards meaningful, transformative, active participation in the local and global communities.

The following examples shed light on some international perspectives in relation to citizenship education particularly in South Africa, Britain and Canada. Following these international perspectives of citizenship education is an analysis of the development of citizenship education in the US and in Kenya.
Examples from South Africa, England, and Canada

Citizenship education in South Africa

I analyze in this section citizenship in South Africa not as a stand in for Africa but as an example of how different countries have different conceptions and policies on citizenship education. But what is agreeable among many of the African scholars is that citizenship education in Africa requires immediate reforms (Kwansah-Aidoo & Djokoto, 2006; Dei & Ashgharzadeh, 2006; Rossi & Tlou, 1997; Kubow, 2007). For example in Swaziland, Kwansah-Aidoo & Djokoto (2006) suggests the need for global citizenship education because of the nature of “encounters and interactions” in the global village that requires “commitment to practices that promote an understanding of other cultures and the adoption of third cultures” (p.165). They add that global citizenship education is necessary because in Swaziland there is no policy that trains students with the necessary skills for participatory activism, or incorporation of intercultural skills and issues and even neglected teacher’s perceptions on global and local issues.

Dei & Ashgharzadeh (2006) on the other hand, speaking for Africa in general recommend the infusion of indigenous thought in citizenship education. They define indigenous knowledge as a “way of knowing developed by local/indigenous peoples over generations as a result of sustained occupation of or attachment to a place, location or space with the result that such occupancy allows peoples /communities to develop a perfect understanding of the relationships of their communities, to their surrounding
natural and social environment.” These scholars affirm that when local knowledge is recognized, then there is possibility of resisting dominant imperial influences in education systems and a way of balancing globalization effects. Dei and Ashgharzadeh assert that “local voice is a necessary exercise in resisting domination and colonial imposition” (p. 58). Local voice in this context includes the indigenous voices of the indigenous communities which should be made integral when speaking about citizenship in Africa.

Regarding South Africa in particular, Waghid (2004) describes citizenship education goals given by the Ministry of Education as “producing good citizens who on one hand can contribute towards achieving the political stability and peace necessary to ensure the growth of a competitive labor market and on the other hand can combat the crime, corruption and moral decadence”(p. 527). In the same vein, as much as the government intends to improve the economy and to combat corruption and crime, Waghid envisions the need for holistic citizenship education that would enhance the attainment of multiple national goals. He recommends compassionate citizenship as a method of “instilling [in students] the value of learning to oppose undeserved conditions of living which affront human dignity such as socio-economic deprivation, racism, inequality and poverty” conditions that affect South Africans and the African continent in general (p. 539).
Even though these social studies scholars perceive the importance of citizenship education for active democratic participation there are underlying problems and issues that may deter reforms. Rossi & Tlou (1997) state that “newly elected governments often confront severe economic needs, ethnic and ideological divisions, and questions of transitional justice that threaten to impede progress toward the growth of a democratic culture…obstacles. We have large class sizes and classroom order problems that hinder class and group discussion. We teach within systems that do not provide the time and support for systematic planning” (p. 256). Therefore, African governments will need to put in measures to reform education system to accommodate citizenship objectives among other things, in order to achieve the goal of educating for democratic citizenship.

**Citizenship Education in England**

In England, citizenship education has been criticized for lack of clear and explicit meanings and content (See, Figueroa, 2004, p.232). Figueroa notes that, in the 1870s non-governmental organizations instigated for civic education. It was not until the 1980s that the government through the ministry of education took action, in publishing a pamphlet on social education with details such as the rights and responsibilities of citizenship (p. 233). In the 1990s citizenship education was made compulsory in secondary level of education (p. 239). Recently the interest in England has been in the teaching of citizenship in the context of the world as a global community (Holden &
Hicks 2007, p.15). Such interest in citizenship education made citizenship content a compulsory theme in the curricula in schools as well as in teacher education courses. Figueroa notes that the development of citizenship education was considerably influenced by multicultural, antiracial and anti-sexist frameworks of thought for the purposes of addressing the diverse and multi-ethnic England.

**Citizenship Education in Canada**

Citizenship in Canada seemed to have been influenced by multicultural and anti-racist paradigms. According to Joshee (2004) Canadian citizenship education emerged as a result of the rise of non-British immigrants 1800-1900s. The purpose of citizenship education was to fight against the prohibition of citizenship for immigrants. At the time, education was characterized by “assimilationist nation building whose goal [was] to instill patriotism in students” (p.135). In 1919 a sense of nationalism was reestablished due to the WW1 that introduced bilingual education as a show of acceptance of other languages and peoples. However, in 1920s-1930s there was a rise in radicalism on the part of feminists and self proclaimed socialists which led to citizenship education in schools to focus on “character education” and “personal value so as to stamp out radicalism in the youth” (p.137). Later in the 1960s Canadian government recognized the need to address inequities and increased issues to national identity. Part of citizenship education involved teaching of immigrant democratic citizenship, and the focus moved from assimilation ideologies to integrationist concepts that are inclusive of immigrants in
the Canadian system. In the 1970s interest shifted towards identity issues especially how Canadians perceived of themselves and their past history leading to a rise in the activist orientation of the youth especially in issues of social justice1980s. During this moment, the focus was on “power inequities as they are structured by society and its institutions,” a focus which borrowed much from Sefa Dei’s (1996) anti-racist education (in Joshee 2004, p.145). From the 1990s to the present Canadian scholars have been examining and advocating for “social cohesion – a response to consequences of neoliberal politics and programs” which is a term used to increase solidarity and faith in the government (p. 147). Along with the development of citizenship education came the numerous revisions and reforms that have and continue to take place in the Canadian system of education.

In conclusion, then the discussion on citizenship education in Africa, Britain and Canada indicated that reforms in education needs to focus on training students to be democratic and active participants in their local and global societies. At the same time the theoretical frameworks underlying citizenship education has worked towards enhancing and transforming its content and objectives in these regions.

**Social Studies Education in the US**

From the onset of the curriculum formation in the US in the 1890s, the traditional way of teaching was found wanting since it did not cater for the complexities and technological development in the world (Kliebard, 1995), compelling a transformation from the traditional methods of teaching to more global and multiculturally centered
methods. Kliebard notes that there emerged a “mental discipline” approach with the intention of strengthening the powers of the mind and filling the mind with content” which later failed in its objectives, requiring new conceptualizations of knowledge (p. 5). Immediately, there followed the rise of the progressivist movement by proponents like John Dewey, Edward Thorndike and others, who highlighted the need to centralize the needs of individual students and the creation of nurturing learning environments (Kliebard, 1995). It is from this progressivist view that social studies derived its educational philosophies. Kliebard states that social studies emerged in 1892 with the formation of National Education Association (NEA). The NEA determined that the future of students would be more appealing if it adopted a curriculum that incorporated the needs of the rising immigrant communities and the different sections of the school population. As Lybarger (1983) notes, this was the time when the most influential documents addressing issues of social studies and curriculum in public education were published. For instance, citizenship content in community civics and in American democracy began to take a center stage. As a result social studies replaced history, if not totally transforming it, to cater for the demands of rising immigrants and the need for citizenship education replacing history as a subject that was found deficient as a discipline informing social studies (Kliebard, p.1995).

The 1920s John Dewey’s progressivist approach to education was notable. Dewey emphasized reflective inquiry and a democratic kind of education that influenced
the teaching of social studies. His focus was to make education useful to students, therefore proposed a student centered approach in teaching. His progressivist approach did not seem to go well with the curriculum developers at the time because as Kliebard (1995) mentions his curriculum was found to be difficult to measure and therefore did not fit into the system that was dependant on external scrutiny through examinations. As such therefore, Dewey’s proposed reforms remained in paper at the time and were never transformed into practice.

The National Education Association (NEA) appointed a committee that would look into the social studies curriculum. The report from NEA committee gave rise to the National Council of Social Studies (NCSS) in 1921 with core transformations for the social studies curriculum (Martorella, 1996). NCSS later published what would be the professional journals for the organization, that is; *Social Education, Social Studies and The Young Learner*. However, as always the intent of the social sciences disciplines to encourage citizenship goals did not materialize. New knowledge had to be incorporated into the curriculum. The 1930s and the Great depression introduced an era of social reconstruction. At this period there was a worldwide economic recession and a collapse of the world market from 1929 to World War II. These changes in the world influenced social studies, by decentering its focus from the social sciences to the contemporary social studies based on concepts of citizenship and social justice (Ross, 2006). The 1950s during the Cold War era and the launch of Sputnik in 1957 by the Soviet Union. Sputnik
was the first space satellite to orbit the earth. Its inception introduced a reassessment of US education system which was found wanting because the Soviets had superseded the US into space (Martorella, 1996). Social studies came under scrutiny that resulted to the “new social studies” with projects throughout the nation such as Man: A course of study (MACOS), and anthropology curriculum study project intended to improve the discipline (Martorella, 1996, p.8).

It was from this period that social studies acknowledged the gap between the “haves and the have-nots and the racialized and gendered patterns of privilege and oppression, which to a large degree form the basis of US economic and cultural life” (Ross, 2006, p.20) issues that were missing in the current curriculum reforms. In the period of the 1960s the focus shifted from the dominant mainstream cultures and people to the minority cultures and people. Questions raised at this point revolved around how social studies can be made relevant to minority groups and women. W.E.B. Dubois (1989) and Cater G. Woodson (2000) were very influential educators at the time because they provided new ideas for improving education of the African American populations specifically, but generally brought hope and possibility to minorities in the country. There was a need to develop democratic and multicultural programs that would enhance education of minority students and women.

In the 1970s, there was the formation of programs that emphasized analysis of conversations on critical issues in education, for active democratic citizenship skills.
Civil rights movements and Vietnam War became part of the major influences of the period. The social studies goals were reformulated to include personal development, decision-making skills and citizenship participation. These were higher-level social studies goals whereby the teachers would expect the students to be active participants and not passive participants in their society, thus progressing towards a more relevant and a participatory social studies curriculum. Such a reform paved way for the 1980s where emphasis moved to a combination of both the best features of traditional social studies education, and the social science inquiry to problem solving, decision making skills and a more democratic learning focus on social studies education. The Bradley Commission on history in schools (1988) and the National Commission on Social Studies (1989) were fundamental in examining inadequacies in social studies curriculum (Wilson et al, 1993). All along these developments put their focus on the local and ignored global events such as the Great Depression, the Vietnam War, and the rise in global interconnections. An ignorance of content about the world demanded an immediate shift to “explore contemporary curriculum development” and “envision an alternative way out of the turmoil of contemporary schooling” as well as “understanding the current debates in education and society” (Slattery, 2006, p. 22).

**Citizenship and Democratic Education in the US**

It is apparent that since 1916 democratic citizenship education has been promoted in various ways. Scholars in social studies focused on ways in which to teach active
democratic citizenship education. The National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) has been at the forefront of promoting democratic citizenship education through the publication of the *Handbook on teaching social issues* that is committed to local and global issues discussions (Hess & Posselt, 2002). The term citizenship has been used to refer to a contested and an evolving field in social studies education in America and the world. In different regions of the world it carries different meanings as it evolves through time. I will examine the conceptualization of citizenship education and its development and how citizenship has been theorized in America.

Earlier constructions of citizenship in the US during the 1800s and 1900s had been connected to issues of race which classified people into social, economic, and political groups determined who is a citizen and who is not, based on their color (Nguyen & Banks 2008, p.138-139). Thus the foundations of American institutions and citizenship in particular are theoretically based on equality, freedom, and justice for all humanity. Therefore because of issues of equity and social justice, other frameworks such as multicultural and anti-racist paradigms have also been invoked in theorizing citizenship education. Critics and scholars of multicultural and anti-racism demanded for change if America was to live up to its ideals. Structures of racism and all kinds of oppression were deeply rooted in the systems of operation at the time. This led to some scholars of color to challenge the formations of citizenship, which denied people of color full citizenship (Ladson-Billings, 2004). One such proposition was an anti-oppressive citizenship
education, which emphasized on citizenship knowledge and citizenship action (Ross 2006, p.67). Others narrativized their experience to deconstruct the assimilationist constructs of citizenship education such as in Monica Sone (1979) in *Nisei Daughter*, which exemplifies the failed ideals of American citizenship that tended to be an assimilationist project. This type of citizenship was criticized because it was driven by political interests and that restricted basic rights to minority racial and ethnic groups (Banks & Nguyen, 2008). Increasing diversity and nation-states led to rethinking of the meanings of citizenship in America and in the world. Scholars come up with concepts such as civic oriented education (Dewey 1916), cosmopolitan citizenship (Appiah, 2006, Kymlicka, 1999), multicultural citizenship, (Banks, 2001) world citizenship and global civics (Gaudelli 2003; Merryfield 2001; Pike & Selby 1995; Pike 2009). The overall ideology behind these concepts can be well articulated by Banks who suggested some elements of a citizenship education in this multicultural and cosmopolitan world. He established that visions of multicultural citizenship education should “enable students to acquire a delicate balance of cultural, national and global identifications and to understand the ways in which knowledge is constructed; to become knowledge producers; and to participate in civic action to create a more humane nation and world” (Banks, 2001). In addition, Pike (2009) advocated for “a reconstructing of a new legend,” whereby educators challenge the prevailing dominant legend. Pike insists that without a new legend it is impossible to go beyond mainstream stories, even if global perspectives
are infused in the dominant stories. What needs to be done as Pike observes is to revamp the deeply embedded stories within the social and institutional structures (p.230). These views are among many views of scholars mentioned above, have necessitated a reconceptualization of citizenship education in America and an overhaul of the traditional assimilationist ideology of citizenship and therefore such a cosmopolitan view of citizenship will transcend the cultural diversities within nation-states and at the same time enable students to participate locally, nationally and globally. Myers (2006) similarly states that global citizenship “is a more accurate curricular frame for social studies” because it “accounts for changing nature of citizenship in the context of globalization,” there is an immediate need for “revamping the national approach to citizenship education in the US classroom” (p.371). Gaudelli on the other hand, looking into the future of the world, advocates for global civics that rethinks dialoguing with global youth as a vital means to help the youth who are future global citizens solve problems of the future (p.175). Therefore, there is no doubt about the significance of a global citizenship education in the American classrooms today if students are to survive in this dynamic world.

However, challenges to global citizenship education cannot be escaped. First, Burbules and Torres (2000) observe that globalization is expanding at a fast rate to include even the previously not known or heard of fields, such as the global communities on the internet. Such internet communities then pose a challenge to educators to rethink
ways in which to incorporate them in education. Secondly, as globalization increases the cultural capital, there is a danger of eradicating individual and local cultural values and beliefs and going for the dominant cultures (Banks & Nguyen 2008, p.148). Appiah (2006) seems to disagree with the idea of erosion and eradication of individual cultural values and identities. Appiah argues that even when cultures meet and mingle and new one come and pass, some aspect of our original culture will still be present however much we gain from the cultural global capital (p.117). Thirdly, on a different lens, feminist discourses posit that challenges emerge which “raise questions as to the constructions and thinking of citizenship based on gendered frameworks (Abowitz & Harnish 2006, p.667). Feminists seem to be questioning the foundations within which citizenship is built that may be sexist, thus calling for new constructions and expanded anti-sexist citizenship ideologies. Therefore the need to approach citizenship education through other lenses such as through postcolonial frameworks that have raised new ways of thinking about the world and women in particular (Crocco, 2008; Merryfield & Subedi, 2003).

Lastly, the main challenge of global citizenship education has its “overarching objective of preparing citizens for life in a democracy” (Stoddard & Marcus, 2009, p.281). How are students to be prepared to be democratic citizens of their nation and the world? As Banks & Nguyen (2008) have suggested global citizenship education should be geared towards responding to diverse issues of race, culture language and religion without cutting off cultural affiliations but to make students part of their culture and
cultural activities. How to achieve the objective of developing active democratic local and global citizens is critical to the development of field of citizenship education.

**Education in Kenya**

Kenya is a country in Eastern Africa with Nairobi as its capital city with about five million inhabitants. Kenya borders Ethiopia and Sudan in the North, Somalia to the North East, Uganda to the West, Tanzania to the South and the Indian Ocean to the East. The country is divided into eight provinces and about 46 districts (with the New Kenyan constitution instituted in 2010, there will be changes to the names of the regions).

According to September 14, 2010 issue of *Daily Nation*, the official 2009 population census figures indicated about 38,610,097 people. There are about 42 ethnic groups, with a high concentration of diverse ethnicities and nationalities in the urban areas including a number of immigrants from different countries of the world (Sheffield, 1971).

Since the colonial period Kenya has been home to a number of immigrants. The British migrated to Kenya during the colonial period and some stayed on after Independence. There are Asian immigrants who also migrated to Kenya during and after the colonial period who now are dominating the commercial sector. At the coast of Kenya we find a group of Arab immigrants who settled in the region long before the coming of the Europeans. They were mostly involved in trade with the people living in the coastal area and with time intermarried with the local people giving rise to the Waswahili people and culture as well as the Kiswahili language. Many other immigrants
are from other parts of Africa such as Somalia due to the instability in their country. Apart from the immigrant population, Kenyans themselves present a multicultural and a multi-ethnic society mostly dwelling in the urban areas.

**Historical background of education**

Education in Kenya did not begin with the advent of formal schooling that was introduced by the Europeans. Rather, education was practiced in indigenous settings. This section will therefore discuss these two educational settings, the Indigenous local education system and the British form of education from pre-colonial era to post-independence period.

**Indigenous Education in Kenya**

In examining the structure of education in Kenya I begin by briefly describing pre-colonial education or the indigenous education system in Kenya as this analysis is very crucial in understanding education today. Sheffield (1973) asserts that indigenous education “cannot be separated from society, because both are interwoven within the same cultural fabric” (p.1). Indigenous education was practiced among the different Kenyan ethnic communities before the introduction of Koranic education by Arab immigrants and the Western form of education by the Europeans. The two main aims of Indigenous African education in Kenya was first to “transmit and conserve from one generation to the next accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the family, clan and ethnic group. Secondly, education aimed at adapting children to their physical environment
which was so crucial to their survival” (Bogonko, 1992). The education system at the time was structured to fulfill these aims as shall be developed further in this section. The structure of the education was similar in most of the different ethnicities in Kenya with a little variation from one society to another.

Indigenous Education (IE) in Kenya according to Bogonko (1992) had teachers’ and educators; content knowledge based on the indigenous ways of knowing; methods of teaching and venues of learning and different stages of development and training. On teachers and educators, IE utilized parents, adults in the community and apprenticeship was used to teach the children and the youth. Bogonko separates IE in two categories, formal and informal. Formal teaching focused mainly in training children for trades such as apprenticeship and initiation ceremonies, while informal teaching was done at home when children learned their roles. Apprenticeship occurred mainly when parents wanted their children to learn a trade such as basketry, pottery, blacksmith, and other hereditary professions. The parents would train their own children or send them to the work with the professionals. In initiation ceremonies different communities practiced it differently and the stages of development varied from one society to another (Bogonko, 2006; Esho et.al., 2010; Mutua, 1975; Ngaroga, 1996; Wafula, 2006).

Most societies in Africa place emphasis on their cultural indigenous knowledge. The girls were taught how to cook, take care of children while the boys were taught how to hunt, tend livestock and fight for their group. In different communities gender roles
were different and were inculcated in children from birth to adulthood (Uwakweh, 1998). Gender roles and specifications in indigenous societies did not marginalize women nor did they promote male hegemony. Amadiume (1997) notes that it is after the advent of Islam and Christianity that male hegemony and gendered construction of patriarchy began. Other cultural content included education initiation and rites of passage, instruction on historical origin of the people, moral and behavioral conduct transmitted through myths, proverbs, oral tales, stories and songs, environmental lessons such us knowledge of herbs and herbal medicine, knowledge about seasons, knowledge of the earth and about agriculture.

The venues for learning were in the homes especially around the fireplaces during the evenings; also in the farms, and basically all locations were learning locations since children leaned mostly experientially by observing, and by doing thing with their hands. Particularly learning began at birth and continued up until death. According to Wafula (2006) from childhood to initiation, the environment was the place for teaching (the classroom), and children learned through observation and hands-on participation as they progressed to adulthood.

The Arabic influence at the coast of Kenya introduced the Muslim Koranic schools that were located mostly at the coast. These schools were introduced around the 7th century AD by the Arabs and Persians (Bogonko, 1991). Koranic schools did not extend to other parts of Kenya but remained confined to the coast. The indigenous
education (IE) of the coastal people was alienated as Islamic education took center-stage, culminating in the growth of Islam and Islamic culture and ethos. Koranic schools were intended “to enable Muslim children to acquire the fundamental precepts of their faith through knowledge of the Arabic script and the memorization of long passages of Islamic Holy Scriptures (Cameron, 1970). Apart from the Koranic knowledge, these schools also taught arithmetic, reading and writing as well as spiritual and moral values. Koranic education seemed to have similarities with the IE especially when it came to teaching children moral and spiritual values from birth to death. But it differed in reading, writing and arithmetic, partly, because IE did not require literacy skills such as writing skills to survive in the society. Ngaroga (1996) posits that Koranic schools were equivalent to Western schools with less emphasis on the awarding of certificates and diplomas.

Sifuna (1976) illustrates some of the elements of Indigenous education (IE) of the Kikuyu through lullabies for little children which transmitted the history of the ethnic cultural values. As the child grew older songs were used and questions to check their knowledge; practical training was given to teach children to walk and sit properly, because any deformities such as bow-legs were despised; at age two or three games were played such as mock fights, playing husband and wife, building model huts, cattle pens, utilizing, materials available, while the girls plaited baskets of grass, grinded corn, molded clay pots, cooked imaginary dishes and the boys were taken by the fathers for practical training in the garden, where they would be given a digging stick specifically
made for them for weeding. Moreover, they learnt names of plants roots, both edible and poisonous ones; and as they grew older they participated in other activities and games like jumping, wrestling, running, lifting heavy objects, girls did domestic chores like nursing babies, fetching water, cutting and gathering firewood (p. 18). In sum, the aim of the IE was to preserve the Kenya cultural heritage, enable youths to adapt and use their environment, and help youth to be responsible for the past present and future as productive members of the society (Ngaroga, 1996).

**British Education in Kenya**

*The colonizer never tried to understand the African people, but rather nursed a perverted picture of the African-as being living in swamps which sweltered with equatorial heat. The European settler and his spiritual policeman, the church missionary adulterated and undermined the local values (Chris Wanjala, 1976, p. 8)*

Western education in the context of this section implies education that was introduced and began with the coming of European missionaries to Kenya. The Western system of education was introduced in Kenya in the 1800 (Eshiwani, 1990). Wafula (2006) notes that before the arrival of European Christian missionaries, formal education had been introduced by traders from the Arabian Peninsula had settled in the Kenyan coast, in 12th century AD and began their form of education. German missionaries
arrived in the country in 1844, and set up schools under the Church Missionary Society (CMS) at the Kenyan coast. Missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (CMC), John Ludwig Krapf and Johan Rebmann established inaugurated mission schools in Kenya when they built a school at Rabai in Mombasa at the coast, in 1844 (Bogonko, 1991; Ngaroga, 1996). To Kenyan educationist, the main purpose of missionary was to “win converts,” “teach literacy to the Africans so that they could read the Bible,” “Westernize Africans” “introduce Western commerce and industry,” but later gravitated towards producing skilled workers for the European settler farms (Ngaroga, 1996, p.21). This position is supported too by a non-Kenyan educators such as Sheffield (1973), who observed that the goals of missionary education was to “gain converts, train catechists who could both preach and teach, literacy to be able to read the bible” and “technical training which laid foundations for education development in Kenya”( p.11).

These schools became racially stratified, with European schools at the top, Indian schools coming second, and last on the hierarchy were the African schools (Eshiwani, 1990). Later in the early 1900s other schools were built in the interior of Kenya. The Bible and the pen were all introduced at the same time even though Christian education dominated because the mindset of the European missionaries was to “civilize” Africans from their so-called barbaric culture and religions. In 1908 there was a Frazer report that introduced the 4-4-4 system of education that is four years primary education, four years intermediate education, and four years secondary education (Ngaroga, 1996). Later in
1911 there was an establishment of an education department to oversee education in the country and formulate of policies regarding education in Kenya as well as establish the first government school (Eshiwani 1993; Schilling, 1972). Prior to 1911 education issues were solely in the hands of the missionaries but the new department of education was a government institution that would oversee all education institutions in the country. Later during the WW1 education was hard hit economically and on manpower. According to Schilling (1972) there was a stand still in education in that resources both financial and human were diverted to war. But on a positive note, the war brought about changes in the education system for Africans. Schilling states that those Africans who had come back from serving WWI were “exposed to Africans of other ethnic groups, to aspects of European technology, to the sight of Europeans killing each other and being killed by black men. These men could not simply return to the reserves and take up life as it had been before these experiences” (p.141-142). Therefore, these exposures in war made African people aware of their mistreatment and injustices in the colonial system. Thus the experience triggered the men to action to fight for better education and better treatment. Moreover, they learned about their rights and the ills of the colonists, which pushed them to fight for change and self-determination. As a result the colonial government had to progressively change its policies to cater for some of the needs of Kenyans. Consequently, there were a number of commissions that were set up to look into the education situation in the country.
For instance in 1919, the Fraser commission was instituted by the colonial British government and presented some recommendations geared towards technical and vocational education for Blacks. In 1924 another commission The Phelp-Stokes commission under the expertise of a certain Thomas Jesse Jones a Welsh and United States citizen, reported solutions to the education system and re-emphasized the training Africans to be skilled workers in order to work in the European settler farms (Schilling, 1972; Wafula, 2006). The Phelps-Stokes commission of 1924 reported on the need for the government to increase its supervision of and work hand in hand with mission schools as well as end the education crisis through “compromise, accommodation, bridge-building, and reconciliation” (Schilling, 1972, p. 243).

Another committee, the Beecher Education commission of 1949 was entrusted with the investigation as to ways of making the African education more useful to the Africans. The Beecher report recommended the introduction of 4-4-4 system of education to replace 6-2-4 structure of education that is the six years of primary, two years of intermediate and four years of secondary education (Sifuna, 1976, p.42). The commission reaffirmed recommendations of 1925 on the need of education to meet the needs of the rural population. Kenyan masses rejected the Beecher commission’s report of 1949 because its recommendations left out the issue of equality, thus perpetuating racial segregation but was it was nonetheless implemented in 1952 (Bogonko, 1991). Kenyans were not impressed by this education because their interests were not catered for. Its
structure and nature favored the colonial government, which at this point had taken root in the country. Most of the content in missionary schools was hymn singing, and technical education to prepare Africans for work in the settler plantations. Schools for Africans were ill equipped, experienced lack of trained teachers and were segregated (Bogonko, 1991). Bogonko further adds that schools for Europeans were best equipped, and then followed by the schools for Indians which were averagely equipped and lastly for Africans were ill-equipped. Substandard education pushed for African opposition, demanding from among other things equality in education. As a result of the substandard education, the British colonial government commissioned a committee to look into the education of Africans.

In 1952, another commission named the Binns, recommended agricultural education for Kenyans and films to teach agricultural techniques, camps for short agricultural courses, and adult education (Eshiwani, 1993). Eshiwani notes that Kenyan’s rejected the recommendations because they perpetuated incivility of Africans and their place in rural farm areas. Other reports on education included the Addis Ababa report (1961) and the Tananarive report (1963), which called for better educational opportunities, and the integration of “African history and culture in the curriculum, and production of students meeting high level manpower requirements, staffing, financing and curriculum of higher education in Africa” (Sheffield, 1973, p.70).
At the same time Africans were boycotting missionary schools for independent African schools. Africans had established Independent schools. The first of its kind was the Kikuyu Independent schools Association formed after the missions prohibited circumcision of girls (Mutua, 1975). These schools accepted indigenous cultural practices such as female circumcision, polygamy, and laid less emphasis on British history and literature, although both religion and school emphasized the importance of the land (Ngugi, 1965; Sheffield, 1973). These schools did not follow the requirements same as those of the missions schools where “before a child was accepted in school, his parents were persuade to be baptized [which] began the journey of estrangement that the African child encountered from his first day of school” and utterly destroyed the African values and systems (Sifuna, 1976). The result was that the independent schools were later closed down for allegedly conspiring with the African associations organized against the colonial government during the emergency period prior to independence in 1963.

On the other hand the Indian immigrants who had settled in the country were also resisting mediocre treatment by the colonists. The European were at the topmost level in the hierarchy followed by the Indians, and lastly on the hierarchical ladder were Kenyans. The immigrants from India were not happy with their position in the hierarchy, thus demanded for equal rights with the Europeans settlers. Schilling (1972) notes that they received support for organizations from India to fight the colonial government. Instead the colonial government retaliated by enacting a policy that fostered “segregation of the
races in commercial and residential areas, with no acquisition by Asians of property in Europeans areas (p.175). The Indians were restricted from buying property and living near the Europeans. At the same time there was a move by the colonial government to train Africans to become clerks and artisans to replace the Indian workers.

**Post-Independence Education in Kenya**

After independence in 1963 Kenya embarked on a strategy to reconstruct the education system. In 1964 the Ominde commission report was established to “advise the government on the reformulation and implementation of national policies for education” (Mutua, 1975, p.viii). One of the recommendations of high priority was ensuring universal free primary education and doing away with segregation in schools along racial lines (Sheffield, 1973; Republic of Kenya, 1965). Also, the Ominde commission report of 1964 brought in new ideas such as the use of English as a medium of instruction in Kenyan schools, which negatively impacted, alienated and marginalized the indigenous languages and cultures. Some of the goals of education recommended by this commission that favored the African education were:

- education must foster a sense of nationhood and promote unity;
- education must serve the needs of the people and of the country without discrimination;
- the nation’s schools must respect all Kenyan cultural traditions and find expression in both social institutions and relationships
• the promotion of social equality and removal of divisions caused by race, religion and tribe;
• An outcome of our education at all levels must be adaptability to change.

(Eshiwani 1993; Sheffield, 1971)

Another significant landmark in the post-independence Kenya was the Harambee movement which was introduced to help in the expansion of educational projects as well as other initiatives such as health and economic development. The Harambee movement was initiated by the first president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta (1889-1978) as a way of encouraging citizens to undertake collective work in community projects, building and supporting schools initiatives (Eshiwani, 1993). Other commissions produced the Gachathi report of 1976 and Mackay report of 1981 that introduced different systems of education that emphasized education for self-reliance through technical and vocational training and the development of a holistic individual equipped to survive in the present society. In 1988 there was the Kamunge commission report that emphasized higher pay for teachers and less emphasis on vocational subjects (Ngaroga, 1996). It is apparent that even after independence, the reports on the above commissions stated that the education system in Kenya was still geared towards developing students with skills useful only for work in the government and in the agricultural sector. Basically, such education only promoted the ruling elites' interests which were similar to the former colonial interests. There was less training of children on social and civic education. At university level the
history and geography content was more on the East Africa region, while in the Kenyan English syllabus, Shakespeare remained part and parcel of the so-called Kenyan English curriculum (Sheffield, 1971).

During the post-independence period there was a move towards Africanizing the curriculum (Merryfield & Tlou, 1995). But the results were not impressive. The post-independent regimes followed along the colonial goals and curriculum in education such that the expected norm for the African children was that of the Western cultural precepts (Higgs, 2008; Eshiwani, 1990). For example, there were recommendations to continue vocational education that had been earlier introduced by the colonial government. Sheffield (1973) aptly describes this vocational education as “inferior education designed to keep the African in his place” (p.20). Also, arguments have been made against the alienating impact of the use of English and the emphasis on European literature, which are far removed from indigenous cultures of Kenyan peoples (Ngugi, 1986). As Wanjala (1976) eloquently puts it, the post-independent regime reinforced colonial interests because they “became better planners of vocational training than the colonizer who sought to alienate man from his environment by bringing an education that highlighted worldviews that are too foreign to be of any use” (p.8). It seems that even the post-independence elite continued the colonial legacy to keep the common Kenyans in their place in the farms and to dissuade them from aspiring for higher social.
The government continued to promote English language and became disdainful toward the use of native languages in education, making the curriculum content more European-oriented in language and in content (Ngugi, 1986). Forty years after independence, the colonial impact can still be felt and manifest in the present education system (Wafula, 2006). Wafula notes that post-independent African countries failed to alter the colonial structures and educational systems, thus perpetuating the nefarious colonial legacy. One could say Kenya is an example of how, African governments failed to reconstruct education that is relevant to the immediate problems of the citizens.

Recent research highlights drawbacks in reforms in the education sector in Kenya. Research done by Owinyo (2006) reiterated that; the students are still overburdened by the curriculum that gives them no room for analyzing critical social issues such as HIV/AIDS; there is lack of adequate financial support in planning, implementation and assessment of educational programs as well as in providing teaching and learning materials; and the examination focus in education has continued to further marginalize schools and students especially, those that have less resources and less government funding compared to privately funded schools that are well equipped. One of the goals of education since independence was universal free education for all which has since been implemented. However, even though education has been free in primary and secondary public schools, there is a high influx of students enrolling, with teacher student ratio of about 1:80, while the government has not been able to fully cater for needs of these
numbers, thus affecting quality of education (EYC, 2003; Owinyo, 2006). Some other challenges facing Kenya today are shortage of teachers, inadequate infrastructure, and impact of HIV/AIDS pandemic on teachers and students, large classroom sizes, teacher quality because of inadequate teachers programs (Godia, 2011). Besides increasing opportunities and access to education for all, Godia was hopeful that the 2030 vision will transform education in Kenya and the country to a middle income and industrialized nation, is still complex and unattained.

**Social Studies in Kenya**

During the colonial period, history of the Kenyan people had been ignores and the British history and culture was emphasized in schools (Bogonko, 1992). It was until the Phelp-Stokes commission of 1924 that recommended an African oriented education (Cameron, 1970; Bogonko, 1992; Eshiwani 1993). However, according to Cameron (1970) there was not much change until after independence when Kenyans themselves began to take action to advance their own culture interests and education. Eshiwani (1993) points out that there was resistance from the Kenyans on the 1924 recommendations because the recommendations only emphasized providing skills for development of rural areas to promote agricultural production for the benefit of the colonialists. The recommendation appeared to have ignored the goals of African education. However, after independence the push in most African countries was the Africanization of the curriculum.
Africanization of curriculum denoted employing “instruction that is developed from and is centered on African people’s experiences, thought and environments” (Merryfield and Tlou, 1995, p.260). This description has been advocated for by proponents of Africans indigenous and cultural roots as an education relevant for Black people as it stems from their African roots (Asante, 2003; Dei, 1995). The Africanizing process has been slow as discussed earlier in this literature review, because of the inherent colonial legacies still embedded in the system. However, changes in the curriculum were aimed at incorporating and dealing with the issues African people were raising or facing. Merryfield and Tlou (1995) mentioned those crippling issues as ethnicity, religious conflicts, urbanization, overpopulation, poverty, human rights, leadership and so on.

As such therefore, definitions and goals of social studies in Africa generally and in Kenya in particular had to be redefined, rethought, and reconsidered. Immediately after Kenya’s independence there was an establishment of the Ominde Commission that reported on reforms needed in the Education system (Republic of Kenya, 1964). This commission also reported on individual subject reforms such as history education. The commission suggested a revision of the British oriented history syllabus and books, to a syllabus that connected to the experiences of Kenyans. The commission stated, “the syllabus will need revision, but such revision must now for the most part await further production of suitable texts by African authors, based on research into the history of East
Africa, and history generally, as seen through the African eyes” (p.58). To promote the localization or Africanization of the history syllabus in order for it to be seen from the African perspective the following are some of the steps recommended by the Ominde commission on Education, first a writing of “Kenya’s history instead of the Kings and Queens of England” history (pg. 82). Secondly, it recommended the production of history textbooks by Africans and specifically Kenyan authors. Thirdly, it recommended that school “teach an East African view of history as part of our own effort of nation building” (p.82). Fourthly, that the curriculum should include history in the examinations along with English, math and sciences. These steps were to be achieved through encouraging scholars of African history by providing funds for research and writing.

Years after the Ominde commission reported on the reforms needed, Kenya was facing drawbacks in its implementation of the recommendations. One of the drawbacks was insufficient resources and equipment for teaching. Another commission the Kamunge report of 1988 was instituted and made another report concerning history education. History was combined with geography and civics which now became GHC (Geography history and civics) (Bogonko, 1992). GHC was aimed at “helping the learner to understand himself and his place in his family, community, district, province, nation and international community… developing such values and virtues of patriotism, loyalty, self-reliance, tolerance, co-operation, diligence, honesty, justice, fairness, love, respect of elders, peace and responsibility” (Bogonko,1992, p.121).
Since its inception and replication of social studies in Europe and America, African social studies programs in different countries were based on their “needs, environment and culture” (Salia-Bao, 1990). According to Salia-Bao, social studies education should help:

to develop a capacity to learn and to acquire skills, including not only the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and calculation, but also the skills of hand, together with skills of observation, analysis, and inference which are essential to the forming of sound judgment; to ensure the acquisition of that relevant knowledge as an essential prerequisite to personal development as well as to a positive personal contribution to the betterment of mankind. (p.65)

In examining closely the above goals of social studies education, it is apparent that even though the goals were not explicit, citizenship goals were examined. For example, African Social Studies Program (ASSP) recommended education that provides skills for “forming of sound judgment” and “relevant knowledge which is an essential prerequisite to personal development as well as to a positive personal contribution to the betterment of mankind” (Salia-Bao, 1990, p.65). Scholars in history education have advocated the need for students to be trained to make good decisions, be they personal or political, students who can effectively work with other people and contribute to the local and global contexts in ways that better their society (Sifuna, 2000). Recently, with the introduction of a new constitution in Kenya, there has been a call for a revising of the social studies
curriculum to not only include the new atlases with the new regions and counties but also a revised curriculum that focuses on building citizenship skills (Oduor, 2011).

**Citizenship and Democratic Education in Kenya**

This section examines citizenship goals and perceptions from indigenous perspectives and from post-independence period perspective, as well as what research has described citizenship in Kenya. Pre-independent Kenyan indigenous societies nurtured youth who would be members or subjects of their community. The members were expected to adhere to the concept of “Ubuntu” which basically was described as “I am because we are, because we are I am” (Mbiti, 1969). Ubuntu is closely connected to Kenyatta’s philosophy of Harambee described earlier in this section, which basically means, “let us pull together.” Both concepts of Ubuntu and Harambee connote the importance of collective responsibility as a form of empowering citizens of democracy a core aspect of Kenyan citizenship. Following the Ubuntu concept, “Democratic African socialism was developed in Kenya in the 1960s to train social responsibility which would extend to citizen responsibility, thus developing members of a community and nation (Arnot, Casely-Hayford, Dovie, Chege & Wainaina, 2010).

In 1948 there was a mention of citizenship education in Kenya on a memorandum, entitled “Education for Citizenship” a document that stated that literacy and vocational education was not enough in a rapidly changing world (Sheffield, 1973, p.31). The memorandum was a policy in education that pushed for the development of a
sense of social responsibility and obligation through democratic action. (Sheffield 1973; Husbands, Konyango, & Pinckney, 1996). Even though this policy on education for citizenship was put in place during the colonial education, what was advanced in the classroom was different. In actuality, African education promoted blind obedience to “retain and enhance bureaucratic hierarchical school structure” (Sifuna, 2000, p.221). After independence the goals of education were expected to change to reflect citizenship goals. For example, the Ominde commission of 1964 recommended education to “foster a sense of nationhood and promote national unity” (Owinyo, 2006; Sheffield, 1973, p.16). Later, other commissions recommended reforms that aligned to citizenship skills and goals such as; a need for unifying Kenyans through a common language which was English; and citizenship education that was expected to bring together diverse citizens of Kenya country would promote the teaching of tolerance and respect of other ethnicities, races and religions as a way to avoid conflict among the groups, and develop a sense of patriotism in the youth as citizens of one country, living in harmony and contributing to the developing of the new nation. Nonetheless what was done in schools perpetuated the same colonial mentality, that is students’ blind obedience to authority of teachers, parents and government. Sifuna alludes that such a mentality distorted the real purpose of citizenship which transformed its meaning to be defined in the context of the students duties and obligations and not their social rights (Sifuna, 2000). This study revealed similar sentiments whereby schools were more teacher-centered and students remain
passive learners. Also the curriculum is geared towards exam oriented and rewarding results and not much in knowledge and skills orientation. There is need to deviate from an exam-oriented curriculum which from producing puppets who memorize facts and reproduce factual knowledge but instead reconsider a curriculum that honors and respects the critical thinking development of active democratic learners.

In the 1970s the education ministry in Kenya made some changes towards citizenship goals. The ministry introduced reforms that would cater for the lack of moral and ethical values in the curriculum (Arnot, et al., 2010). These authors noted that Social Education and Ethics (SEE) was established as a way of dealing with “anti-social behavior” and contribute to social justice education within the new 8-4-4 curriculum under the McKay report of 1981. Another commission on 1999 called the Koech commission was also set up to look into citizenship education for the purposes of promoting patriotism and nationalism (GOK, 1999). This commission encouraged the teaching of patriotism and nationalism in an attempt to fight against ethnocentricism as well as to lay emphasis on civic virtues (Arnot, et al., 2010). SEE promoted values and ethics that would holistically develop students of good behavior and as collective members of the entire society. However, later according to a study done on youth’s perception of citizenship education, the results established that the students had a narrow view of citizenship. The students were aware of citizenship content, that is their citizenship rights, birth rights, voting rights, but were powerless when it came to fighting
for their rights (Wawire, et al., 2009). Most probably, citizenship learning focused on factual knowledge and not participatory learning methods thus citizenship content did not help students to be active democratic citizens thus indicating that the active participatory angle of citizenship was missing.

Other research done in Kenya on teachers also revealed other conceptions of democratic citizenship education. Kubow (2007) conducted a research in Kenya on teachers’ constructions of democracy. She stated that constructions of democracy in Kenya “is an activity of the mind” (p.323). To explicate further, Kubow declares about the Kenyan conception of citizenship as “democratic citizenship was achieved when the individual transcended ethnic affiliation and local setting for the higher calling of the public square” (p.310). It seems here that ethnic affiliation was a critical aspect of the notion of citizenship, however, the way democracy and citizenship principles were perceived as pertinent in transcending identity and ethnic affiliations. From Kubow’s analysis on democratic citizenship in Kenya, conceptions of good citizenship need to surpass ethnic affiliations and embrace a national citizenry. However, her statements do not imply a doing away with the local cultures but rather not letting ethnic affiliations crowd Kenyan’s appreciation of their being Kenyans.

Citizenship education in Kenya was also theoretically geared towards infusing global education. The Kenya institute of Education (KIE) syllabus for history and government for form one-four, (2003) and the goals of education all promote
international consciousness as part of the international community and a sense of belonging and responsibility as a member of the international community. The syllabus also indicated a lot of content about the world from agriculture, democracy to constitution in other parts of the world. However this content was precisely factual knowledge as well. It did not incorporate skills required in preparing students to actively participate in the international community.

Some of the proposals for citizenship education for Kenya are first citizenship education should be geared more towards appreciation of the pluralistic society through democratic learning skills to avoid past experiences of conflicts and build peaceful futures. Put it in other words, there needs to be a push towards active democratic global citizenship through incorporation of more citizenship content that goes beyond knowledge for knowledge sakes to participatory skills. Secondly, Sifuna (2000) proposes that for democracy to flourish there needs to be politically informed and active citizens who participate in the processes of their society and government. With these suggestions, it is apparent that informed and involved citizens are the core of strong democratic governments. Consequently, Kenya need to reform its citizenship education to cater for the above proposals for its education to be meaningful to its students and future citizens.

Controversial Issues in Social Studies

Controversial Issues in the US Social Studies Classrooms
This section looks at the conceptualization of controversial issues as well as some of the topics deemed controversial in the US. I first begin by the conceptualization of controversial issues. In the earlier years John Dewey (1916) critiqued traditional education that encouraged students’ passivity. Rather, he proposed an experiential kind of learning where the learner is an enquirer and at the center of learning while the teacher becomes a facilitator. Dewey stated that democracy is a “conjoint communicated experience” (p.87). Dewey in this context demands that discussions should be made up of sound arguments that contribute to critical thinking skills. In such a context then use of controversial issues in a classrooms was seen to allow students to deliberate on controversial issues with the purpose of giving sound arguments and development of their critical thinking abilities.

Controversial issues have continued to be a critical topic of discussion in the US social studies curriculum reforms process. Scholars in the social studies filed have extended Dewey’s (1916) vision by showing the importance of including controversial issues as part of the social studies curriculum even when little was known about its effectiveness (Engle and Ochoa 1988; Evans and Saxe, 1996). Social studies researchers in the US agree to the need for controversial issues teaching and development of democratic citizenship education (Grimberg, 2010; Hess, 2010; Graseck 2009; Ochoa-Becker, 2007). Controversial issues have been conceptualized as “hot-button” issues (Graseck, 2009). Oxfam (2006) states: “issues that are likely to be sensitive or
controversial are those that have a political, social or personal impact and arouse feeling
and or deal with questions of value or belief (p.2). This definition captures the extent of
what controversial issues means. To further explicate Oulton, Dillon & Grace (2004) give
a detailed description of controversial issues. They state:

By controversial we mean that significant numbers of people argue about them
without reaching a conclusion. The argument often focuses on what should be
done about an issue but is usually underpinned by differences in key beliefs or
understandings about the issue held by the protagonists. The basis of controversy
may stem from differences in one or more of the following factors: religious
beliefs, such as abortion; cultural differences, such as links between ‘race’ and
intelligence; and moral issues, such as genetic engineering. (p.411)

Both definitions denote the nature of controversial issues as it affects and is affected by a
broad array of issues. Because of our lived experiences, historical cultural backgrounds
and the “official knowledge” taught in schools, there is bound to be controversy,
stemming from the different ways we know and interpret issues. Oulton et al., observe
that our epistemologies and ways of knowing influence how we interpret events and
issues in the world. Therefore, teachers and students find themselves in complex
situations trying to explain the events and interpret them. For example, Graseck (2009)
brings up the issue of immigration as an example of a hot-button issue, in her classroom.
She notes that the issue of multiple identities emerge, such as when a student from an
Asian background would say: I am American and I am Chinese also, while another student considering his roots as an Irish ascendancy explains that I am American too but Irish as well. Therefore such a topic can elicit uproar in classrooms in an attempt to understand relevant issues related to the student identities. Another example is in England where the debate was on the moral behind slaughtering and burning of animals infected by the foot and mouth disease because of their infectious nature (Oulton et al., 2004). These two examples reveal that the range of topics that may arise in classrooms are diverse and they include local and global aspects such as war, world cultures, world trade, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and the list is endless.

In as much as researchers encourage controversial issues (CIs) teaching for democratic education, the reality in schools is different. First, this study revealed that some teachers do avoid engaging in CIs and when the issue is touchy they brush through it. Some reasons for avoidance are described by Hess (2005) as denial (teachers deny the controversy behind the issue and see the issue as closed and with a right answer to it), privilege (assume there is a right answer on the issue and privileges that right position), avoidance (because of the uproar an issue would bring or because the teacher feels strongly about the issue and cannot be able to provide a different perspective from theirs) and lastly, balance (wanting to provide a balanced perspective when an issue is not controversial enough) have been found to be reasons for not teaching controversial topics (p. 48). Secondly, the textbooks have also not been left out of criticism. Stoddard and
Marcus (2009) have criticized social studies texts for avoiding controversial issues, leaving teachers to search for their own resources. For a teacher who hardly has ample time to search for materials, it may pose a challenge to teach certain topics where materials are hard to locate and many may despair and avoid teaching the issue altogether.

Examples of controversial topics emerging in this study were numerous. Some were issues of racism and abortion. Discussions on race and racism mostly came about when discussing other issues, such as slavery because of the foundations of race in the country, and given the diversity in the classrooms in the two regions of research, it was important to analyze the two issues mostly because they are fueled by the media. On the other hand, abortion has been a hot-button issue in the society pushing some teachers to avoid discussing it (Hess, 2005). The controversy behind abortion was the legalization of abortion through the Supreme Court case Roe v Wade case which legalized abortion as a woman’s right. Similarly the teaching of HIV/AIDS and sex education are still hot button issues that were previously in the curriculum but now removed from the curriculum in the mid-West schools analyzed because of its controversy, yet they are critical issues and HIV/AIDS is a fast growing pandemic in the US (CNN News, 1/14/2011). Another controversial issue was the teaching of Africa. The resources used in social studies classrooms in many cases have promoted an imperial view of Africa that is filled with
misconceptions leading scholars to call for a reconsideration of content about Africa (Willinsky, 1998).

To approach the above hot-topics and others in the curriculum or emerging issues, some of the social studies scholars have proposed a critical lens of inquiry to provide divergent viewpoints on the issues and the need to eliminate biases. Merryfield & Wilson (2005) suggest that teachers need to be balanced when tackling controversial issues so that students learn from multiple perspectives. Similarly controversial issues should include “relevant and valid factual information must be drawn from the broadest possible base of knowledge and should not be confined to the comparatively narrow perspective offered by single social science disciplines. Seeking the broadest base of knowledge makes the search interdisciplinary” (Ochoa-Becker, 2007, p.163). As a result, Levine (2010) aptly states that when controversial issues are utilized in the classrooms students are trained to have skills and confidence to participate as citizens in a democracy, and as Ochoa-Becker (2007) believe it contributes to students having positive attitudes about their present and future as citizens of the world.

**Controversial issues in social studies classrooms in Kenya**

Controversial issues are defined as “discussions which involve two opposing parties with each group expressing opinions or views about a given topic or subject” (Republic of Kenya, 2008, p.31). Sifuna (2000) describes a controversial issue as an issue “where there is alternative viewpoints, contradictory arguments and values (p.231).
However, Sifuna is critical of the curriculum in Kenya because of its discussing of issues from a narrow one-sided perspective. In other words, the idea of controversial issues teaching is based on teaching for factual knowledge and not for critical thinking. However, this study found that the Ministry of Education has included some controversial topics in the curriculum without naming them controversial.

Nonetheless, very little or nothing has been written on pedagogical instruction on democratic learning where controversial issues teaching lies. Little research has been done to examine the pedagogical approach of using controversial issues as a path towards citizenship education. Rather the emphasis on merely on discussions of particular controversial issues research and analysis such as on HIV/AIDS, gender, human rights (Kiragu, 2007; Owinyo, 2006). It should be pointed out that controversial issues only arise as issues that are controversial in the society or in political sphere or in the curriculum. Some of these issues such HIV/AIDS have been infused into the curriculum and classroom discussions as sub-topics or part of other topics and not as a complete standalone unit. HIV/AIDS was infused in the curriculum in Kenya mainly due to the government’s initiative to decrease the spread of the disease (Kiragu, 2007). Another hot-button issue in the curriculum is the constitution. To explicate the nature of the controversy of the constitution, I will borrow from a number of new paper reports from Kenya, which indicated that in August 4, 2010, Kenyans voted for a new constitution. The controversy was that there were two warring factions: one for the constitution and
another against the new constitution. The third president of Kenya since Independence, Mwai Kibaki and his prime minister, Raila Odinga routed for the new constitution with support from the international community, including United States which sought to decentralize democracy in the country and give less power to the president as a means of holding autocracy in check. On the other hand some leaders of the religious community and members of parliament were against it because they deemed some controversial clauses such as abortion, land issues, sexuality rights and so on as problematic (Kenyan Constitution, 2010). In the social studies classrooms the constitution was a major issue debated upon especially on the clauses the students or teachers deemed problematic.

Ethnicity identity and identification was another controversial issue in Kenya. Owinyo (2006) states that ethnicity was a major cause of violence in schools and in the society. She gives the examples of schools who refused to enroll students from neighboring ethnic communities because they are viewed as “Other” or where school administrations favored teachers from the region having positions of authority in the school even when non-native teachers are equally or more qualified to receive those positions. In Kenya, the peak of ethnic animosity was seen in the aftermath of 2007 election violence. The election violence was sparked by ethnic animosity because different ethnic groups ganged up against supporters and leaders of the other parties. The groups consisted of supporters of the political party Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) affiliated with the then elected president Raila Odinga (who later settled for the
position of first prime minister after the conflict) warred against supporters of the political Party of National Unity (PNU), affiliated with the then outgoing president who had then been sworn in as president (ICC, 2010). The outcome was ethnically instigated post election violence resulted in the death of 1,300 people, 3500 being injured, and several thousands being displaced (ICC, 2010).

Sexuality had been a controversial issue in Kenya as well. Research done by Kiragu (2007) revealed that sexuality education is a topic that teachers are “disoriented and embarrassed” about it in classroom conversations (p.5). She further adds that discourse on sex is devoid of vocabulary, treated vaguely or even silenced. The reason Kiragu gives for the silence is that teachers are not trained to teach the subject, there are no guidelines from the Ministry of Education, and sex education is not a subject in the national curriculum. Attempts to include sexuality education in HIV/AIDS life skills have been made but still the Ministry has not done enough to prepare teachers and to include it as a pertinent issue in the curriculum, neither has parents and the church been cooperative in promotion of the issue. Therefore, Kiragu’s recommendation for teachers to be “more responsive to dealing with sexuality issues in schools” seems appropriate (p.14). Another instance was the banning of Chinua Achebe’s satirical literary text, A Man of the People (1966) from high schools reading list on assertion that it contains sexual content and information. In most of these cases mentioned here, the political interests and authorized political ideology about the issues at hand pervades and overrides any other decisions.
made by the teachers, or the community members. Therefore, an examination of teacher’s perceptions and how they negotiate political ideology to teach controversial issue is necessary, a project that this study undertakes in the next chapter.

Gender was another controversial topic. In Kenya, women rights such as the right to education, to vote and equitable opportunities for girls are pertinent issues given the heteropatriachal systems that have denied women their rights. Some of the male-centric ideologies in the society state that education is “training boys to be aggressive and girls to be tender and submissive” (Owinyo, 2007, p.145). As a result, African feminists have been at the forefront in fighting for women’s rights and educating girls to fight for their rights to education and equitable resources (UNESCO, 2006). The issue of women’s rights raises controversy because, the patriarchal institutions that govern and produce curriculum are not ready to promote women’s rights rather want to promote male hegemonic practices so as to maintain control. Issues of equity can be seen in the representation of women in the curriculum and in textbooks in the classrooms. An analysis of textbooks revealed less than one percent of women featured and if women are featured most are given inferior roles such as farmers.

The purpose of teaching the controversial issues was to provide deliberations of the issues and not avoidance of the controversy (Sifuna, 2000). One of the reasons that lead to avoidance as Sifuna concludes, are teachers who are ill equipped to teach these controversial issues, opting to teach for information and “political conformity.”
Therefore teachers totally avoid the liberal approach that considers other positions on the issue. (Some other reasons are described in chapter 3 from the finding of the study.) Such an education defeats the purpose of citizenship training, which encourages tolerance of other people, their culture, and language, and not intolerance and violence.

To deal with controversial issues in the country, recently the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), the curriculum developer organization in the Ministry of Education has introduced, a life skills curriculum. The new curriculum incorporates approaches to teaching social issues, which mostly are controversial issues. The life skills curriculum states that skills in literacy and numeracy are not enough to deal with other critical social issues therefore pushing for the introduction of Life Skills-Based Education (LSBE) “as a means to empower young people in challenging situations” such as “HIV/AIDS prevention; Health Education; Human Rights and Social Issues; and Violence Prevention, Peace Building and Education for Development” (UNESCO, 2006).

**Controversial Issues Pedagogical Approaches**

The development of democratic practices has been advanced through teaching of controversial issues. Scholars in the field of critical pedagogy have also advanced controversial issues teaching as pertinent for the development of democratic teaching and learning practices. For example, Giroux and Giroux (2008) state that, “education is a crucial sphere for creating citizens equipped to exercise their freedoms and competent to question the basic assumptions that govern democratic political life” (p.182). With these
said, controversial issues pedagogy should aim at equipping students to participate in a
democratic society not as blind participants, but as active participants who have the
freedom to question government practices.

There are several rationales for utilizing a controversial issues pedagogy. However, this section will analyze only three of the rationales that seem more meaningful to the study. The three approaches discussed are, namely the development of critical thinking skills, creation of multiple perspectives and value training for effective citizenship.

**Development of Critical Thinking Skills**

This section argues for the teaching of controversial issues as pertinent in developing critical thinking skills in students. Scholars have found that using critical thinking skills has positive effects in developing reflective thinkers and good decision makers (Freire, 2000; Giroux, 2004; Parker, 2004; Wolk, 2003). The need for empowering students to think critically is what introduced critical theory and pedagogy. Before discussing what scholars have contributed towards strategies in critical pedagogy and critical literacy, it is important to first examine the meanings of critical pedagogy. Commenting on the concept of critical pedagogy, Freire (1998) stipulates that it abandons what he terms as “banking concept” in education” of “teacher narration sickness,” which “inhibits creativity.” In other words, students do not have the freedom to think for themselves as critical thinkers (p.79). What Freire is illustrating here is the heavy reliance
on teacher-centered syndrome in instruction. He suggested that students be taught to critically think on issues so as to make skillful decisions that help them become active participants in the community.

Critical pedagogical practices lead to critical literacy. Wolk (2003) states that critical literacy “means that an important purpose of the classroom experience is to have students engage in a critique of society, the world, and ourselves (students and teachers),” a practice that can enrich students experiences and knowledge (p.102). In a similar vein, Subedi (2008) states that teachers need to encourage critical dialogues in the classrooms to develop students with critical thinking abilities. Such dialogues can be through deliberative classroom discussions, which are described as “a dialogue-across-difference under conditions where difference is regarded not as a problem to be tolerated but as a key advantage to finding the most workable and just solution” (Parker, 2004, p. 452). This means leading students to critically think on alternative perspectives of an issue.

In sum then critical thinking appears to be an overarching skill for both the pedagogy and literacy concepts. The importance of critical thinking skills cannot be underestimated, scholars in the field have noted that critical thinking methods of teaching such as deliberations comparative analyses, literary criticism, problem solving, prejudice reduction, problem-solving and self-reflection empower students to “translate new knowledge values, and skills into action” that are necessary tools for their own transformation and that of the society (Gay, 1995, p.179; Parker, 2004). Consequently,
McLaren (1995) asserts that critical thinking and pedagogy will in addition to developing knowledge, also help students to critically challenge forms of knowledge and “power relations” in an attempt to confront and engage in the world more positively (p.7).

Research tends to raise the caveat that critical thinking skills should not be an “add-on” to the curriculum but “an integral part of the learning content of the social studies” (Wright, 2002, p. 261). For example, Dei (2006) proposes a set of questions that introduce critical thinking skills as well as utilize a critical anti-racist lens when scrutinizing the films. These include questions such as: What representations speak to the material existence and everyday exigencies of racialized and marginalized subjects and communities? Whose interests are being served with such cinematic productions? How are social stereotypes being reproduced to absolve responsibility? Whose articulations are taken up and produced as legitimate and valid conceptualization and enunciations of racisms? (p.17). These questions inform the teacher’s thinking, help eliminate the “cultural and political baggage” that teachers and students bring to the classrooms from the media and their society (Giroux, 2004, p. 38).

Additionally, in dealing with texts, teachers can make use of Wolk’s (2003) strategy by connecting critical thinking to students’ everyday lives. This can be done through utilizing questions such as: Have the students been victims of prejudice or the abuse of power? How do they see and treat people who are different from them? In what ways has their culture been oppressed in the past and the present? What other forms of
prejudice do we see in the world today? What can we do, individually and collectively, to reduce or end prejudice? These questions will draw out students thinking to better help them understand differences as well as embrace differences. Students undergo many forms of discrimination in their life by virtue if their sex, weight, illnesses, beauty, wealth, etc. therefore using the above questions will lead them to perceive how other people can be misrepresented or prejudiced because of being different. Wolk reiterates that probing questions will lead students to “learn to form their own opinions on social and political issues, become more knowledgeable about the content being discussed, develop empathy and compassion, understand the symbiotic relationship between discussion and democracy, and hear pollution, environmental destruction, and health problems” (p.104).

McLaughlin & DeVoogd (2004) suggest asking questions such as: Whose viewpoint is expressed? What does the author want as to think? Whose viewpoints are missing, silenced or discounted? How might alternative perspectives be represented and/or found? How would alternative perspectives contribute to your understanding of the text? What action might you take on the basis of what you have learned? (See Pescatore, 2007, p. 329). These are profound and powerful questions that require students to use thinking faculties and skills and are fundamental tools when interrogating any literature or film that may contain stereotypical information. Simply put, educators just as students need to “cast a critical eye on those forms of knowledge” (Giroux, 2004, p. 37). If the
above questions are culled into teaching they can aid learning critical thinking skills. On the same note, Merryfield (1998) rightly insists on teachers “commitment to teaching students higher level thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation)” a significant aspect that controversial issues promotes. Therefore there is not a doubt that research has proved that controversial issues pedagogy is a pathway to development of critical thinking skills.

**Creation of multiple perspectives**

Scholars in the global education field have reiterated over and over again the importance of multiple perspectives in teaching social studies (Kirkwood, 2003; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005; Ukpokodu, 2005). Multiple perspectives is similar to and advances Hanvey’s (1976) dimension on “perspective consciousness” that encourages one to consider different world views because their own views are not universally shared and are solely their views. Indeed, multiple perspectives and perspective consciousness can be realized when “students learn to look at past or present events and issues through the cultural lenses of other people and explore the diversity of perspectives that exist within societies” (Merryfield &Wilson, 2005). Also, multiple perspectives allow room for different worldviews and different or varied perspectives. It enables students to understand and examine the different problematic standpoints that can be influenced by different interpretations based on positions of power. In teaching using multiple perspectives, several ideas have been proposed for incorporation of multiple perspectives.
Merryfield & Wilson (2005) suggest three approaches to teaching, namely; first, connecting global content to student’s lives; secondly, helping students to make connections across time and space; and lastly teaching them about interconnectedness of global and the local inequities. In general these scholars recommend that learners table their worldviews and then compare these personal worldviews with those of other cultures in the world across time and space. Concerning classroom practice, Ukpokodu (2003) laments, that pre-service teachers view integration of multiple perspectives in their classrooms as “complex, insurmountable, fixed and adult concerns and beyond the understanding of young children” (p.78). With such a view, then, Ukpokodu states that incorporating global controversial issues such as terrorism might be ignored in classroom discussions because the teacher may view it as an issue beyond the students’ comprehension. Yet, such issues are paramount to the understanding of diverse views and perspectives on terrorism. However, this does not indicate the futility of the endeavor because there are exemplary teachers using multiple perspectives in their classrooms. Research by Bleicher &Tucker (2004) provide an example on using multiple perspectives as a way to understand units on “air and water pollutions in Romania” by considering perspectives from neighboring countries and the consequences of the pollution on their health or to understand about Vietnam War students considered views from “American forces, Vietnamese military and South East Asian civilians” (p.121). At the end of the
exercise the students will be able to get different views from the different people impacted by the pollution or the war.

In promoting multiple perspectives teachers’ practices are an integral part. Use of lower to higher level thinking questions can be a good approach towards developing multiple perspectives. One instructional method is use of probing questions that require thoughtful answers from students. To illustrate, when discussing the issue of the American war in Iraq, Kirkwood (2003) proposes use of questions grounded in multiple perspectives to elicit different views such as: what viewpoints do other nations hold regarding the going to Iraq for the purposes of the weapons inspections and the continued American invasion of Iraq? These questions open avenues for discussions and dialogues about differing views about the war in Iraq. In the end it is hoped that students will be more informed about that war and make better conclusions regarding the war in Iraq.

Similarly, controversial issues should provide “relevant and valid factual information must be drawn from the broadest possible base of knowledge and should not be confined to the comparatively narrow perspective offered by single social science disciplines (Ochoa-Becker, 2007, p.163). It appears that not only should multiple perspectives focus on one single discipline but the broadest possible base of knowledge including both local and global knowledge base. Other classroom practices suggested for controversial issues teaching in the classrooms are role-plays and simulations because when students take up a role it enhances their understanding of the issue and alter their worldviews as they play
different roles (Oulton et al., 2004). Similarly uses of participatory teaching and learning methodologies, discussion debate, role-play, and enquiry have been said to promote multiple local and global perspectives (Oxfam, 2006).

**Values training for effective citizenship**

Apart from developing critical thinking skills and an understanding of multiple perspectives, controversial issues discussions has also been associated with development of values and attitudes necessary for developing good citizens. Chikoko et al. (2011) states that, controversial issues instruction prepares students to “posses a proclivity to reason, open-mindedness and fairness and the practice of cooperation, bargaining, compromise and accommodation” (p.6). This statement indicates that values training ensures that students will be prepared to reason with an open mind, respecting other people’s opinions, compromising and accommodating other opinions and differences. Also, controversial issues are said to explore values and develop skills to enable students’ debate on local and wider global issues by weighing different opinions, participate peacefully in arguments, and resolve conflicts (Oxfam, 2006). In this case then with the development of values and attitudes that encourage respect, compassion and accommodation of other peoples opinions, Byford, et.al. (2009) asserts that controversial issues discussion is important in solving issues of national security and conflicts. More importantly, controversial issues prepares students to engage reflectively in social issues as well as participate in transformative practices for social change (Grimberg, 2011).
Therefore, from the above scholars in social studies field it is apparent that controversial issues discussions are the pertinent to development of critical thinking multiple perspectives and values and attitudes for effective citizenship and thus a step towards fulfilling the goals of social studies and citizenship education.

**Understanding Teachers Epistemology**

Teachers’ epistemology can be defined as teachers’ way of knowing and doing things. These ways of knowing first occur as thought processes or cognition, which then result to action (Fang, 1996). This section presents research that argues that teachers’ epistemological beliefs are significant in charting out pedagogical practices. Thus epistemology helps us understand how teachers know what they know. This section discusses the formation of teachers’ epistemologies, why their epistemological know how is pertinent to teacher practices, how the epistemologies are impacted through time and the challenges facing teacher beliefs.

Pajares (1992) opines that teacher beliefs are formed through enculturation and social construction of knowledge. Pajares perceives teachers’ epistemologies as informed by their culture, traditions, values and lived experiences. Pajares seems to imply that teacher beliefs are shaped by the society and the environment to which they belong, or live. He further notes that development of these beliefs follows a process and a sequence of events and practices. Apart from worldviews and culture, Fang (1996) elucidates that teacher epistemologies are also informed by among other things the subject matter or
content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and curricular knowledge. Therefore it appears that epistemologies are shaped by an amalgamation of different aspects in the teachers’ worldview and experiences.

An examination of teacher’s epistemologies is crucial in shedding light to their practices. Nespor (1987) asserts that teachers’ epistemological beliefs have the affective and evaluative aspects that are crucial in defining classroom practices and learner activities. Oguz (2011) further adds that epistemological beliefs affect the choices and decisions that teachers make in their classrooms, their students epistemological beliefs, and can predict students’ comprehension and influence instruction in the classroom. Thus, if teachers’ beliefs impacted their practices, then it is important to investigate what has informed their way of knowing. Also teachers’ beliefs demand investigation because less attention has been given to teacher’s epistemology. Instead emphasis has been on how teacher practices affect students’ achievement and not how teachers thought processes affect teaching and ultimately students’ performances.

Teacher beliefs have been impacted by time and space. As teachers experience different events in their society and in the world, or as they move through time and space, their beliefs change and are replaced by other relevant, experiences (Nespor, 1987). These changes and successive acquisition of new beliefs therefore introduces new dimensions and challenges which are sometimes a “messy construct” and may demand sorting out one’s beliefs to make a distinction between the beliefs, or to narrow down
between general teachers’ beliefs and the educational beliefs on teaching and learning (Pajares, 1992). However, even with the separation of beliefs there may be a narrow line explaining what beliefs have influenced a teacher’s pedagogical practice. Another challenge described by Fang (1996) is determining how teachers’ beliefs translate to effective pedagogical practices. Fang notes that there is bound to be inconsistencies between teacher beliefs and their practices because of contextual constraints. These constraints may be personal, peer, parents, administrators, society, or curriculum among other things that may hinder effective practices.

**Controversial issues and Teacher’s Epistemological Influences**

This section was built on the premise that “teachers’ views inform their teaching” (Hess, 2010, p.226). Said differently, teachers’ “attitudes function psychologically as powerful screens or lenses. They influence which knowledge is noticed, sought, and developed. If one does not appreciate perspectives different from one’s own or not open-minded to information that contradicts deeply held values (Don’t bother me with the facts; I’ve already made up my mind), then there is little chance that information about different cultures or knowledge of arguments contrary to one’s position on global issues will be seriously pursued or developed” (Parker, Glenn, Mizoue, Meriwether & Gardener, 1997, p.192). These affirmations denote that the teachers’ worldviews, their attitudes, and their knowledge is the lens which informs their teaching of controversial issues. In other words, teachers epistemology impacts constructively or negatively the process of
teaching and students performances or evaluations. The following discussion discusses how controversial issues may be impacted by the teachers’ epistemology.

First, teacher attitudes may be influenced by what Byford, et al. (2009) refer to as, “teachers’ are uncomfortable teaching controversial issues” (p.166). As seen earlier in the case of Kenya and sexuality education, many teachers decide to be silent on the issue because they are embarrassed even to use some of the vocabulary involved in sexuality issues. In the US I mentioned earlier, Hess (2005) observation on why teachers are uncomfortable teaching controversial issues. She mentions four aspects of avoidance, denial, privilege, and balance, aspects that were discussed earlier in this work which may influence their teaching of the issue at hand.

Secondly, awareness of our perceptive understanding is significant in the way we teach. Case (1993) explains that one needs to have an open-mind, anticipate complexities, resist stereotypes and empathize and maintain a non-chauvinistic perception. Case believes that these aspects will enhance the development of proper thinking and therefore culminate to effective controversial issues pedagogy. In the same vein, Merryfield & Wilson (2005), denote that there is need for embracing multiple perspectives and perceptions and incorporate different views from different cultures and the world. Merryfield and Wilson assert that perceptual understanding includes complexity of thinking, avoidance of stereotyping, promotion of empathy and reflective thinking. Since pedagogy cannot be excluded from the teacher’s perceptual
understanding, these explanations reveal the significance of investigating teacher perceptions and understanding as it affects pedagogical practices.

Thirdly, teachers need to recognize the precepts of the “hidden curriculum.” The pressure of teaching the hidden curriculum or publicly authorized ideology most often takes center stage. As a result teachers’ views are blurred to the real ideology on issues. Bell, Washington, Weistein & Love (2003) teachers will need to examine their own knowledge, social identities, biases, fears, and prejudices as well as “ be willing to examine and deal honestly with our values, and self-awareness that we believe are desirable qualities in any teacher become crucial in social justice education” (p.464). Self-scrutiny for biases and troubling our beliefs and worldview can aid us to make appropriate decisions when teaching controversial issues. Self-scrutiny will include examining aspects like teachers’ political views that impact teaching of controversial issues (Hess, 2005).

Lastly, as Freire (1970) has reiterated that the “banking” concept of education where the teacher deposits information upon students may affect the way they teach controversial issues. The “official knowledge” that is presented in the curriculum may promotes canonical knowledge, which means that depositing such information may imply missing the purposes of citizenship education and forward mainstream cannon (Apple, 1996). Therefore, an interrogation of teachers epistemology beliefs are pertinent in
negotiating how controversial issues will be taught to accomplish the purposes of citizenship education.

Conclusion

This literature review has comprehensively presented the scope and depth of literature in the research study. I have examined the post-colonial and critical theoretical frameworks that inform the study; explicated the foundations of controversial issues within the democratic and global citizenship education; I have described the structure and development of education, social studies and citizenship education in particular, in the US and in Kenya; and finally, I have examined the underlying conceptual discussions influencing controversial issues discussion and pedagogical practices such as teachers epistemologies. This literature review has revealed without a doubt that social studies scholars perceive the significance of incorporating local and global controversial issues in social studies classrooms as a way to develop active democratic citizens and also a space for constructing new democratic spaces while engaging in social change both in the local and global arenas. The next chapter will discuss how this research proceeded.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study set out to investigate teacher perceptions and construction of ideas about controversial issues and how the teachers’ ideology impacted their pedagogical know how and practices. There are a number of reasons for my adoption of a decolonizing methodological framework. First, such methodology often seeks to understand the participants’ experiences, their ways of knowing, and practices in the research regions (Smith, 1999). In other words, to understand controversial issues teaching and teacher epistemological beliefs, a decolonizing framework was needed to shed light on participants’ worldviews, and actions. Secondly, given the educational contexts in the research regions and the effects of colonization and imperialism, a decolonizing research framework helped me to continuously interrogate of “hegemonic power structures” that advance marginality of local knowledges and cultures (Swadener and Mutua, 2008, p.33). Lastly, I approached this decolonizing research framework from an endarkened feminist epistemology that sees research as a “responsibility, answerable and obligated to the very persons and communities being engaged in the inquiry” (Dillard, 2008, p.280). Therefore, if research is a responsibility it implies that that intentions of this research study are to open conversations between the communities engaged in the inquiry as well as making
visible those conversations. I was preoccupied with the following research questions in this study: 1) How do teachers construct and interpret the idea of controversial issues? 2) How do teachers teach about controversial issues? 3. How do teachers’ ideas or situatedness impact or complicate their teaching local/global controversial issues? These questions were examined through a discussion of a decolonizing research framework.

**A Decolonizing research framework**

I framed this study within Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s idea of decolonizing methodologies. I approach the research from a non-Western perspective or from what may be termed as a peripheral space in an attempt to explain how decolonizing research speaks to the experiences of the marginalized. I intend to take this research journey through an analysis of some specific questions that guided my thinking such as: “How do we, in a decolonizing framework, know the world? What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?” (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008, p.22) or “whose knowledge has been extended by research?” (Smith, 1999, p.164). Throughout the study the above questions enlightened the process, while at the same time guided my thoughts about my place and position in the study enabling the pursuit a decolonizing research methodology. As noted in the earlier chapters, Kenya has suffered through imperial and colonial experience necessitating a research framework that disrupts and troubles the colonial and imperial narratives of Kenya, as well visibilize the marginalized experience of Kenyans from a non-Western lens. Equally important was a decolonizing framework that makes
sense of the experiences of teachers in the United States. While engaging in the teaching of controversial issues the participants in the US were enacting decolonizing practices. First, the teachers engaged in teaching approaches that disrupt the mainstream views and knowledges. Denzin et al (2008) reiterate that a decolonizing framework is “one version of a critical theory paradigm” that is, it emerges from similar positions of marginalized and its methodological approaches work to decolonize research (p.22). Thus, the following section describes how a decolonizing framework and methodology fittingly describes the lens through which I set out to conduct this study.

The tenets of decolonizing research that guide this work are drawn from conceptual framework of Denzin et.al (2008) which essentially:

i) “focuses on the best means of acquiring and interpreting knowledge about the world…values ethical systems embedded in indigenous values” (Denzin et.al 2008).

ii) Sees decolonizing ethics as implying a moral ethical stance between the one engaging research and the community with whom the research is done.

iii) Seeks to initiate “conversations between the “north” and the “south,” that is, the so called developed and developing societies” (Kinetcheloe & Steinberg, 2008).

iv) Seeks collaboration between the researcher and the marginalized peoples, also referred to as the insider/outsider collaboration” (Mutua and Swadener, 2008)

v) Commits to a prolonged research engagement with the research community to greatly understand their way of life and actions.
vi) Has the ability to speak the language of the locals and to understand indigenous ways of knowing and communicating,

vii) Shares findings with the community as well as publishing with those with whom we engage research.

viii) Sustains contacts with members of the community.

**Nature of qualitative Inquiry**

Decolonizing research practices are grounded in “culturally responsive research practices” which seeks to make known knowledges of marginalized communities (Denzin, et.al, 2008, p.6). Therefore, such a methodology brings to the fore practices of the marginalized and deconstructs the imperialist notions that have for centuries described those on the periphery. Qualitative research design is one such methodology that seeks to give voice to the subaltern and explain their ways of knowing and acting to liberate themselves from western research frameworks. These Western frameworks have explained the indigenist in popular anthropological ways that deem the indigenist inferior and their ways of knowing as uncivilized. Utilizing a qualitative inquiry allows for the collection of in-depth data that is useful and meaningful when explaining the experiences of the teacher participants in this study as opposed to the quantitative inquiry that engages itself with numbers and figures that do not really speak to people’s ways of knowing. Qualitative inquiry was the best methodological design in this study because it “focuses on the best means of acquiring and interpreting knowledge about the world” be it peoples
cultures, customs or traditions (Denzin, et. al, 2008. p.22). Thus as I engaged this qualitative study, through paradigms derived from subjugated ways of knowing, it made it possible to understand the world views of subjugated peoples.

Swadenner & Mutua (2008) posit that “decolonizing research extends to conducting research, not exclusively in contexts where the geopolitical experience of colonization happened, but indeed among groups where colonizing research approaches are deployed” (p.35). This statement implies that decolonizing research cannot only be restricted to regions where colonialism or imperialism was a force but can also be extended to areas where colonizing research is employed. Thus the decolonizing methodology fittingly can explain the experiences of participants in the US who attempt to critically decolonize the minds of students from the Eurocentric or imperialist legacies (Willinsky, 1998). To be able to speak to the epistemologies of the oppressed, Dillard (2008) in her notion of an endarkened feminist epistemology, asserts the need for “understanding deeply the humanity of those with whom we engage in the research endeavor” (p.287). Dillard holds the view that qualitative inquiry should be guided by seeing the other person or participant as equally human as we are, and not perceiving them as the other, “the researched” but honoring their place, their humanity and seeing them as collaborators in our research. Approaching qualitative research from such a context means resisting and dismantling the popular Western practices of seeing the
researcher as superior but rather the researcher as a participant in the research community and ready to learn from their valued knowledges.

In order to realize the objectives of a qualitative research design, grounded theory methodology was utilized to analyze data. Grounded theory was relevant and fitting in this study because theory is generated from the data and not vice versa (Creswell, 2009, p.193; Corbin & Holt, 2006, p.49). Approaching the research with apriori design opened room for any emergent frameworks. Qualitative researchers add that “theory emerges from inquiry for the naturalist” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, approaching this research from a naturalistic inquiry led to understanding how humans construct their own meanings of their social contexts, (Cohen, 2008). Since little is known of teachers’ construction of ideas on local and global controversial issues allowing data to generate emergent new theory was particularly useful. Grounded theory cannot be discussed without interpretive research. Because while grounded theory concerns itself with generating theory, an interpretive approach on the other hand takes us through the steps of “understanding of the meanings humans construct in a given context and how these meanings interrelate to form a whole” (Greene, 2010, p.68). Therefore the next section discusses in detail how decolonizing research looks like within a qualitative interpretive approach, and then provides an example from the study that illustrated decolonizing practices.
Interpretive approach

Interpretive approach attempts to understand human construction of knowledges and how they make sense of the society within which they live. Besides discovering and exploring social phenomena as qualitative approaches do (Patton, 1990), interpretive approach extends the inquiry to include researchers interpretation of the lived experiences from the point of view of the participants, which are aspects of decolonizing research (Andrade, 2009). Similarly, Andrade asserts that qualitative inquiry along with interpretive methods investigates phenomena from all contextual environments of the participants, such as their way of living, their language, and cultural artifacts in order to produce a thick description of participants’ worldviews and activities. In providing detailed description of the phenomena, qualitative inquiry stands apart from non-decolonizing research such as quantitative approaches. Quantitative inquiry emerged from the positivist discourses that ignore lived experiences of people and their environments and only concerns itself with numbers, quantifying of data and making generalization. Rather, a qualitative researcher seeks to record events as they occur naturally in the natural environment so as to develop a grounded theory emerging from the phenomena observed (Ary et al., 1996).

In this section, I examine reasons that make interpretive approach a practical tool in decolonizing inquiry as well as attend to emergent concerns in the field research. Interpretive inquiry is closely related to critical inquiry because of its focus on societal
issues and emphasis on critiquing oppression for the purposes of social change. Just as critical inquiry, interpretive research entails examining ideologies and power hierarchies in the societies they research in an effort to transform alienating and oppressive situations (Banks, 2004). In this regard, this study utilized interpretive research in three ways, first as a method for responding to participants ways of knowing, secondly, as a path towards transformative and emancipatory praxis and finally, as a avenue for critique and resistance.

Since decolonizing qualitative work seeks to deeply and exhaustively engage with participants to understand their knowledges, interpretive approaches shed light on new knowledges and ideas presented. New knowledge presented from the study makes visible the practices of Kenyan teachers and their stories to the world. In the US teachers experiences were critical in demonstrating teacher practices through use of controversial issues. By presenting new ideas, this study goes a long way in first opening conversations about social studies education and controversial issues discussion in the two regions.

As a path towards transformative and emancipatory practices, interpretive research creates avenues for decolonizing the field and producing knowledge that is anti-discriminatory. In rereading and re-evaluating texts and data collected in the field, interpretive method illuminates the whole experience, to provide different lenses or viewpoints. An issue such as social injustice can be read in ways that would offer insights
to the issue, and provides alternative solutions that offer hope and possibility at the same time moving away from injustices.

Finally, research is considered a political endeavor (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000). In this context interpretive approach becomes a political avenue for critique, resistance and critical research. Ngugi (1986) and Smith (1999) assert that decolonizing research deconstructs and moves the center of a Western epicenter to a reconsideration of indigenous perspectives. Through, critically interrogating experiences thoughts and actions of participants and investigating the length and breadth of their ways of understanding can reveal the different worldviews that have influenced them and deconstruct these views in an effort to decolonize minds and knowledge from the popular worldviews. It is also a step towards recognizing power structures and how these influence and shapes viewpoints and ideologies in the social structures that support discrimination and injustices. In examining pedagogies for local and global controversial topics, postcolonial discourses demand for counter discourses that explain this global issues from the lens of the indigenous Other (Ngugi, 1986). Similarly, this interpretive and decolonizing work become a quest for justice especially in seeking to do justice to the participants knowledges and giving voice, and speaking in defense of the subjugated knowledges. In this regard, by engaging a decolonizing and interpretive research, knowledge produced was nurturing as opposed to the official knowledge and its discriminatory tendency.
To explicate more on the importance of a decolonizing research, I provide an example. In order to understand teachers’ construction of ideas on controversial issues and its impact on their pedagogy, I spent time with participants, engaged them in conversations to deeply understand their experiences. Also I followed them through their daily experiences in their classrooms to have an in-depth understanding of the environment and the students they teach. In utilizing the interpretive approach, which focuses “investigation on meaning, highlighting the premise that human activity can only be understood when the meaning of the action to the actor is taken into account” that is examining meaning and action from the perspective of the participants to understand the whole phenomena (Preissle-Goetz & LeCompte, 1991, p.61). In a similar context, when interpreting texts or documents collected, I used Kaomea’s (2000) suggestions of an interpretive method of analysis where I incorporated new lenses in scrutinizing the documents. Similarly, as Kneller (1984) suggests, “opening myself to a text (or its analogue) and questioning it” was pertinent to understand a text (p.68, in Patton, 2002). Thus looking and reading a text from different angles and questioning the obvious conclusions made the interpretive approach to this study meaningful.

**Location of self in the study**

It is imperative mention that this research journey began with a discussion of my situatedness in the project. The research methodology and design is structured around and
within my ways of knowing and being, as a Black woman, researcher, and as a teacher
engaging in research in transnational spaces. As a Black African ascendant woman,
living in transnational spaces I find myself always negotiating my position every day as I
navigate my way as a graduate student in the corridors of the Western Academy. First my
academic training at a university in the US has introduced me to discourses and narratives
of the West that explain my positionality as a Black woman with a particular heritage. On
the other hand, by asserting my identity and position in the center of overwhelmingly
EuroAmericentric ideologies, I have had to find discourses that speak to me as a woman
with a different Kenyan heritage. It is in Black feminisms and particularly the endarkened
feminist epistemologies that I found a space that resonates with my personal, indigenous
and transnational experiences (Dillard, 2006).

Endarkened feminist epistemologies taught me to value discourses that encourage
the nurturing of frameworks that embody our cultural understandings, histories, and ways
of knowing as Black women. Unlike the paradigms from the metropole that objectify
those on the margins, endarkened feminisms encourage nurturing paradigms that
empower those in the margins. It is Dillard’s (2006) endarkened feminist epistemology
that guides the lens through which I locate myself in the study. It gives me a space within
which to examine my transnationality.

Living in transnational locales makes one to gravitate towards certain stances. For
example, my position as a researcher can be aptly described as “halfie researcher” a
description that fittingly explains my stance (Subedi, 2006a, p.574). A halfie researcher is a one who embodies two or more positions by virtue of identity or affiliations to different geographical locations. In my case, I have lived in the two geographical locations, necessitating a navigation of multiple and international spaces, that is in Kenya and the United States of America. These contexts made my situatedness feel much like what Appiah (2006) observes eloquently about culture as being an onion peeled to reveal the different personalities and identities some at the fore and some deeply entrenched in my being. My experiences in the two worlds have layered my culture, knowledge and identity. For instance, in Kenya I did not see myself from a particular ethnic point of view, but in the US I have had to be defined by my color, which prescribes my position in the society.

My predicament is best described by Smith (1999) who states that one “struggles individually to engage with disconnections that are apparent between the demands of research, on one side, and the realities they encounter amongst their own and other indigenous communities” and the need for decolonization of the academy as well as social justice concerns (p.5). All these issues, that is, cultural realities of home on the one hand and academic pursuits of education and research on the other, have impacted and troubled each other. As a teacher of many years I have been concerned with issues of social justice and how these issues impacted pedagogical practices.
Living and studying in the United States especially created opportunities for me to re-think and analyze critically the construction of teaching practices in the two regions. For instance, some of the critical areas that I had earlier mentioned in the preceding chapters were concerns about social justice issues and how teachers approach these issues in their classrooms. My experiences in the US and in Kenya had shown that some of these critical social justice issues might not be receiving an effective engagement in the classrooms thus denying students holistic learning moments.

Also, my concern was how social studies teachers bombarded with personal, media, societal, and global influences negotiate their thoughts, ideas and attitudes towards critical local and global issues to teach for the development of active, informed democratic citizens. I argued that teachers’ ideologies impact greatly their pedagogies, which may impact “honest dialogues” in the classrooms (Subedi, 2008). Thus, there was need to investigate what it really happens in social studies classrooms. I reached this perspective because of my constant encounter with misinformation and biases while conversing with teachers about different cultures locally and in the world. For this reason, interrogating teachers’ perceptions and how it influenced their teaching practices is a necessary pursuit if scholarship is to contribute to teacher development and extend conversations on controversial issues. In the same vein, as I interrogate teacher perceptions, I will also be interrogating my own lived experiences as they relate to my worldview and my position as a researcher from a marginalized colonial nation and as a
teacher in the so called “first world.” Negotiating the positions of insider/outsider in the
two field sites problematizes my status and work since I will constantly have vested
interest in what I do and with perhaps a view to moving beyond preconceptions and
perceived ideologies and looking for ways of speaking, writing about subjugated
knowledges.

**Insider/Outsider perspectives**

I found myself to be both an insider and an outsider in the two research contexts. In Kenya after about six years of absence, it was difficult to negotiate my presence as an insider. I was a displaced or alienated insider. My identity shifted depending on how the participants perceived me. Daza (2008) explicates my situation by stating that researcher authenticity is “not fixed, determined, or necessarily decided before research, researcher subjectification and authenticity are discursively shaped” (p.74). In these spaces I was perceived as an alumnus of the school, a former colleague, a schools’ inspector, a mentor to students, a probable sponsor for the school and needy students by virtue of my living in the US and popular societal perceptions that any who lives in the US is wealthy.

When I went to the principal’s office to explain the reason of my visit, he welcomed me and said “You are one of my former students.” At that moment I felt at home and quite accepted in the school. After meeting the teachers who barely remembered me, I felt differently. First, the teachers saw me as an intruder and did not actually understand my being there. As Daza (2008) elucidates, I had to negotiate and re-
negotiate my identity to build rapport with the teachers before I could start observing their classrooms and interviewing them. It was quite a surprise, when I arrived at the schools to be considered privileged from the perspective of the teachers in the school due to my living in the US and my academic qualifications. The teacher participants almost tended to perceive me as one of the inspector of schools. Therefore, I had to unlearn my “Americaness,” “Englishness” and tone down my academic intellectualism or privileges in order to fit in the research contexts. I had to employ a methodology of spirit which is a “loving, compassionate, or reciprocal relationships with others” whereby I saw the participants I am working with as equal humans who are knowledgeable and rethink my position not as a “knower” but a worker together with those whom I engage research with (Dillard, 2008, p.288).

Likewise, I utilized Brayboy & Deyhle’s(2000) idea on the need to maintain a marginal native position for effective collection of rich research data. Doing the opposite would have led to an incomplete research. In my case therefore, it meant building rapport with the participants, speaking their language or the teachers’ language register and following the participants to places where they are most comfortable, that was their staffrooms where they gathered for tea breaks or lunch. In the classrooms, to build rapport with the students, I spent time chatting with them during their lunch breaks at the end of the research period and making them to saw me as one of them.
In the US, I was introduced to the teachers by the principals as a “student researcher” which was basically my identity as I went to the schools. The teachers also introduced me as a researcher intending to observe how social studies was taught. The position of a researcher put me at a higher power position which I thought made it difficult for me to develop rapport between me and the students. Very few students conversed with me as much as I tried to level the power difference with the teachers and students. The teachers had good rapport with me, which made me get more in-depth data especially in conversations. Therefore, the above experiences denote that insider/outsider relationships are still bound to be complex.

**Research design**

A research design is simply a “logical plan for getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered and there is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions” (Yin, 2008). In this study the “here” are the research questions mentioned earlier. In getting “there” is specifically the focus of this chapter that is the steps to finding answers to the research questions. The following are some of the steps or methods employed in the study; case study selection, gaining access and participant selection, interviewing, document analysis, participant observation, reflective notes, journals and memos as well as ethical and moral methodological premises.
Research site and context

In this section I provide the description and context of the research sites in both the US mid-West high schools and Kenyan High Schools. In the US I conducted research in two high schools Lincoln High and Kennedy High (pseudonyms) that are located in a fast growing city with diverse populations. I chose these two high schools because of they represent more diversity than other schools in the region and thus enhanced the data collected. In Kenya I also selected two high schools namely Town high and City high schools (pseudonyms). These schools are located in fast growing cities with multi-ethnic and multi-cultural populations. I chose the schools because they are public mixed gender government schools with students from diverse Kenyan cultural groups. The following are vignettes of the schools that provide a detailed research context.

Vignettes of Research Regions

Vignettes of the US high schools

The first school was called Lincoln High School. Lincoln high was situated in the middle of a small town in one of the Mid-Western regions. It has about 1800 students and 150 professional staff. It occupies a block in between two road intersections. It has four floors of buildings, which house classrooms, administrative offices, labs, a gymnasium, a dining hall and a swimming pool. As a visitor entering into one door did not necessarily mean automatic exit on the same door. It was a huge school. It was built in the early
1900s. Lincoln High is known as a diverse school with different social, economic and cultural backgrounds. About fifty percent are students of color, including African American, Native American, Hispanic, and Asian and the other fifty percent are Caucasian. The students excel in academia with about 70% going to four-year colleges according to the 2008 statistics.

As I drove towards the school, I passed through a beautiful neighborhood and then all of a sudden the school appeared. The first thing that struck me was the presence of a police car and a police officer inside the main school entrance. I thought the police presence meant trouble in the school. But later when I asked about the police presence, I was informed that they are there to maintain peace inside and outside the school in case of disturbances and that police existence in schools is a common feature in many high schools in the region. As I entered the school I went straight to the attendant who immediately directed me to the principal in charge of curriculum. I later learned that there were four assistant principals with different responsibilities and heading each grade level and one head principal overseeing the activities of the whole school. I met the assistant principal of the school who seemed quite busy and thankfully had a few minutes to listen to me. We quickly talked about the reason of my coming to the school, although I had earlier mentioned about it in an email exchange. He immediately directed me to the chair of the social studies department. The social studies department head invited me to his classroom and I explained about my research study. He told me of other teachers who
would be willing to accept me in their classrooms. He also accepted to be part of my study as well. I met the rest of the teachers and made arrangements to begin the study.

The second school was called Kennedy High School located in the same the mid-West city as Lincoln High. Both these schools were well known and recognized for their curricula and extra curricula achievements. Kennedy High was built in the early 1900s. It was a school with about 2100 students from diverse economic, social-cultural backgrounds. In this school class sizes vary from 12 to about 50 students in other popular classes such as band. There were about 79% of students who go to four-year colleges.

As one nears the school one cannot but notice the huge building that occupied a whole block that is surrounded by a beautiful neighborhood. It seemed quite easy to navigate through the school because the building was rectangular shaped with about three floors of classroom buildings. I was interested in social studies teachers in the school. Fortunately, one of my contacts had directed me to social studies teachers who taught controversial issues in their classrooms. After I was given access to the school by the school administrator, I asked to talk directly with the social studies teachers who willingly gave consent to participate in the research study.
Vignettes for Kenyan High Schools

Immediately after I had made up my mind that I will conduct a comparative research study in Kenya and the US, I started thinking about the two high schools that I would seek access. I decided to go to the high schools I was familiar with either through my own schooling or teaching in Kenya. Whether or not the principals would allow access to their schools was another issue. So I set out my travel plans to Kenya. My first stop after arrival was the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology where I had to apply for authorization for conducting the research study as part of the research requirements in the country. The application packet included an application form, research proposal and protocols as well as an authorization letter from my university that authorized the study. Then after authorization from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, I went to the particular districts to inform the district educational office of my research and they in turn send information to the school principals. Lastly, I had to seek access from the principals of the particular schools. Fortunately, I had a great welcome from both school principals of City High School and Town High School.

City High School was one of the most reputable public government and day high school in the region (High schools in Kenya are divided to private and public whereby in private schools, students pay tuition while public schools are government funded. Some high schools are boarding schools while others are day schools). City High was founded
in 1949, fifteen years before Kenya’s independence. Presently it had about 1,000 students and about 35 teachers. There were five classes in each stream, that is, from form one to form four (similar to 9th grade to 12th grade in the US), that is five classes in each grade level. There was an average of 55 students in each class. The high numbers of students was a result of the introduction of free tuition for secondary education in 2008. These numbers also reflected the greater numbers of students who graduated from primary (elementary) schools in the region after the introduction of free primary education and were now admitted to the few government funded secondary schools in the area. Students admitted in form one are allocated a class that they remain in for one year and move to the next class in form two, a system that continues until form four. Teachers moved from class to class where they taught a single or a double lesson and then moved to the next. During their free time, the teachers sat in the staff room or in their offices if they have any. Offices were mostly allocated according to the subjects they teacher taught or the extracurricular work they did. For example, the mathematics office was for teachers teaching mathematics, or social studies office for the history teachers or a games office for the teachers who were in charge of games/athletics. Students were required to only move from their classes when they were going to science labs for science lessons (physics, chemistry and biology labs) or art, technology and other skills classes.

As I drove towards City High School gate, I saw small businesses that sold clothes and mini shops for groceries that had lined up almost close to the school gate.
Across the road was a Hindu temple and housing blocks. When I got into the school gate there was a gatekeeper who opened the gate and asked who I wanted to see in the school. I identified myself and then was asked to proceed to the office. As I got in the school compound I saw on the east side familiar surroundings. There were rows of classrooms and one building of administrative offices in between. On the West side was a huge field where school assemblies are held every Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, school sports, athletics and other field sports were held in this space. In the North of the field there was an open market across the school hedge that sometimes was very noisy. To the far East was the basketball pitch. Next to the basketball court was the school library. All buildings were concentrated in one middle section, they had offices, classrooms, science labs, craft labs, computer labs and the school meeting hall. Two school buses were parked besides the library in the school garage. There were beautiful flowers and gardens surrounding the buildings, which were blossoming in the warm tropical weather. On the extreme east side was another playground used mainly for other sports like hockey and soccer. A dining cum meeting hall was at one end of the field. On the East side there was a secluded section with zero grazing cows that apparently produce milk for sale as a revenue-generating venture for the school. Students were given lunch in the school if their parents could afford to buy, otherwise some students went home for lunch during the hour break or brought their own lunch to school.
As I get closer to the administration building, to my surprise I saw some six students kneeling on the floor corridor next to the entrance of their classroom. This scenery brought memories of the punishments that we used to get from making noise in class, failing a subject, coming late to school or even forgetting to complete the class sweeping duty. I hated the kneeling down let alone the caning we used to receive for the similar reasons above. I wanted to speak but I couldn’t. I was tongue-tied. It did not feel good then and did not feel good now. I could not believe that the practice of punishing students by making them kneel still existed. I just passed on straight to where I was heading to with questions running in my mind, such as; why? Why does such punishment continue to happen? Even after the 2001 Kenyan Gazette law that banned corporal punishment as a violation of Children’s Act as well as human rights, why does such type of punishment persist?

I walked straight to the principal’s office with disturbed thoughts. The principal’s secretary let me in the office and was received well. I explained the purpose of my coming to the school and he was glad to let me do my research. I signed the visitor’s book and he immediately, gave me a tour of the school, talked about the school in the history of the school, the teachers, students and the recent plans they have for the school such as building a dormitory for boys in an effort to extend admission to student boarders. Then I was taken to the assistant principal to make arrangements for me to start my research project.
The assistant principal directed me to the social studies department chair who asked the teachers if they would be willing to let me to observe their classes and interview them. One teacher said that he was busy with the form four mock exams and therefore not having a regular schedule. But other teachers were willing to let me in their classrooms accepted to participate in the study. The teachers had numerous experiences in teaching history and other subjects. The teachers are from different cultural backgrounds and all enjoy teaching in the school. I had two female teachers Kendra and Linda who participated in the project. The relationship between the teaching profession and women raised questions about the bigger number of women in the schools who were teachers. My experiences as a teacher in Kenya was that being a female teaching was culturally thought of and advocated as the best-respected occupation for women. It was a socially and culturally assigned job for women similar to nursing.

The second school was Town high school, which was quite similar to City High School. It was also built before independence and is a government funded high school with students and teachers from diverse backgrounds around the city. As I drove towards Town high, one side of the road had housing buildings and small business shops. On the other side were two schools each sharing a hedge. There was a primary school next to the Town High school. As one comes close to the school, there is a gatekeeper at the main gate and a fence surrounding the whole school parameters. There is an assembly ground and then the administrative offices. Behind the offices are classrooms and other teachers’
offices. The school had blocks of buildings for classes from form one to form four. These buildings are in a rectangular shape and behind the buildings is the school’s athletic field. On the West side of the school was a big dining hall and some offices for teachers as well as a home science room that had a refrigerator and cooking ovens and surfaces. The far West side had teachers’ houses. Since the houses were few, most teachers lived around the city. A few teachers managed to get accommodated to the schoolhouses based on seniority. Similarly the school auxiliary staffs were also housed in the school. The far North side of the school is the athletics ground, where students will always play a sport during break time and after school. Students were provided with school lunch and not allowed to leave school until the end of the day.

I met the acting principal of the school who was serving in that capacity following the retirement the former principal. The acting principal was welcoming. When I told her about my project and she was excited and wanted to know more about it. I took time to explain in detail. Then she gave me a brief overview of the school and teachers and the school. She told me that the school is planning to shift from a day school to a full boarding school, a project they were excited about. She then told me who was teaching what courses and which teachers retired. She was still hopeful that she would get new teachers to fill the gap of those teachers who retired. She said that the high school also served students from the region and had about 900 students. There were 27 teachers in Town high school who were all employed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) an
arm of the government that is responsible for hiring teachers. The teachers who worked with me in my research in this school were Kelly and Kate who had taught history for a while now. They were from multi-ethnic backgrounds just as their students. The teachers then introduced me to their classrooms and the books in their classrooms as recommended by the Ministry of Education.

Both the City and Town High schools were built shortly before independence. During this time the teachers were of European and Indian origin. After independence the government took over running of the schools and worked to train Kenyan teachers for the schools. All teachers in the two public schools were employed by the TSC. Sometimes there were teachers who were employed by the school boards in cases where teachers were few. The schools continued to be government funded with parents buying school uniform and writing materials for their children, while the government is expected to provide funding for books and teaching materials. Students in both schools came from all over the city. Students were admitted to the school depending on their qualifications after the Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination (KCPE) a national examination that determines if students will qualify to be enrolled in public government high schools. Both the schools perform exceptionally well in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examinations (KCSE) that is done at the end of four years of high school. The national examinations done in form four determined the student’s admission to public government universities. Students who received an A grade in the national examinations in form four,
had a better opportunity to be admitted to the public universities in Kenya and with a government sponsorship.

**Case Study Selection**

A qualitative case design was employed. Case studies or “multiple cases” are described as a study that covers multiple individual case studies (Yin, 2008). In my project, I studied two mid-Western high schools in the United States and two high schools in Kenya. I draw on Yin’s rationale for selection of case studies to ensure that my research will be productive. Yin stipulates several questions to consider before embarking on a comparative study, these are: “Could case findings supplement individual cases? Could data from multiple cases fill a gap left by individual cases or respond better to some shortcoming? Would multiple cases comprise a stronger case study and make findings more compelling?” (p.62). Based on Yin’s suggestions, my project fulfills the above features of a multiple case study, in that through analyzing individual teachers ideas, knowledge and influences the study produced abundant information that supplemented areas where experiences were different as well as made the study more concrete and compelling. Also by engaging in the comparative study in the two regions and in different schools, more attention was put on teachers’ construction of ideas on contentious issues, and their practice, that made a stronger case that will add to teacher development, instruction and curriculum reforms.
Moreover, there are several underlying principles that have guided the choice of conducting comparative case studies. First, Miles and Huberman (1994) state that when several cases are compared and contrasted, they increase possibilities in “strengthening the precision, the validity and the stability of the findings” (p.29). By engaging in a comparative research, this study encouraged dialogue within the social studies education field in the two countries, which will in turn inform scholarship and teaching practices in both regions. Secondly, by virtue of having living experiences in the two sites, there is increased possibilities for gaining access but also having a familiarity of these two locations. Thirdly, comparative research enables one to learn much from the cultures in the research sites that becomes “a window to a society, revealing particular histories and cultural values” as well as broaden the researcher’s conceptual lenses as they analyze similar issues or topics in different national contexts (Hahn, 2006). Finally, comparative case studies offer opportunities to observe the different democracies and citizenship education policies in two nation-states. As Hahn asserts the results include “international understanding and peace” and “enhancing teacher education, improving curriculum and instruction” (p.141).

In selecting the case studies, attempts were made to maintain similar contexts in both regions. One such similarity is that social studies education is a core subject in both regions. Secondly, research questions and number of participants were similar, as well as the criteria for selection of high schools. Finally I studied similar grade levels, form 1-3
in Kenya and grade 9-11 in the US, with each system consisting of students from the age of 15 to 17 years old.

Methods of Data Collection Procedure

Since positions of neutrality are not easily attained in research, Patton (2002) recommends multiple data collection procedures to obtain “high-quality qualitative data” (p.51). In this study, critical analysis will be attained through a number of data collection procedures as will be discussed in the following sections for the purpose of collecting high-quality qualitative data.

Gaining Access

In the US, I began by getting authorization from the Human Subject Review Board at the Ohio State University. I then traveled to the research regions to seek access from the school district in the mid-West and from the Ministry of Education in Kenya. Gaining access was thought to be easy, but my experiences present some tensions in both regions. In the US getting authorization in the Mid-West school district took rather a long time than is usual. According to the district research protocol, it was supposed to take two weeks to complete the process. Nonetheless, I had to write several emails to the officer in-charge of the research in the district, without responses and then had to email the officer in charge of research in the district, who took the matter in his own hands and ensured I was given access. The process ended up taking two months. Then I
immediately began emailing the prospective school principals seeking access. This took twists and turns, some emailed back and others did not. I called leaving messages that were not answered. Finally I got a response back and then explaining my research was another huddle especially when I mentioned the title “controversial issues.” I came to realize later that the title of the research might have sent danger signals that the researcher may have been controversial as well, which was far from the truth. However once, I got access to the teachers, I was surprised how informed they are about the teaching of controversial issues.

In Kenya, I had to go through the Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology, which provided authorization after I paid the required fee. Then in the school districts I also had to go through the education officers in the districts concerned with research who then gave me a letter introducing me to the school heads. The teachers had one week to, decide whether or not to participate, and then I made arrangements to meet them and sign the consent forms as well as explain or answer any questions they had. Once the potential participants had been selected, purposive sampling was used to select teachers that would be most useful for my data.

Gaining of access in transnational research may be problematic due to the possible tensions accrued during transnational research (Brayboy &Deyhle, 2000; Collins, 1991; Hahn, 2006; Subedi, 2006b). To explicate, Brayboy & Deyhle (2000) assert that research is political, therefore as a researcher the issue of whether one is an
outsider or insider in the community raises concern in transnational research. Collins (2001) notes that even in one’s own community one can feel like being inside out or outside-in research. One becomes an outsider/insider in one context and vice versa in another. When in Kenya, after my absence of about six years, I found myself in a complex position of both outsider and insider or more specifically falling under what Banks (1998) calls “indigenous-outsider” where some in my community may view me as an outsider or an indigenous-insider” where my community views me as one of them but have reservations (p.8). In a similar vein, Subedi (2006b) affirms that “questions about seeking entry into marginalized communities and the ways of conversing with respondents are serious topics” (p.15). Because of Kenyan’s historical experiences with Western research/ers, it is quite likely that some may have considered the same way as the Western researcher and concluded that it’s all about “cultural imperialism” (Merryfield, 1990). In some cases the participants could not understand why I should be doing research, because research is not a common reality especially when one of their own is conducting it. So I had always to justify myself and explain my objective and simplify the wordings of my study to gain access. Furthermore, being considered an insider might pose a tension in becoming all too familiar with the educational environment, as such providing a biased view of the data collected. Moreover, bias introduces the issue of reflexivity. As I analyzed my narrative expressions, I included my own “feelings, experiences, value judgments and growing insights about oneself and the
subject under study” (Merryfield, 1990). These ethical measures enhanced the outcomes of the study. Also, because research is considered “disruptive to routines, causes disturbance with no long term payoff for the institution and its members” because “limitations of its own activities are to be disclosed, the ulterior motives of the research, remain unclear for the institution” (Flick 2009, p.109). Such perceptions of researchers were disruptive to routine and hindered access to schools. In Town High school in Kenya, I had to leave out the form four social studies teacher because the teacher did not want the class to be disrupted as they were preparing for national examinations.

**Participants’ selection**

I used purposive sampling to nominate eight teachers for the study. Purposive sampling is the “handpicking of cases” for particular purposes, which provides most information and understanding of the group discussed (Lewin, 2006, p. 219) or “information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 2002, p.230). In the schools, the social studies coordinator to social studies introduced me to teachers and gave them the consent form and recruitment letter. During this time especially in the US after talking to my peers I realized that I should focus on world history, social issues and ethnic studies courses since these courses taught more content on controversial issues than general US-History teachers. After a week I contacted them again to see if they wanted to participate in the study and many accepted but in Kenya
some teachers did not because of preparing the four students for national examinations making it impossible to find time to participate. I then did initial interviews with the teacher to select the final eight teacher participants. Critical cases and sensitive cases were selected (Flick, 2009). These critical and sensitive cases are cases that are deemed to produce best results of the phenomena examined.

Therefore, participants were first interviewed about their engagement in controversial issues in their social studies classrooms. The purposes of the initial interview were to get participants who incorporated more controversial issues in their teaching. Getting participants who integrated delicate issues contributed more to my research.

The basis of teachers’ selection was; at least with two years experience as social studies teachers; perceive controversial issues as an integral approach to their teaching social studies; and were willing to participate and provide informed consent. The teachers in both regions were observed in different times from April to December.

**Interviewing**

Babbie (2004) suggests that interviewing should be made an integral process in field research especially because it helps “make sense of what you have observed, getting a clearer feel for the situation you’re studying, and finding out what you should pay more attention to in further observations” (p.302). I interviewed eight teachers to find out their construction of ideas on controversial issues (CIs) and understand how their pedagogy
was impacted by their perspectives and epistemologies. Four teachers in each region and two in each high school were interviewed for a maximum of two hours. In qualitative interviews, Creswell (2009) explains that they can be face to face or by telephone and generally with open-ended questions intended to “elicit views and opinions from the participants” (p.181). These interviews were face to face, open ended and semi-structured and also dwelt on themes that clarify the research questions such as teachers’ perceptions and experiences in teaching controversial issues, their teaching contexts and settings and its impact on pedagogy on controversial issues, teachers’ perception on their students’ experiences and perspectives on CIs.

In preparing for the interviews, I was guided by what Kvale (1996, p.88) describes as the stages for the interviewing process (see, Babbie, 2004, p.302). These are:
1. Thematizing-clarifying the purpose of interviews and concepts to be explored.
2. Designing-laying out the process to be followed.
3. Interviewing-conducting interviews.
4. Transcribing-create a written text for the interviews.
5. Analyzing- determining the meaning of the gathered data in relation to research questions.
6. Verifying-checking the validity of the gathered material.
7. Reporting-telling others what I will have learned.
These seven stages made the interview process more productive. The first interview was done the first week of observation and the second follow-up interview was done towards the end of the observation period. In “making sense of what I have observed” as Babbie (2004) recommends use of notes collected from the participant observation. For example, the questions I collected from participant observation were such as: Why did the teacher decide to use this film in teaching about Rwanda genocide or women reproductive rights? Or why did teacher disclose opinion on the issue yet they indicated in first interview that they do not disclose opinions? Using the notes and questions from participant observation gave me an opportunity to deeply comprehend the teachers’ practices.

Conducting interviews in Kenya raised some tensions. There were moments when a teacher would lower their voice and whisper. For example when asked why she does not teach about ethnicity in her classroom, the teacher whispered that “you know I am not a native of this area, so we do not want students to think we are into the politics of the area. We want to leave in peace.” I would understand the teachers’ sentiment and why she lowered her voice. Ethnic tensions were still rife in Kenya after the disputed 2007 elections. The teachers’ ethnic group was a cause of tension in the region. Another moment was when the teachers would code-switch during interviews and during classroom teaching. Kenya being a multi-ethnic country with two official languages English and Kiswahili teachers would switch between the two languages. The practice raised a critical issue of ethics of translation. Translation has been described as “the
rendering from one language to another” (Wood & Bermann, p.4). The ethics of translation brought up the notion of how to rightfully render the statements given in a different language. Whiteley (1969) affirms that “translation is a difficult art” (p.19). Therefore, when translating statements or whole books, research ethics needed consideration. My being a Kenyan with competence in Kiswahili enabled me to easily translate the statements without a problem. In other instances I had to not only translate concepts but “a whole way of life” for an audience that may not be familiar with the Kenyan cultural context (Emerson et. al. 1995). My cultural understanding of Kenyans as people assisted in understanding the participants’ culture and way of life. I knew that most of Kenyan people like code-switching, and this classroom experience was not a unique feature. However, in translating their statements I had to take caution to ensure that I translate the context of their sentences and not word for word which would distort meaning. To ensure accurate translation, the participants had an opportunity to read their interview transcripts.

Conversations

In decolonizing research “interactions allow different epistemological spaces from which to collect data without imposing power on others” or “claim to represent Others” (Denzin et. al., 2008, p.56). Conversations were a great resource on the interactions with participants and members of the community to first build rapport and secondly to understand the ways of knowing of the participants in an environment outside of official
parameters of recording and note taking. Thirdly, conversations also helped balance the power relations such that we all spoke to know and learn from one another without imposing power on others. Conversations have been said to be the most user-friendly method that allows the researcher to learn about what people think and how one person's perceptions compare with another, and what values inform behavior (Owinyo, 2006). In both research contexts I found out that conversations were a useful data collection and triangulation method. These were done before class and after lessons and during other member-checking meetings.

**Document Analysis**

Documents were collected from the libraries that deal with social studies education in the particular country, teaching materials for controversial issues such as curriculum, public records, lesson plans, handouts, copies of students work, assessment materials, websites, public records, newspapers, pictures, charts, texts books, and any teacher journals provided. My reflective notes on the documents were also part of the data corpus. To interpret these documents, I incorporated Kaomea’s (2000) idea in examining the texts in multiple lenses for emergence of new themes. Dei (Dei, 2008) suggestions on analyzing texts can be useful in my analysis of the documents collected. To be able to clearly understood the teachers’ perceptions on delicate matters in the documents, I used these questions: Why do I need to use this document? What is this document telling me about the study? What is the document not telling me? What are the
existing and repetitive themes? Is there any missing link in the document? What is the significance of the document? Are there any underlying messages that the document presents? Whose or what local and global knowledge does the document promote?

**Participant Observation**

Participant observation is a tool that enables the researcher to build a rapport with the participants and can acquire more information from the study (Billings, 1994). Participation of the researcher was minimal so as not to interfere with the teacher practices. Some of the phases of participant observation utilized were first descriptive observation where I provided specific and non-specific details about the research field, secondly, focused observation which “narrows your perspective on those processes and problems which are essential for research questions,” and finally selective observation which focused on “finding further evidence and examples for the types of practices and processes” (Flick, 2009). I began my study by detailing everything I observed in the research field including research environment, wall pictures, activities, participants actions and responses from students, facial expressions and so on. I then narrowed it later to look for answers to my research questions and finally after getting a broad picture of the context, I began to focus on evidence on controversial issues teaching, what was said and not said in the classroom. The participant observation grid used is shown below explicates the specificities that directed my observation (see Table1):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Observation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Description</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How does the teacher engage students in Controversial issues?</td>
<td>How did conversations begin? After identifying an issues are students put into groups or whole class discussions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Who is in the groups</td>
<td>What is the classroom layout? How many students are present? What are their identities? How is membership acquired?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What is happening here? What strategies does the teacher use in engaging the issues?</td>
<td>What are the students doing? discussing? interests? What teacher’s strategies seem non/effective for the class?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What are the relationships towards one another?</td>
<td>How are the activities organized? Explained? What kinds of debates arise?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What is the nature/content of the conversations?</td>
<td>How are they handled? How are students interacting?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Table 1. Participant Observation Grid Adapted from McMillan & Schumacher (2001)


| 6. What is the perspective of the participant researcher on the issues that arise? | What content or topics arise? What beliefs do the content and conversations illustrate? How are the different opinions on the issues deliberated? What meanings do students take home about the issue discussed? |

Classroom observation in both research contexts introduced some important issues. One issue was when teachers would code switch from English to Kiswahili. For example a teacher would say “If you were living at the time of Mau Mau rebellion mgekuwa upande wa Mau Mau muende msituni au upande wa Wazungu? (If you were living at the time of the Mau Mau would you be on the side of the Mau Mau fighters and go to the bush or on the British side?) Noting such specific instances allowed more in-depth analysis of the code-switching practice and of the possible reasons for code-
switching such as for emphasis and ensuring comprehension of the issue. Another issue was when students did not participate in classroom discussions, my observation notes assisted me in analyzing the whole context of how why and what issues may have lead to their silence. The following is an excerpt describing the classroom situation. (Table 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School:</strong> Kennedy High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher:</strong> Mr. Dan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Gay rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade:</strong> 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(I arrived at 8:56 am to observe the lesson. The teacher began by revisiting the previous day lesson by giving a brief overview of the film they watched called *The Laramie project*)

**Teacher:** Remove your handout on “John and Jim say I do.’ What did you think about the article?

**Students:** (silence)

**Teacher:** The teacher gives a brief summary of the article that speaks about marriage between to gay men. What is your position about the issue of gay /lesbians and their right to marry or form civil unions?
Students: (silence)

Teacher: (Goes ahead and connect the article to the film Laramie project and then gives example of his neighbor and the issue of benefits because of not being married the state

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Classroom Observation 1 US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continued</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>denues the spouse benefits.) What are the laws in the state about gay marriages or unions?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student: I think they have health insurance benefits from their mates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student: I think the law does not allow marriage….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: (Provides students with the laws on gay marriage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*To ask the teacher about the student silences at the beginning of the lesson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This lesson observation indicated silences on the part of students at the beginning of the lesson. Such silences were noted down and became part of the interview questions to clear my speculations as to the reasons for silence.

In Kenya similar tensions happened especially where students could not recall facts on the subject under discussion. (See Table 3)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School: Town High</th>
<th>No. Of students: 50 (26 Boys, 24 Girls)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: Ms. Kate</td>
<td>Time: 9:00-9:40am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Space exploration</td>
<td>Date: 29/7/2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form: 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Observation 2 Kenya

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher: today we are going to talk about space exploration. Take out your notes and tell me what is space exploration?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student: Study of outer space and heavenly bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: what definition does the textbook give?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student: scientific inventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: open your books and tell me what it says?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students: silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: these is basically scientific inventions that explore space or other planets. Why do we have space explorations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students: for security reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students: spying on other countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above classroom observations show that taking notes on the teaching and learning process is significant in understanding the study. My notes not only presented questions to the participants but shed light on the problems and minute details about the classroom practice that was significant for the study.

**Researcher’s reflexive thoughts and field notes**

I kept reflexive notes such as diary or journal, which included daily personal experiences, thoughts, emerging ideas/themes, my observations and ideas about the interviews. Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (1995) state that, writing detailed field notes as “a method for capturing and preserving the insights and understandings stimulated by the close and long-term experiences” (p.10). Therefore, it meant describing all I could see and that which informed the research questions. Emerson et.al, adds that it would require the researcher to select those details which offer or present most clearly and vividly meaningful data. Some of the perspectives for writing field notes are considering the “indigenous meanings and concerns of the people” and provide details of the “social and interactional process” as it explains the participants’ experiences (p.11). With such notes I was able to get a holistic and concrete experience of what was in the field sites. The following is an excerpt of my reflexive notes.
Reflection 1

Form: 2  
Teacher: Ms. Kendra (Kenya)

Lutrell (2010) states that the inquirer “is part of the setting, context and social phenomenon he or she seeks to understand” (p. 3). With this in mind my preoccupation in writing the reflexive notes is to understand what is happening in the classroom. In this class the topic of discussion was Early Urbanization in Europe-Athens. The class began by an introduction of previous lesson and the teacher did well to connect the topic previous to the present one. She used critical questions beginning with a brief background of Athens and why it was necessary to learn about it. I noticed also the use of caller response type of activity where the teacher would say; And Athens was known for… and students would complete the sentence in chorus? Is it the cultural way of teaching? She did a good job in drawing out the views of students by asking leading questions and comparing with other cities they have studied previously. I thought it was none of the best classes so far observed. The teacher asked students to read ahead on Nairobi and Johannesburg using the same themes used in writing notes on Athens to give students a local perspective and a continental perspective. I do not know why the teacher did not
begin with urbanization in Nairobi before moving to Europe. (To make inquiry)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection 2</th>
<th>Date: June 4th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: Mr. Emanuel (US)</td>
<td>Course: World History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade: 10th</td>
<td>Topic: Review of Examination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This was the final day of classes. Students and teachers seemed in high spirits. The teacher was preparing students for the world history examination the following week on

Continued

Table 4 Continued

Tuesday June 8th. I thought it was a good idea that the teacher previewed what the exam entailed and what students should be reading. The students had a weekend to read for the examination using the review sheet prepared by the teacher. I imagine that teachers were able to prepare and review the exam because they are in control of what they want to test students in. They are without pressure from the school district or from the school. I guess I have to ask how then they ensure that they follow the state social studies content standards. Also the teacher said that the exam will be similar to the review exam with a few twist here and there. Is the teacher giving away too much information on the exam to the students? This practice is very different from Kenya where students only have a topic as a clue for the exam, no review sheet. Students make their own review sheet for the
The above reflexive notes guided my thinking and served as a space for me to describe and reflect on my thoughts about the research that day as well as guide me to what further questions to ask the participants.

Field notes and memos served another very important purpose. McMillan & Schumacher (2001) state that reflexive field notes serve as a “self-monitoring” tool for possible biases, which therefore minimizes the influence of biases during data collection and analysis (p.442). While Charmaz states that memo writing “helps us spark our thinking, look at data in different new ways, elaborate processes, assumptions, and actions” (p.189). Memo writing helped me ask questions that were used in subsequent interviews or conversations to provide a clear understanding of the teaching context.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation method is advocated for qualitative research. This is because it allows the use of various methods of data collection in order to confirm new findings. Flick (2009) describes triangulation as a “strategy to improve quality of qualitative research” which includes use of “different sorts of data, take a different theoretical perspective” such as “studying the issue with more than one research perspective, involve two or more researchers in the project” (p.405).
In my research I incorporated multiple methods, such as interviews, classroom observations, document analysis, and my own reflexive notes as well as revisiting the findings from different theoretical perspectives as they emerged. For instance passivity of students in Kenyan classrooms was examined from the cultural point of view that nurtures youth to be active listeners. At the same time I examine what Freire’s (2000) says of passive learners and teacher centered classroom instruction. In this instance I examined what the teachers said in the interviews about silence in their classroom (teachers did not see silence as an issue), compared to what my observation indicated and analyzed the silence from the cultural purview. After analysis and triangulation of the issue of students silence in Kenyan classrooms implied that the cultural perspectives may have influenced silence as well as teacher-centered instruction.

Triangulation has been used to promote understanding of teachers thinking such as open-ended questions, probes, and member checking (Cunningham, 2006). I included different types of questioning techniques such as open-ended and probes and also member check to make sure that my interpretation of participants stories and thoughts were correctly presented. By utilizing multiple data sources, I enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings. In the US, just like in Kenya, I had the opportunity to converse and observe classrooms before the interviews. These conversations and observations enabled me formulate questions for the interview. For example during an observation, I realized in a US-History course, 50% of class time was focused on analyzing literature
texts on World War II. My observation raised a question for the teacher about why there was a literary focus in the course. The teacher’s explanation to my question informed my data and shed light into the classroom practices, thus the observation informed interview. Similarly after writing of the interview transcripts, I gave the teachers their transcripts to add or remove any information they wanted. After that I typed it again with the edited parts and when I came up with themes from the interview I discussed the topics with the teachers. During analysis I compared the interview, what I observed and my journal notes to make sure I interpreted their experiences as they presented it to me.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis began in April 2010 and was ongoing through to December 2010. According to Erickson (1986), data analysis seeks to “search for patterns of generalization” within the case at hand, rather than for generalization from one case or setting to another. Engaging in comparative case study will demand an examination of patterns that emerge, without generalizing the patterns. Data analysis has been described as a constant comparative method that is employed to investigate the description of each case and then compare the emergent categories with other cases, re-analyzing the categories and re-organizing in order to come up with theories (Straus, 1987). A comparative case analysis was done and then a cross-case analysis. In other words, individual case units were analyzed individually. After individual analysis, I utilized Patton’s (2002) idea by comparing the emerging patterns within the data corpuses of
other participants in the same school and same region. After analyzing data in each region, I then compared the patterns in the two regions. I employed “tactics of generating meaning” and applying a critical examination of the data to come up with good codes (Miles and Huberman, 1994) through comparing and contrasting themes, examining similarities, differences, noting available patterns in the data which will enhance meaningful conclusions. I used Flick’s (2009) and Foss’s (2007) suggestion that coding should be broken down, sometimes line by line, sentence by sentence and conceptualized, and re-conceptualized and then put back together in new ways, and many new ways to develop theory.

An example of the process of coding and analysis of data was from an interview with one teacher. I did line by line, statement by statement analysis to identify emerging concepts. Then there emerged codes such as teaching experiences, challenge teaching controversial issues, definition of controversial issues, ideas about controversial issues, controversial topics, democracy crucial aspect in social studies, history of controversial issues in the country among many emerged. I did the same coding with other teachers in same schools and same regions and then cut out the themes. After analyzing the different codes I had to narrow down the themes arising. I had several envelops with titles of narrowed down categories such as controversial issues, perceptions about controversial issues, challenges to controversial issues teaching and then placed the broader themes in the envelops. So patterns such as problems with teaching controversial issues, lack of
teaching materials, lack of training in controversial issues teaching were all put under the title challenges to controversial issues teaching. After cutting up the different emergent codes, I put each code in its envelope. The struggle that arose was how to relate these themes to meaningful categories. I had to recode, rearrange, regroup compare analyze the different codes many times. Finally, I come up with themes that spoke to all the participants such as teacher “epistemologies” “strategies” “opinion,” “influences” and “practices.”

To fulfill the precepts of a decolonizing qualitative research I collected rich detailed data from the research field. While abundance of data may be seen as a weakness, and lacks validity, through a decolonizing research process, it presented ample opportunities to verify the data. I tried to ensure the validity of findings by comparing and contrasting cases in order to increase possibilities in “strengthening the precision, the validity and the stability of the findings” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.29). Subsequently, the following strategies developed by McMillan and Shumacher (2001) were employed beginning with the preliminary data collected, these were the writing of “observer comments” from field notes, interview transcripts and observations to identify possible themes; I wrote summaries of observations and interviews through questions such as: What did I learn from the discussion on controversial topics?; I developed initial categories of themes and concepts as they emerged from the data and then explored literature to see how it backs up or contrasts with my observations.
Establishing Trust-worthiness and Validity

Qualitative research is confronted with the issue of trustworthiness. Issues of trust emerge because they demand an explanation on ways in which the researcher undertakes the ethical issues to avoid biases in the result. I understand that it is quite impossible to “step outside of our own experience to obtain some observer independent account of what we experience” (Milles & Huberman, 2002). Because of my outsider/insider status in the two field sites, my data definitely had some level of bias. Somekh and Lewin (2006) suggest that a researcher should "consider from the outset what ethical issues might arise and think through…how these instances would be addressed.” Several measures were put in place to counter these biases. Multiple measures with which to establish trustworthiness will be utilized and informed by Lincoln & Guba (1985).

The first measure taken to ensure validity was to collect rich, in-depth descriptive data that gave a holistic picture of what is happening in each field site. For example, I used vignettes to describe the research contexts, during the interview process, I carefully described, transcribed and re-listened to the recordings a number of times to conceive the breadth and depth of what happens, “the exact reproduction of people’s speech” in an attempt to obtain validity (Reinharz, 1992). Secondly, I performed a “reflexive reading” and “self scrutiny” in analyzing the data for more objective conclusion (Somekh & Lewin, 2006). In reflexive reading and self scrutiny of the data and context I constantly asked myself these questions; Am I presenting the participants voice as it is without ignoring
the obvious? Am I completing their sentences and assuming I know their experiences or do I let them speak and reveal their world to me? Am I exoticizing their experience as the imperialist researcher? Am I presenting myself as one of them, or are my privileges distracting and glossing over the teachers’ experiences? Am I working with the teachers and seeking to understand their experiences and worldviews without a veil in my perception of them and their practices? Thirdly, I utilized multiple sources of data such as participant observation, interviews, field journal/reflective notes and documents.

Fourthly, Lutrell (2010) suggests the use of reflective writing exercises where one writes to the participants a letter or email to briefly summarize what has been learnt from the experience after an interview or observation. Because of limitations of technology in the Kenyan context and lack of internet services, I used conversational time to bring up points that I have learnt as a way of confirming or disconfirming their experiences. In other contexts I used emails to summarize my learnings from the teachers’ experiences. But in the US context, I was able to communicate with the teachers often via email and conversations after observations about my learning from their experience. In the same vein, multiple other sources collected such as documents, observations, reflective notes and journals were useful for triangulation and for clarifying and disapproving themes.

Fifthly, Kvale (1996) recommends member checking with the participant and debriefing with colleagues. During the follow-up interviews and in the consecutive email correspondences with the participants, I conducted member checks. I shared the
transcripts and findings with the participants in informal settings for them to confirm or disconfirm the data as well as for me to get clarifications on any questions or issues emerging. In debriefing, Merryfield (1990) recommends using a peer debriefer, from within the culture, who recognizes the dilemmas of the study and the cultural context. As discussed earlier, decolonizing research demand the use of a peer from the community. Throughout the study I used several peer debriefers in the community in a number scheduled and unscheduled meetings. In Kenya and the US I was able to be in touch with members of the community who are researchers and college professors in those regions. Sixth, during data analysis, I employed “negative case analyses” an activity that helps refine the information as more and more data becomes available (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Using the negative kind of analysis I was able to identify data that provide a different interpretation and that disconfirms evident themes such as during interviews teachers claiming to engage some hot issues and yet shy away from them in the class. Finally, the detailed self-reflective notes were a good tool in confirming and adjusting my data collection methods. These notes helped to conceptualize my own preconceptions and then attempt to reread and rewrite the conclusions differently.

**Researchers’ Ethical Role**

Researchers’ have been negatively viewed due to historical experiences of Western anthropological researchers, who exploited indigenous communities or due to the intrusiveness they present (Flick, 2009; Smith, 1999). I was able to get the
participants views by close communication with participants and from interacting with local peers/people in the neighborhood in Kenya or other research students researching in the same region in the US mid-West. The motivation behind my position to approach data from the insider’s views was because this study only began a “long-term commitment” with the participants and peers in the community (Smith, 1999). I hope to continue updating them and working with them in making known their experiences as mandated by decolonizing research.

Several tensions arose on ethical issues. These are the researcher’s positionality in relation to research and the issue of informed consent. On my positionality as a researcher, my stance which was considered one of “privilege,” because of my experiences and knowledge on citizenship, global and postcolonial frameworks and practices meant that there was a possibility of analyzing data from a particular biased lens, rather than considering the participants experiences. To go beyond this bias I collected and wrote “the exact reproduction of peoples’ speech” so that I could fully describe in detail what happened in the research environment (Reinharz, 1992). This description provided a clear, picture of the research environment. Flick (2009) proposes that one should “try to consider the participants’ role and think from their perspective how would it be for you to do what you expect them to do in your research” (p.43). I constantly was renegotiating my role as a researcher and as a teacher in their contexts to be able to feel what they feel and think as teachers.
On the issue of informed consent, I utilized views of researchers who state that ethical issues need to be driven by respect of persons involved (Somekh, 2005). Therefore I obtained the consent form before the study began and assured the participants that I will use pseudonyms instead of their real names. But as the study continued, I realized the tensions between the researcher and the participants. For example, the teachers in Kenya were concerned about the ‘controversial’ nature of my research especially when it came to questions about how they teach ethnicity issue given their past experience with ethnic tensions. On one instance after an interview a participant asked “have you turned the machine off?” The participant wanted to make sure that the tape recorder was off before she could talk about her experience with the 2007 election violence. This issue was successfully approached after I assured her that the tape was off. Because of these tensions I chose to use pseudonyms for the names of the schools and the where the research was done considering the teachers feelings about the information they gave.

**Tensions emerging in the field**

During the research, tensions arose in both Kenya and the US. In the US I had problems establishing rapport with the teachers. On instance, is when I went to observe a class and the teacher told me, that she forgot to tell me not to come that day. The reason was that students were working on their own projects. I asked the teacher if it was possible for me to observe students do their project and the teacher reluctantly accepted. I
found myself in an awkward position because I did not know if I should move from group to group or sit at one position. Sitting at one position meant that I would miss students’ interactions. So I requested the teacher to allow me to move to different groups to observe the students. Another instance, in the US is when a teacher emailed me minutes before class and tells me that he will not be teaching the class because of observing Earth Day which interrupted the teaching of the day since students were participating in doing different activities. I did not have an opportunity to request to observe students during the Earth Day celebration. These two examples taught me that rapport with participants can be complex. I learnt that sometimes negotiating with the teachers can allow opportunities for further understanding of issues and add to the information about the study.

In Kenya I was scheduled to interview one teacher but kept missing the pre-interview appointments. I did not know the reason why he missed and yet he was present in the school. After using the history department chair to track him down, he said was busy with preparing form four students for the national examinations. I wondered why the teacher was not candid enough to tell me earlier on. Because of my experiences in Kenya and my understanding of the society’s perception of saying “No” that is perceived as being unkind, I understood the teachers situation. With the assistance of the deputy principal of the school I was able to get another teacher to participate in my study. This experience further exemplified the complexity of gaining rapport especially when the
social-cultural perspectives come in between the participant and the researcher. I have since learned to develop rapport from the onset of the study, to ensure that participants are free to speak to me.

Writing up

In the writing up process, I included many examples, narratives and vignettes from the field, including excerpts and detailed narratives of what transpired in the field. Such narratives provided an in-depth picture image and understanding of the field experience in Kenya or in Mid-Western US high schools. The writing process alludes to what Emerson et.al, (1995) observes, “writing is a way of seeing of increasing understanding, and ultimately of creating scenes (p.97). Therefore the write up process proceeded after the data had been analyzed and themes had been identified as described above on the coding process. The results of this study all emerged from the study. The study attempted to open conversations about social studies and the teaching of controversial issues as a pathway to citizenship education in both the US and Kenya.

During the writing up process I chose to use the traditional format or writing up because it logically explained the findings. Even though I had two research regions to write on it was logical to place the findings sides by side, making chapter three to have two parts. The reader is able to compare and contrast the ideas from Kenya and the US all in one chapter. I began by writing the findings and quoting segments of the interviews and observation form the data. However, there were tensions as well including: first, the
issue of representation of the teachers and their community, and secondly the difficult choices on what to leave out in the study and lastly.

Tensions emerged concerning issues of representation of the teachers and their communities. Going into this study I knew that my world and that of my participants and their community were different. But to bridge the gap I utilized what Somekh & Lewin (2005) suggested is the need to include conversational techniques and use of vernacular in case where participants use another language. I utilized unstructured interview questions and at times in Kenya I would restate my questions in Kiswahili or converse in Kiswahili, to close the research/participant gap and the power relations. It was a constant struggle to get into the participants world and their communities and then afterwards while analyzing data switch to a researcher’s world.

This research study would have gone many ways, but I chose to focus on teachers’ perceptions and practice of teaching using controversial issues. Many times I kept thinking to myself how students’ ideas about controversial issues would enrich the study. So I chose to ask teachers at their own will to provide students assignments. Most teachers in both regions provided me documents and I made copies of the documents to analyze and return. Others gave them to me in class to study them and return. In Kenya one teacher even allowed me to respond to questions as the students were very eager to converse with me. The student experiences enlightened the study and illuminated teachers’ stories. For example when asked about why they liked controversial issues
discussion the students said it helped them know their rights and understand democracy. These were the same views that the teachers had presented in their interviews. However, further conversations in one school revealed that students had their own controversial issues that were not given a hearing in the classrooms or in the schools. Some of these were about the school prefects. Prefects are students were given the power by the school administration to oversee fellow students and ensure they follow school rules. Of particular concern was the issue of prefects giving fellow students excessive punishments such as kneeling down, or cleaning classrooms. These were sensitive issues that put me in awkward positions, as the students expected me to voice their concerns to the administration. But that would be going against my immediate research goals. However I decided to discuss the issue with the deputy principal of the school who promised to look at the issue. This experience was a learning moment in understanding the research participants and their social setting.

This writing process served the purpose of decolonization. As earlier stated in this chapter the study first attempted to understand the participants’ experiences, their way of knowing, living and practices in the research regions (Smith, 1999). Findings of this study present participants experiences and ways of knowing and living. Their ideas and stories were given utmost concern and space in the write up process. A decolonizing framework also requires constant interrogation of self and the research process to avoid creation of hegemonic spaces and marginality (Swadener and Mutua, 2008). Continuous
interrogation revealed my biases especially when I found myself criticizing teacher practices without looking at the practice from their perspective. For instance, when one US teacher had trouble having students to participate in discussions about gay/lesbian rights, I came to learn from the teacher that there were tensions in the class because of one student who was self-proclaimed gay and therefore the rest of the students did not know how to approach the subject. So students’ withdrew from conversations fearing that they may say something inappropriate to the gay student.

Lastly, by engaging in this study, I have added to the social studies knowledge, I have made visible experiences of those in periphery, as well as opened avenues for educational reforms that will improve education in both regions. This is in line with decolonizing framework that sees research as a responsibility and an opportunity to effect social change (Dillard, 2008). One case in point was when a teacher in the US taught about Rwandan genocide and the perspective that students had after the lesson was Rwanda stuck in war and synonymous with Africa. After conversations with the teacher about the lesson the teacher noted the missing perspectives of Rwanda, and was determined to incorporate all perspectives of Rwanda not only as previously ravaged in war but as a hub of commerce and development. Also after one teacher realized that his classroom discussions missed participatory activities for social change, he decided to ask students in their own way to participate in the fight against homophobia. Some students said they would wear a ribbon in support of gay and lesbian rights. In Kenya, after
debriefing of class observations, teacher participants were determined to find ways of incorporating more controversial issues in their classrooms amidst an exam-oriented curriculum.

**Conclusion**

This qualitative research study investigated social studies teachers’ beliefs and attitudes on delicate issues in the social studies classrooms and how their conceptualization impacts their teaching strategies. As this chapter has indicated, a decolonizing research was used in the two regions of Kenya and the United States. I have also stipulated step by step procedures taken to answer the research questions as well as get most out of the research field. Because of employing qualitative grounded theory and interpretive approach emergent themes were identified. The following chapter engages in a discussion of findings from the two regions.
CHAPTER FOUR
UNDERSTANDING TEACHERS’ CONSTRUCTION AND INTERPRETATION OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Introduction
This chapter sought to explore teacher perceptions and their constructions of ideas on controversial issues (CIs) and how their ideas impact or complicate their practice as teachers of social studies. To understand teachers’ perceptions on CIs, I present narratives and experiences of the teacher participants, as they opened up their world and classrooms to me. I discuss the emergent themes from across the entire spectrum of participants in the case study regions, namely, the United States and Kenya. In these two regions there were a total of eight teacher participants in the study. Even though the research contexts were different there were some similar emerging themes. However, each individual participant’s experience was unique in his or her own way and therefore presented rich and diverse information on CIs due to the different lived and teaching experiences in different spatial locations. I began by presenting findings from the Kenyan context in the first section and then later findings from the US in the second section.

Part One: Kenya Findings

Introduction
The first part of the study was centered on Kenyan teachers’ perception and interpretation of controversial issues and how their perceptions not only impacted their
pedagogical strategies, but also explained their experiences of teaching in post-colonial spaces and contexts. Besides answering the research questions, Kenyan teachers’ experiences shed light on how the social-cultural and political context influenced and shaped teachers’ pedagogical practices. It is important to note that, as the teachers revealed their lives, they revealed something about the experiences of the society as whole, because the “self” is much entwined in the “we” or community in the Kenyan context.

Some of the emergent themes from the Kenyan case study were: 1). Teachers’ epistemological beliefs about controversial issues; 2). Teachers’ perspectives of controversial issues and citizenship education; 3) Teachers’ use of controversial issues pedagogy; 4). The challenges in teaching controversial issues. In the final section, I share the classroom experiences of how controversial issues were enacted in the Kenyan classrooms.

1. Teachers’ epistemological beliefs about Controversial Issues

This study was an attempt to understand the teachers’ epistemology or ways of knowing and belief systems that informs or impacts their understanding of controversial issues. A discussion of the teachers’ epistemology and their belief system enhanced knowledge on how they understood controversial issues within multi-ethnic and multi-cultural communities. Furthermore, this section examined the teachers’ epistemological beliefs and how these beliefs impacted the decisions they made about the teaching
controversial issues in their history classrooms. A detailed portrait of these teacher participants is available in the appendix A.

A) Construction of teachers’ epistemology

Teachers’ perceptions were greatly influenced by their epistemologies. This study found that teachers’ epistemologies played a significant role in their perception of controversial issues and classroom practices. Some of the factors that continually informed and reformed their epistemologies were education, fellow teachers, their cultural knowledge, religion, and the society.

The findings revealed that education played a major role on teachers’ epistemology and perception of controversial issues. Ms. Kelly, who taught a form two history class of 49 students of diverse cultural backgrounds, posited that her quest for knowledge was a major boost in informing her understanding of controversial issues (CIs). Ms. Kelly had begun taking a PhD degree on sexuality studies in education. She opined that “the knowledge I had in college, and what I read in books for my studies, I try to bring it into my teaching,” implying that she perceived education as a way to add to her knowledge and teaching practices. To explicate how additional education had informed her teaching, Ms. Kelly said that before taking courses on sexuality education she did not teach sex education in her classes. In many Kenyan societies, some controversial issues such as sex issues are out of bounds. As a result, Ms. Kelly noted that sex is still a taboo zone and a taboo topic, but because of her new knowledge on sex
education derived from taking graduate studies, she admitted to being comfortable approaching the topic with her students.

Likewise, Ms. Linda, a form one history teacher of 65 students, said “We go to the internet, to Google information and it has been useful in teaching our students.” Ms. Linda’s use of the internet to seek knowledge to use in her classroom is unique since computers and the internet are still luxurious equipments in Kenya. Her passion to go out of her way and deviate from the curriculum-based teaching to enrich her teaching practices was exceptional. Like Ms. Kelly, Ms. Linda was enrolled in a post graduate degree in history. She also believed that acquiring more knowledge would improve her teaching skills and add to her knowledge. She specifically mentioned how she was more informed and able to utilize electronic resources in her class because of her college experience. She said, “I can now search for materials on the internet that are useful for additional information in my history classes.” What was clear from her interview was that the internet was useful for additional information. It was clear that the material from the internet was not critically examined for misconceptions before she used it in her classroom as factual knowledge.

Ms. Kendra, a form two history teacher of 50 students, noted that the training by different government departments such as Ministry of Health had informed her knowledge on controversial issues. She indicated that the ministry sends to schools materials on HIV/AIDS, drugs and substance abuse, and other social issues. She used
those materials to inform her understanding of the issues and then used them to teach her students about those issues. An example she gave was in teaching about HIV/AIDS when it came up under form two history syllabus on the topic on scientific revolution and medicine, which only mentioned about AIDS and the problem of finding a cure. Hence she would use the HIV/AIDS brochure to give students extra content on the disease. The book analyzed causes, transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS. It had more content on HIV/AIDS than the form two history textbook, which only mentioned the disease in a sentence.

Similarly, Ms. Kate, a form three history teacher of 49 students, stated that reading abundantly is her way of knowing. She saw herself as a learner, and therefore always is reading to learn. Her passion for literature had significantly influenced her knowledge and teaching. She said, “The stories I read contain controversial issues, so when such issues come up in the classroom I know where to get more information about the issue. I ask students to read the stories then discuss what they learned from it.” Ms. Kate appeared to believe in supplementing textbook information on controversial issues with narratives from literary texts to provide a different perspective of the issue at hand. Additionally, she was in the process of enrolling in a post graduate degree, because she believed there was no end to her learning.

It can be concluded then, that the participants’ ways of knowing was created and shaped immensely by their interest in adding knowledge to inform their practices. The
quest for knowledge appeared to be the major reason for the teachers to pursue further education. The teachers revealed that the knowledge they received increased their confidence and expertise in teaching sensitive topics.

This study found that cultural knowledge was another significant base that helped construct teachers’ epistemology and perception towards controversial issues (CIs). Ms. Linda made use of her cultural knowledge to teach about her ethnicity; she identified herself as a Gikuyu woman who had been brought up in the Gikuyu cultural way of life which informs her epistemology. For example, when teaching about “Peoples of Kenya,” Ms. Linda utilized her historical and cultural knowledge in the Gikuyu culture, which is one of the ethnicities in Kenya that was discussed under the bigger title, “Peoples of Kenya.” When she taught about the Gikuyu people of Kenya, she was passionately engrossed in providing details about her ethnic group to her students. She said, “You know as a Kikuyu, I have a lot of information about their origins.” Therefore her inspiration to freely teach controversial issues was because of her cultural knowledge and pride in her identity. This knowledge inspired her to present more details about the controversial topics beyond the syllabus; in the case of “Peoples of Kenya” she presented the stories of origin of the Gikuyu people. Unlike Ms. Linda, who felt free to speak about her ethnic identity to her students, other teachers did not because of some societal constraints. The teachers revealed that the ethnic tensions had made them conceal their ethnic identity and they could not freely discuss the topic because their ethnicity was not
a dominant group in the region. These tensions had its beginning in 2007 during the controversial Kenyan election where people fought to kill ethnic minorities in their region. During my research study, similar tensions emerged because of the struggle for a new constitution that divided people of Kenya. Even though the teachers expressed that their ethnic affiliations, their way of life, informed their epistemology and how they taught some hot topics, they would not freely discuss ethnicity as Ms. Linda who shared the same ethnicity with majority of people in the society.

Ms. Kendra’s cultural knowledge was useful in enlightening her idea of controversial issues (CIs). Concerning the CIs on female genital cutting (FGC), she personally did not believe in its practice and therefore could not discuss it in her class or give any argument on the practice. She seemed uncomfortable even talking about it. When asked the reason for her abhorrence of the practice she indicated that her culture did not allow the practice. Although other cultures different from hers’ would advocate for FGC, Ms. Kendra was determined not to teach it. Likewise, because of her idea, on the issue of sex education, Ms. Kelly thought it necessary to teach sex education even though the cultural purview of the society did not encourage discussions surrounding the topic. Ms. Kelly stated that parents are just uncomfortable with the sex and sexuality issues, which implied that parents are uncomfortable discussing sex issues with their children because it is a taboo topic in many Kenyan cultures. Thus, the responsibility of teaching sex education was left to the teacher. Ms. Kelly added:
Parents trust and they believe in teachers, so whatever we are doing is right for them may be because of lack of education, knowledge, or taboo, makes them not to be comfortable with it. Even myself as a parent doing a PhD on sex education, am not comfortable in telling my children about sex issues. I would want somebody to just come and do it for me.

Ms. Kelly’s story is similar to many other stories of teachers and parents especially when it comes to talking about hot taboo topics in the Kenyan cultures such as HIV/AIDS and sex education; the socio-cultural perspectives of an issue impact the presentation of the issues at home or in school. Ms. Kelly stated that because she understands that cultures do not teach it as she knows it, she endeavored to go beyond the cultural silences to teach the topic in her classroom.

From another perspective, Ms. Linda observed that her students shy away from talking about simple issues as friendships between girlfriends and boyfriends; such friendships are not tolerated in many cultures especially when students are in school, therefore making it even a challenge to discuss other deeply entrenched cultural forbidden topics. Ms. Linda commented about teaching sex education:

We just touch it a bit. You know form ones are very naïve. You tell them something about their boyfriend or girlfriends, they say we don’t have boyfriends and girlfriend, because of their naivety, we just avoid the topic. We do not discuss it much.
From this experience it appeared that the cultural way of thinking that shies away from sex education has been passed on from generation to generation. Therefore, because students were not free to discuss such controversial issues, Ms. Linda chose to skip the discussion. Ms. Linda’s revelation raised relevant questions on the methods by which teachers can effectively approach hot-taboo topics such as HIV/AIDS and sex education and encourage discussion amidst cultural silencing.

Other epistemological influences revealed by the findings of this study were religious beliefs. Ms. Kendra referred to religion as being at the core of teachers’ knowledge construction. All of the teachers were devout Christians, identified as church members, and said their views of some issues have been guided by their religion. Ms. Kendra believed that a practice like female genital cutting is inappropriate given her religious and cultural views. Ms. Kate opined that if students would be more religiously inclined then it would solve problems with HIV/AIDS and abuse of drugs and substance abuse. Ms. Kelly said that the church had been at the forefront of education to ensure its interests are served in the schools; she said that for many years a subject like sex education has been opposed by the church but recently, the church has accepted to provide guidance as to how and what content should be included; thus the church and all involved were involved in the process of preparing a syllabus for the teachers to use in teaching sex education. However, my conversation with the school head about the teaching of sex education indicated that there was still a controversy with the Catholic
Church because of its assumed representative position as the religion of the state. Other religions, both Christian and Islam, want a stake at voicing their views on what should be taught in school.

Regarding teachers’ construction of knowledge, this study found that fellow teachers had a tremendous influence on the teachers’ epistemology. Kenyan teachers’ cultural way of knowing was most commonly through collective work and conversations. Ms. Kate asserted that collaboration with other teachers in the department cannot be ignored as they work together in many activities from syllabus preparation to setting and grading the social studies examinations in the school. In working closely with other teachers, she said, “I have learnt a lot by observing what other teachers do in their classes. That is how I have learnt to use novels in my lessons especially when they are relevant to students’ questions and understanding.” As explained by Ms. Kate, it appeared that fellow teachers influenced her way of knowing and helped to make her teaching more meaningful to her students. Ms. Linda said that because of the common idea that we know what we know from associating with others, her epistemology in teaching controversial issues (CIs) was shaped by collaborating with other teachers in the department, who were useful in providing teaching ideas, materials and resources. The teachers also noted that they received help from other departments in the school such as the counseling department, which helped in discussing sexuality issues with their students.
By engaging in collective conversations and analysis of their pedagogy, all the history teachers in the schools knew what was going on in all the other classrooms that they did not teach, and they helped one another solve issues that emerge in the classrooms. However, the teachers lamented that because of time constraints, meetings with teachers as a group were limited, and they most often utilized tea break sessions where they all converged in a tea room at least once every day as part of the school’s culture. My visit to the school found that the tea room was a space in which teachers not only spoke about their classroom experiences but also shared and exchanged teaching resources, and conversed about politics of the school and in their government.

B). Teachers’ Epistemological Decisions

In this section, I examined how teachers’ epistemologies informed their teaching philosophies about controversial issues (CIs) and how their philosophies impacted decisions they made in their social studies classrooms. Some of the decisions were founded on their ideologies, as these teachers perceived CIs as a moral obligation and responsibility.

Teachers’ decisions about what they did in the classroom were based on their epistemological beliefs. They felt obligated to teach controversial issues (CIs) to empower students to know their democratic rights so they could then make good decisions as future citizens and leaders. For example, Ms. Kendra felt obligated to teach for human rights and democracy. She stated, “The world has gone democratic and we
want to allow the students to have an idea on what democratic principles, human rights are, because they are the leaders of tomorrow.” The sense of obligation and indebtedness that Ms. Kendra felt affected how she approached CIs. She knew that her students “have no idea on what democratic principles and human rights are.” As a result, Ms. Kendra believed it to be her duty to discuss democracy and human rights with the students. She saw that as an opportunity especially because democracy was never learned in the past in the classrooms, and therefore many students had no idea of what democracy looked like. Also she considered herself as representing the new crop of citizens who had now begun to understand democracy both in play in the country and in the classroom. However, democracy seemed to be a new concept and precept in the country to Ms. Kendra as well. She added, “We are lucky enough, that we can teach about democracy, most of our parents did not know much about democracy because even them in the past they never learned about democracy.” Ms. Kendra observed that since the era of multiparty democracy, teachers have been able teach democracy unlike previous political contexts that did not allow the teaching of democracy and anything geared towards raising students awareness about issues of democracy. In sum, therefore, because the history of the country that did not espouse democracy and its ideals, Ms. Kendra believed that she had to take the current opportunity to teach about it to the younger generation because of the conducive political situation. Ms. Kendra acknowledged that:
There is a lot of freedom in talking about democracy and the rights of children. Students’ feel they are the ones to participate in discussions and debates. They feel that this is their time to effect change in the society. It empowers them, gives them freedom of speech, freedom of everything, even telling us what our government has been doing that they do not like.

Therefore, Ms. Kendra believed in empowering students to know their democratic rights and responsibilities, which in turn empowers the students to speak, air their views and question even their government practices. In this case, more than just teaching for awareness, Ms. Kendra wanted to prepare future informed leaders.

Similarly, other teachers in this study related their epistemological choice to teach controversial issues. Ms. Kelly believed that sex education needs to be taught. She supported the teaching of sex education because parents shy away from discussing the issue either because of lack of knowledge or because it is a taboo topic, thus leaving the responsibility of teaching the hot button issue to the teachers. Ms. Kelly insisted that, “We are giving them what parents cannot do, that is teach them about these taboo issues; if we do not discuss them who will tell them about it?” Ms. Kelly’s taking the responsibility of teaching sex education that has still not been included officially in the curriculum symbolized her determination to follow her beliefs amidst cultural limitations. In addition to following her epistemological beliefs, Ms. Kelly further made a decision not to shy away from teaching CIs. She posited:
You know we were not taught how to teach about HIV/AIDS or sex education, but my own interest and beliefs is what helps me. I read a lot about these topics. Also you know we cannot run away from reality, these issues are here with us, so we as teachers have do something, because the parents cannot teach their children such topics.

Ms. Kelly perceived controversial issues (CIs) as a life reality, and as a teacher, she believed she could run away from teaching CIs. Therefore, her interest and passion to do what is right were what informed her choice to take up CIs in her classrooms.

Another experience was from Ms. Kate who decided to pursue her belief in filling the gaps in the curriculum. She stated that, “Topics like the constitution are not given enough time in the curriculum, so as a teacher I feel obligated to include extra time for such topics to ensure students get a grasp of them because it is worthwhile in the students’ life.” Ms. Kate believed that if students learned about these hot topics it would be worthwhile in their lives; in other words discussions of controversial issues (CIs) would make students lives meaningful. Given these teachers’ statements it suffices to state that these teachers’ way of knowing and interpreting CIs was the driving force behind their classroom decisions, such as decisions to teach about democracy, sex education or the belief in informing and preparing future citizens. They believed teaching CIs to be a moral obligation and a responsibility; teaching their students about their human and democratic rights inspired the teachers to engage CIs in their classrooms.
Nonetheless, this study found that teachers’ epistemologies were constrained by other factors such as cultural political and mandates of the curriculum. Even though it was clear in this study that controversial issues should be taught, some other controversial issues were deemed non-controversial because of the sociocultural views towards them. One example was abortion. Ms. Kate personally believed that abortion was wrong given her religious and cultural underpinnings. Her belief might have been shared by her students and the society as well, therefore she did not perceive it as a topic for discussion in the classroom because of her thinking that there might have been a commonly accepted idea about it. Another example was female genital cutting or FGC. Ms. Kendra did not feel obligated to teach about it when it emerged in her class because of her cultural beliefs about it and the common belief that FGC is wrong. Similarly, the issue of gay/lesbian rights was not considered as a matter of discussion when it emerged in the classroom because of the agreed perception of the issue in the society. Thus, the complexity in those experiences was how some CIs received utmost consideration while others did not, especially those that were perceived as having a conclusive answer in the society; as a result teachers decided not to teach such issues.

Apart from the sensitive unspoken controversial issues, there were other constraints that hindered full realization of teachers’ epistemological beliefs. Ms. Kelly aptly posited, “When you are teaching what we call biographies of Kenyan leaders, it is a bit tricky, it is like you are touching on a ‘shaky ground.’…What we do is give students
the information and they make their own decision makers.” In this statement, it appeared that the politics of the day limited their decisions to teach politically sensitive topics. In discussing Kenyan leaders Ms. Kelly still believed that she is still treading on what she calls “shaky grounds,” meaning that the issue remains rather touchy given the knowledge about the last election violence as described earlier. Ms. Kelly chose not to go into details about the leaders because of her opinion about them and what they did for the country. If she chose to speak her oppositional opinion about the leaders, it would be detrimental to her life in the region, since the region was still coping with the aftermath of post election violence. When such an issue emerged in her classroom, she would present the story of the leaders as it was discussed in the textbooks. Ms. Kelly believed in providing students with information or knowledge on CIs which in turn equipped her students with skills to make decisions when engaging other controversial topics.

Teachers’ epistemological decisions seemed divided according to the findings of this study. On the one hand they believed in incorporating controversial issues (CIs) discussions which mostly go beyond the curriculum. On the other hand, curriculum mandates demand that teachers teach the curriculum for the students to pass the high stake examinations that afford them university opportunities. Also this study found that the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), the umbrella arm of the government, mandated strict adherence to the curriculum content which promotes government ideology and perspectives on issues. KIE representatives followed teachers in the schools to ensure that
they adhered to the curriculum directives. Also, Ms. Kendra stated that KIE recommended text books that schools were expected to buy; the schools did not receive government funding if they chose not to follow the guidelines.

The following classroom observation excerpt is representative of most of the regular history class procedures and indicates how teachers adhered strictly to the textbooks that are the mandated ‘curriculum’ by Kenya Institute of Education (KIE).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic: Early Urbanization in Europe: Athens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class: Form 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time: 10:10-10:50am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Students: 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Used: <em>The evolving world</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: Ms. Kelly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher:** Introduces the lesson by reviewing what they learned the previous day then gives a brief background of Athens. Through questions and answers the teacher discusses the topics in the textbook. (Students are required to read and make notes prior to class)

**Teacher:** When did Athens come to existence?

**Student:** After Persian wars in 490-40 BCE.

**Teacher:** Athenians were great thinkers. What began in Athens that is very important?

**Student:** The idea of democracy

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Table 5 Example of classroom observation 1 (Kenya)
Table 5 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher:</th>
<th>What type of governing?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students:</td>
<td>Where people make decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>Yes, am talking about the town which was beautiful. How were the streets built? What was special about this town?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students:</td>
<td>There was a temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>Yes, the temple was built in honor of a goddess. The houses are built of……</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students:</td>
<td>Mumble something…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>The roofs were…..(teacher lets students complete her sentence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students:</td>
<td>thatched.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>so what were the factors that led to growth of Athens?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students:</td>
<td>(all quiet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>look at your texts books. So what were the factors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students:</td>
<td>(restate factors that led to the growth of Athens from their history textbooks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>(Question and answer format to cover details on Athens such as, explanation of factors leading to growth of Athens, looks at functions of Athens, and the reasons for decline of Athens. The teachers’ notes were worded as they were in the text book. Lastly students were asked to read and make notes for the rest of the unit.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The findings in the above excerpts indicated an overt reliance on the text books by the teachers. The teachers stated that Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) required them to follow strictly the curriculum. Therefore to ensure speedy coverage of the curriculum, the teachers asked students to write notes in advance of class. As a result the teachers disclosed that strict adherence to the curriculum restricts and debilitates their passion and belief in teaching sensitive topics. The students too had limited space to critically reflect on the topics discussed because they were absorbed in completing the writing of the required notes. When I asked the students if they are up to date with what they called “copying” notes from the history textbook, a few students were up to date while the majority were behind, some even two three units behind. Copying of notes was done almost word for word since the students lacked time to analyze those notes and summarize them. That note taking practice indicated that most often critical thinking skills in analyzing and making informed conclusions were missing from the notes. When I asked the students what took place when they had not completed the notes, one student said that she may not pass the continuous assessment test the following month. Students explained that they had learned to rote-learn or memorize major points in the textbooks in order to produce those points during the exam which assured their passing of the test.

In conclusion, the teachers’ experiences in this section confirmed that teachers’ epistemologies are the force behind their controversial issues (CIs) pedagogy and the decisions they make about the CIs. Their epistemologies have been shaped by their
culture, their quest for knowledge through education, society, and their collaborations with teachers. It is this epistemology that pushed them to teach issues that may be deemed taboo issues in the society. It is their way of knowing that inspires teachers to go beyond teaching for knowledge’s sake to teaching for transformation. This section showed how their epistemologies move teachers to make decisions that advance CIs teaching. However their teaching of controversial issues had been complicated by the politics, culture and curriculum demands of the government. Teachers could not fully realize their ideas and beliefs in teaching controversial issues.

2) Teachers’ Perspectives of the Controversial Issues and Citizenship Education

a) Controversial Issues for Healthy Democracies and Citizenry.

In the previous section I examined teachers’ construction of ideas about controversial issues and how their epistemology influenced the decisions they made in their classrooms about controversial issues teaching. How the teachers’ interpreted controversial issues in the classroom is examined in the following section. Also, I present teachers’ perspectives of the relationship between controversial issues and the teaching of democratic citizenship skills and global citizenship skills as a path towards fulfilling the goals of developing healthy democracies and citizenry. Lastly I discuss teachers’ perspectives about disclosure of opinions in their social studies classrooms.
i) Teachers’ Interpretation of Controversial Issues in the Classroom

The teaching of controversial issues (CIs) was demonstrated as pertinent to equipping students to know and practice their democratic rights, to engender students’ participation in discussions and debates, and to give them a voice and the skills needed to be good and effective decision makers. The consensus among participants’ was that the inclusion of controversial issues in their history classrooms was significant in training students for healthy local and global democracy and citizenry. It is therefore necessary to discuss how the teacher participants interpreted controversial issues and controversial issues teaching.

To illustrate, Ms. Kate, a form three history teacher, preferred to call CIs “emerging issues” because these issues come up in the news and in the class. The issues could be in Kenya or elsewhere in the world and required scrutiny in order to understand their country and the world. Ms. Kate said that when emerging issues emanated from students after reading a section in the history textbook they were more likely to be involved in the discussion and to argue about it. She said that the inquisitive students offered to do extra work to compare the issue to other countries in the world. Then later students analyzed the policies put in place in those countries that could be applied to Kenya, thereby increasing their understanding of the world. Ms. Kate gave an example of HIV/AIDS issue which often comes up as an emerging issue in the current events or as an issue in history textbook. In teaching the issue the teacher asked students to compare the
textbook content on HIV/AIDS with facts in works from other countries, including portrayal of the disease in literary texts. The students then reported their findings by providing a holistic picture of the disease beyond the textbook. Besides fulfilling students’ curiosity for knowledge, the discussion on HIV/AIDS empowered students with knowledge to make good decisions in their lives.

Ms. Kendra, a form two history teacher, saw controversial issues (CIs) as one that “can really cause a never ending conflict” in the classroom without reaching a consensus and gave the example of the topic of democracy. To this teacher, democracy in itself was a controversial concept, given the history of the country in which democracy was perceived as a word in the dictionary and an ideal with little immediate manifestations in the day-to-day lives of citizens. She went on to say, “It’s a topic that was put in the syllabus just some four years ago.” Ms. Kendra viewed democracy as a concept and not a reality or a practice. As a topic it had been included recently in the syllabus. Therefore, it was difficult for Ms. Kendra to comprehend how to teach it as a topic in cases where she said “there were no free choices and participation.” Also, she did not know how to teach about democracy as she had no training on democratic learning nor had she grown up in what she perceived as a democratic system. Finally, there was no clear example of what democracy looked like especially in the aftermath of election violence in 2007. Therefore, the topic of democracy was in itself controversial. Nonetheless, democracy
was a topic in Kenya that teachers were progressively accepting, understanding and incorporating in their classrooms.

Similarly, the findings revealed that controversial issue (CIs) are still extremely delicate issues. Ms. Kelly perceived controversial issues as a fragile topic. For example, Kenya’s constitution was a delicate topic at the time because of the political events and news in Kenya, especially when the people of Kenya had to vote to change the old constitution. In circumstances similar to democracy, the constitution had been introduced recently to the social studies curriculum in light of the recent 2007 educational reforms. Since most teachers did not know how to approach the topic of the constitution, most often the teachers put aside evidences on both sides of the issue and went along with the mainstream views. Ms. Kelly asserted her viewpoint on the constitution saying, “Whether right or wrong you protect it,” denoting that as a teacher one is obligated to protect mainstream viewpoints. When asked why she believed in protecting mainstream perspective of the constitution, she said it was for her own security. Thus whether it was a controversial issue or not, teachers promoted the prevailing knowledge and especially the views of the people in that particular society, in order to be safe and secure in that society. (Further discussion on the issue of safety and security has been discussed in chapter two).
ii) Controversial Issues and the Teaching of Democratic and Citizenship Skills

In chapter two, I indicated that democratic goals are closely intertwined with the development of good citizens. Briefly stated, in that chapter I discussed how following the change of power from the British to the new crop of elite Kenyan leaders in post-independence Kenya, the system of governance was a single national political party up until 1992, when multi-party political systems began, thus ending the single party system monopoly. This single party monopoly was seemingly identified and believed to have been a democratic transition from the colonial government and to have introduced democratic ideals into the new system of governance. Nonetheless, manifestations of democracy in the government were slow. In other words, realities of a democracy were still a dream yet to be put in practice. But years later, those actual policies and reforms, especially in education, took effect. As for education, especially the history curriculum, the teacher participants’ indicated that they only began teaching democracy about four years ago. This meant that democracy was and is still a concept with which they are grappling and developing in their pedagogy. Ms. Kendra, said she had no training in democratic ways of teaching and learning, nonetheless teachers were required to teach it with their limited knowledge. Ms. Kendra explained that in previous political governance before the Kenyan multi-party system there were “no free choices” and “participation.” Consequently, teachers became agents of the government and taught the political ideology as recommended in the curriculum without looking at different sides of
an issue. However, with time teachers have begun to review their pedagogy and teaching philosophy, and have come to believe and encourage some semblance of democratic learning to empower students to make good choices, informed decisions and critical judgments about CIs.

The findings demonstrated that teaching for citizenship skills has been an element in the teachers’ pedagogy, though not explicitly stated. To illustrate, when teaching about the constitution, Ms. Linda stated that she always explained what the constitution entailed, she gave information about the constitution and then gave details about the newly proposed constitution on which there was soon to be a vote. It was apparent that the Ms. Linda taught the topic on the constitution for content knowledge and awareness and not specifically to challenge students to action. To illustrate, Ms. Linda stated that, “I talk about details given in the new proposed constitution and then compare the new laws with the arguments given in the media, and then we discuss about it.” One observation of her class explicated how she used the human rights clause as described in the new constitution. She chose the definition of right to life, an issue that can cause controversies, and then she read from the constitution clause 26 (ii, iv) that says, “the life of a person begins at conception…. Abortion is not permitted unless, in the opinion of a trained health professional, there is need for emergency treatment, or the life or health of the mother is in danger or if permitted by any other law.” Therefore, the purpose of the lesson was to make students aware of what the constitution says and what the media says
and then she left the matter to the students to make their own evaluations of the matter. Some of the students mentioned the views against abortion and saw it as dangerous and destructive to human life while a few others perceived abortion as crucial where a mother’s life is in danger.

It is necessary also to understand how the curriculum is set to encourage citizenship skills. I give a brief overview of a form 1 history textbook. A textual analysis of the form one text book that is recommended and used in all history classes indicated some content on national citizenship goals. One chapter out of eight chapters of the text, *The Evolving World: A History and government course (Form 1)* by F. Kiruthu, J. Kapiyo and M. Muma focused on citizenship. Some of the sub topics on the chapter are rights of a citizen, responsibilities of a citizen and elements of good citizenship. As students progressed to other levels of learning more content was incorporated about the topic of citizenship, such as understanding the specificities of the constitution. However, most of what was taught was knowledge for knowledge sakes; there was no reference to how citizenship looked like in practice. The evaluation questions at the end of the chapter asked only for a discussion a definition and a stating of facts, and did not go deeper to explore issues such as human rights vs. abortion or who is really is citizen in contrast to immigrants or ethnocentricism. It appeared that some content on citizenship was learned but not practiced.
At the end of the history textbook there was content on civic education. Civic content in Kenyan social studies curriculum was described as useful in preparing and educating students to participate in the civic processes of the country such as in policy making, constitution making and to make students aware of their government and their rights and responsibilities geared towards successful and productive citizenship.

Teachers said that they strictly followed civic learning as it was stipulated in the curriculum for the purpose of developing patriotic, national citizens. Consequently citizenship skills learned through civic education seemed to be geared towards promoting a sense of nationhood and the skills needed to participate effectively in the changing face of the Kenyan democratic state.

iii. Controversial Issues and the Teaching of Global Citizenship Skills

Global citizenship which can simply be described as teaching citizenship through a global perspective is a relatively new concept with the teachers in Kenya. In asking questions about global citizenship to teachers, I explained what global citizenship meant. I asked if the teachers’ incorporated issues about the world in ways that prepare students to fit in the global world and then I probed using other questions such as, Have you taught about the terrorism in the world or any other sensitive issues in the world? And what do you expect to achieve after training their students about world issues? These questions guided the teachers comprehension of what I meant by global citizenship as well as enhanced my own understanding of their experiences. From the teacher
participants’ views and experiences, I observed that they do include some form of global citizenship perspectives in their history classrooms. To explain the extent and scope of global citizenship learning in Kenya, I relate some of the teachers’ practices and experiences geared towards global citizenship skills and review the text books they use to see what they present. When discussing land issues, Ms. Linda compared land issues in Kenya with those in the Congo and in other parts of Africa. She also incorporated perspectives and examples on land issues from other parts of the world, such as the Palestinian and Israeli land issues. Ms. Linda practiced comparisons of local issues to international issues for “students to see that land issues are a common problem in the world as well and can see what other countries have done or what policies they have put in place to solve those problems and then apply that to Kenya.” It seemed that for Ms. Linda comparing issues in the local area and in the world opened students’ open minds to the similar problems in their country and those around the world, and, therefore students became knowledgeable of their continent and world. Further, aside from comparing the issues, Ms. Linda wanted her students to apply what other countries have done in the context of writing plans to solve the land problems in Kenya.

Likewise when Ms. Kendra was asked how she incorporated global perspectives in her history classroom, she stated “I teach about democracy in other countries in the world and we talk a lot about events in the world, especially what we see in other parts of the world like the US, they have a lot of democratic space and rights as compared to what
we have here.” Just like Ms. Linda, Ms. Kendra compared controversial issues in Kenya to those of other countries in the world. Specifically, Ms. Kendra compared democracy to the United States’ type of democracy, as she perceived it to be an ideal for providing democratic space and rights for its citizens.

By incorporating global perspectives in citizenship education, Ms. Kelly said, “We involve a lot of current events. Like at present we tell our students that unless they learn current events in the world, history will not help them. When they come to form one they learn about Kenya, and Africa as a whole, and more about the world.” Ms. Kelly asserted the significance of current events in the world as having a part in educating students of their world. Similarly, Ms. Kate spoke about the emerging issues both from around Kenya and in the world. She indicated that students brought up those issues from the news and the fictional texts they read in the classroom. In her teaching, she used the issues students brought up and compared the issues to the local situation and the global situation. For example, when the students brought up the issue of HIV/AIDS, she encouraged them to think about the issue broadly and beyond the local area, to the continent and in the world. Ms. Kate asked students to do research on HIV/AIDS in different countries neighboring Kenya and in the world, and then report on their findings and how it compared or contrasted to Kenya’s situation. She wanted students to be informed about other countries facing the same problem as their country.
Besides demonstrating participants’ beliefs in incorporating global content in their classroom, my analysis of the texts books used suggested a considerable amount of global/Western lens. For instance, while examining the history and government curriculum for forms one to four, in form one I found three out of eight units of content from the world. In form two, four out of eight units included content from the world and the trend continued. It is apparent that the global focus of the history curriculum was intended to develop students who are aware of their world in fulfillment of the objective of Kenya’s history education that is determined “to promote understanding and appreciation of intra-national and international consciousness and relationships” (KIE, 2003a). Developing students who are conscious of their world and who become citizens of Kenya and of the world is well placed. However, further analysis of the textbook found that majority of the global content was focused on Western and specifically Europe and USA; this raises questions as to the definitions of global education.

Also the study found that there were more units that spoke about the world in the Kenyan history curriculum than those which spoke about its people, an aspect that appeared problematic. Also called into question is whose perspectives and whose ideologies the curriculum seeks to promote at the expense of the greatly needed local knowledges.

The teachers’ stories and the curriculum content indicated that the concept of global citizenship in education was not in use. However the methods of teaching and
approaching subjects from different perspectives and the goal of developing students to survive in the world denoted that some form of global citizenship education. In other words Kenyan teachers understand and practice global citizenship education in their own way different from the Western conception of citizenship. However, the skills the teachers promoted in their classrooms, such as global perspectives, were geared towards citizenship goals. The teachers included issues from the local region, and applied them to Africa and the world. They advanced awareness of the world and skills that the students could learn from studying about the world.

b) Teachers’ Perception on Disclosure of Opinions

All of the Kenyan teacher participants asserted that they disclosed their opinions on certain controversial issues. However, this study found that there was a variation on when they disclosed, the nature of the controversial topic under discussion, and the political situation in the local and national community. Ms. Kendra stated that, “As a teacher I like to tell them what I believe in, but as for something like FGM I will teach them the content about it but I will not dwell on it, I do not like the practice itself.” For Ms. Kendra revealing her opinion depended on the topic at hand. A topic like female genital cutting, referred to as FGM, is a cultural practice or custom that she did not favor or practice because of her belief. From her perspective FGM is not a debatable issue either because her cultural or ethnic group does not practice it, and because she personally views it as an unlawful practice, as many Kenyans do. Therefore, she
preferred to only provide curriculum content on the issue, such as why it was and is practiced, but she would not dwell or engage a conversation on the topic. FGM was a closed issue from Ms. Kendra’s perspective; there are other ethnic groups, however, who continue the practice, even after the government declared it illegal. This experience on FGM reveals the complex situation within which teachers find themselves. On one hand students who come from communities that practice FGM may want to discuss the topic, and on the other hand, the teacher who thought that the topic did not warrant a discussion denied the students an opportunity to speak their feelings.

Ms. Kelly, on the other hand, imagined how her disclosure would impact the students’ views. Kelly thought that:

Any time a teacher gives their views on a subject, it is like the students think that it is where the teacher wants us to go. So most of the time we let the students discuss about it, we look at the good side and the bad side of it, then as a teacher you come generally and give views on both sides.

When pressed about giving her opinion, Ms. Kelly said:

I will keep off. I will tell them it is for the individual to decide, depending on the issue you handle. I tell them this is right or wrong, like the constitution I tell them if you think this is wrong or right it is ok. Then I give my opinion and I tell them sincerely speaking if I was given an opportunity this is what I will do. You end up
telling them it’s up to them as individuals. You give your view depending on the circumstances on the issue, otherwise you keep off.

Ms. Kelly believed in empowering her students to think critically for themselves without teacher interference in their ideas. She insisted that even when she gave the students her opinion, it was up to the students to decide their position and supporting arguments. For example in teaching about colonial/British education, she guided students through questions and answers such as, “What was the reason for colonial education? How did it look like? Why did the colonizers want to change African traditional education?” After a discussion of the content on colonial education, she told them her opinion about colonial education. In that lesson she revealed that colonial education brought something good for Africans, and was the reason why we can now read and write. Ms. Kelly encouraged the students to make their own independent decisions about what they think about traditional and colonial education. In the context of the discussion about education for Kenyans before and after colonization, Ms. Kelly was confident in revealing her opinion, but she still emphasized that “depending on the circumstances on the issue, otherwise you keep off.” She may reserve her opinion on some subjects that may be deeply heated. She explained that when discussing sensitive issues such as tribalism, she would not disclose her opinion for fear of reprisal from the community, which was intolerant to opposing political views since the 2007 election violence.
Like Ms. Kelly, Ms. Kate posited, “Usually I first let the students’ debate around the issue and making sure they are looking at either sides of the issue, then at the end of the lesson I will tell them.” Kate gave me an example, “When talking about slavery, after discussing about all kinds of slave trade and how and why slaves were acquired, I will ask students to tell me what they think of slavery and slave trade, then at the end I will tell them my own thinking about it.” This example signified the teacher’s use of multiple lenses in discussions before disclosure of her opinion on the issue.

Both Ms. Kelly and Ms. Kate encouraged discussions on the controversial subject before disclosing their opinion. Similarly, when asked about the passing or failing of the new constitution debate in Kenya and her stand on it, Ms. Linda said, “I told them my view on the land issues and told everything that we should embrace the change so that the land would not be left idle.” Unlike Ms. Kate and Ms. Kelly, Ms. Linda not only revealed her opinion but she said “everything” including her deep seated feelings and political engagement about the land issue and her opinion as to why the new constitution should pass. As a teacher she became an advocate of the new constitution and promoter of political ideology which was advocating for the proposed new constitution. Linda trusted that the passing of the new constitution would especially change former problematic elements on land issues and the new laws would ensure no land is left idle to the benefit of the masses. It appeared that for Linda, her beliefs in sharing her opinion go beyond just teaching controversial issues as was the case with the rest of the teachers. She became
politically involved as an advocate or activist for the government wing that was for the new constitution.

These narratives of teachers explicated the complex situations that complicate the teachers’ disclosure or withholding of opinions. They stressed three points; the political situation around them greatly affects their disclosure, the cultural beliefs such as Ms. Kendra about FGC impel them not to disclose or discuss the topic, and lastly their reasons and for intentions disclosing opinions. What was problematic was the presentation of the debates or controversial issues. Classroom discussions revealed mostly questions and answer format that did not give space for critical discussions of the controversial issues. Teachers emphasized content on the issues and few opportunities for students to critically analyze and speak about the issues; they were left with the one option of going with the flow of ideas. Moreover, the popular societal belief was to listen to the older ones who were always perceived as wise decision makers, and thus empowering the teachers’ authority and the purging of students voices. Finally, the examples provided revealed that teachers chose what CIs they would engage in the classroom and those that were not directly connected to the curriculum. It became visible then that the teaching of controversial issues rested mainly on the teachers, particularly with the limitation of the teacher centered instruction.
3) Teachers use of controversial issues pedagogy

These sections examine the different ways teachers used controversial issues in their history classrooms. First, I looked at how teachers’ epistemologies and beliefs in teaching controversial issues was realized through the different pedagogical practices in their history classrooms. Secondly, I examined what the teachers revealed as the complexities in enacting controversial issues pedagogy. Finally, I present teachers views about the complicated role of teaching gender and ethnicity in the Kenyan context.

i) Practices of Controversial Issues Pedagogy

From the teachers’ epistemological beliefs and understanding of the purposes of controversial issues, it was clear that the teachers’ belief and interpretation of controversial issues pedagogy (CIP) was to empower students to think critically on the controversial issues (CIs). It is therefore significant to examine how teachers’ utilized an empowering pedagogy that sought to educate and empower students to be able to make their own decisions and choices, to use their freedom to speech, to know their rights and to actualize their knowledge through participating in their society. To realize these goals the teachers utilized pedagogical strategies such as discussions and debates, research projects where students presented their research and question and answer approach. These strategies were also in line with the recommended learner-centered strategies in the history curriculum (KIE, 2003b). This curriculum emphasized on teachers’ use of pedagogical practices such as debates, group project reports, dramatization, and role play.
Teachers in this study explained that because of time limitations they could not utilize role play or dramatization.

Regarding discussions and debates, my findings revealed that whenever teachers had extra time after completing a given unit they would engage discussions and debates. Most of the discussions and debates were enacted towards the end of the lesson engaging students’ questions or current events. For example, after a question and answer session on the rationale and differences between Traditional and British education Ms. Kelly the teacher asked students to debate controversial issue of Traditional education vs. British education for Kenya. So Ms. Kelly placed students in two groups; those who argue for Traditional education sat on the one side of the classroom and those for British education to sit on the opposite side. The debate became engaging and the students deliberated on their points before presenting to strengthen their arguments and also to refute the other group’s views. The debate appeared to involve most students and invoke their interest in the subject.

In another form three history class, Ms. Kate engaged a debate on Mau Mau, a nationalist movement that was said to have been at the forefront of Kenya’s independence struggle from British rule. Ms. Kate asked students to deliberate on why Mau Mau was described as terrorist group by the British colonial government and described by Kenyans as an independence movement. Although most students believed that Mau Mau was not a terrorist group they speculated as to why the colonial
government called it a terrorist organization. Some of their speculations were; Mau Mau was a secret group and a terrorist group is a secret group; some of its members were implicated in breaking into houses in White neighborhoods, and killing White people. The debate empowered students to reflect and make decisions about the Mau Mau issue. These classroom experiences signified how Kenyan teachers practice controversial issues in their classrooms through what they consider an empowering practice.

Regarding research projects in the classrooms when teaching about the migration of different ethnic groups in Kenya in a form one history class, Ms. Linda asked students from a specific ethnic group to research their ethnic group and then present their findings to the rest of the class. This class was multiethnic and provided a good number of research projects. In these discussions Ms. Linda emphasized that students inject their cultural knowledge and stories about their ethnic group to enhance their projects. Students began by recounting the historical facts about their ethnicity and origins and then narrated stories about the different myths and cultures. This project showed how the indigenous cultural knowledge is still valuable as a knowledge base for Kenyans. It also taught students to espouse affiliations with their ethnic groups as they embrace affiliations with the national and international society. Likewise, in a discussion about urbanization in Kenya and its effects in a form two history class, HIV/AIDS emerged as one of the consequences of urbanization. To further the discussion on why urban cities had higher HIV/AIDS cases, Ms. Kate asked her students to do more research on the
topic and compare and contrast the HIV/AIDS statistics in Kenyan urban cities with those from different countries in the world. Groups of students were assigned their choice of world countries to research and to present what they found. This practice empowered to students because it gave them an avenue by which to speak, raised their knowledge of the world, and helped them to make good decisions about the pandemic.

Findings showed that debates were a teaching strategy. For instance, Ms. Kelly utilized a set of critical thinking questions to guide students’ debate on traditional education verses British education. Some of the questions were, “What was the reason for traditional/colonial education? How did they look like? Why did the colonizers want to change African traditional education? How different is the British colonial education from the Traditional education?” Ms. Kelly’s goal in this case was to assist students in making independent decisions about traditional and colonial education, thus making the lesson learner-centered. Similarly Ms. Linda stated that “We mostly discuss. If we were to discuss something like the rainfall in Kenya we gave each one a piece of the research for example Central, North Eastern, Rift Valley and Nairobi and they would research on each of the provinces and then present in class.” Ms. Linda’s example illuminated how she conducted research projects with her students.

Another finding disclosed Ms. Kendra’s a distinctive controversial issues approach of the use of exhibitions, displays and drama. While teaching about Trans-Atlantic Trade in the form two history curriculum, Ms. Kendra emphasized that Slave
trade was a topic that was barely touched on the curriculum. She explained that Trans-Atlantic Trade entailed knowledge about its origin, organization, its decline and the impact of the trade as presented in the textbook. After the discussion she then arranged for her students to do more research about the trans-Atlantic slave trade and present their research in class. During the presentation day, the students had arranged themselves into groups with different activities. Some presented a visual map of trans-Atlantic slave trade with specificity of the slave routes. Another group presented pictures associated with trans-Atlantic slave trade such as a map with countries involved in the slave trade, pictures of slaves inspected for sale, bound slaves and a picture of a slave ship. Another group enacted a drama of how slaves were captured and sent to the slave merchants and off to the unknown land. The last group presented a discussion of the origins of slave trade and slavery in Africa to the abolition of slave trade and slavery. The teacher ended the discussion with critical questions about the topic such as Why did slavery begin? What do you think about slave trade and slavery? Why did the British champion the abolition of slave trade? How did slavery impact slaves in the new world? This lesson explicated how Ms. Kendra enacted a controversial issue discussion.

ii) Complexities in using Controversial Issues

The previous section demonstrated how teachers in Kenya taught controversial issues (CIs). Furthermore, the section revealed how the teachers and the curriculum supported the learner-centered classroom practices. However, amidst the curriculum
stipulations of effective teaching strategies and the teachers’ good intentions, other complexities hinder the teaching of controversial issues and learner-centered instruction. This section discusses the complexities in teaching CIs in the classroom and the reasons for those problems.

Before I examine classroom practices, I am compelled to share what Ms. Kate offered in honestly describing the actuality in the classrooms; this signifies the reality of most schools in the region. She asserted:

I want to tell you the truth of what is happening, so you know, because this is the reality and is not what people want to hear and say, we believe in critical thinking skills but the style of teaching does not allow time to consider those skills.

Students are not encouraged to think on their own, they just take what is available to learn so they can pass their examinations.

The above findings showed that realities in the classrooms deny best practices in teaching for the sake of rote-learning. Ms. Kate’s honest perception of the reality in the classrooms in Kenya cannot be generalized to speak to all teachers and all classrooms, but her conclusive statement demonstrated the complexity in teaching CIs as well as in encouraging critical thinking skill; if the teachers concentrated on teaching these skills they would not complete their syllabus, nor would students perform well in examinations. In sum then, although teachers believed in teaching CIs, many times their beliefs do not translate to practice. The expectations of curriculum and the teacher guidebooks such as
The Evolving World: Teachers Book Form 1 (2003) by Kapiyo recommend the teaching of critical thinking skills through learner-centered strategies such as discussion, group work, role play, debate, and educational visits; however, the teachers would not or were unable to achieve those goals. The following section presents classroom examples of how CIs were taught and the constraints teachers faced.

Findings indicated that, first, it is important to reiterate that there was consensus among the teacher participants that controversial issues pedagogy should incorporate balanced perspectives by presenting both sides of the issue and including evidence supporting the positions. For example, in teaching about Mau Mau rebellion in pre-independence Kenya, Ms. Kate utilized a deliberation that examined both the perspective of the Kenyans about Mau Mau as an independence movement and the perspective of the British on Mau Mau as a terrorist group.

Secondly on empowering students teachers agreed that their beliefs and intentions to teach controversial issues was important for empowering students with critical skills that the students can utilize in the future. When the issue of HIV/AIDS emerged in Ms. Kate’s class, she gave students an opportunity to research on the topic beyond what was in the textbook and present their findings to the class. Ms. Kate effectively followed up on the emerging issue because she had some time left after a unit to discuss the issue. However, because of the pressure to complete the syllabus, such CIs strategies in
teaching were not often the case in the classrooms, mainly because lengthy discussions interfered with the timely completion of the syllabus.

Ms. Linda explained the complexity in fulfilling the purposes of controversial issues pedagogy. She taught a topic on causes of food shortages in Kenya. One of the emerging causes of food shortages was HIV/AIDS. The disease was said to have caused many deaths among the productive workers. During the discussion, one student asked, “What is the government doing to prevent this pandemic?” The teacher immediately asked the students to find materials on HIV/AIDS in the school library to learn more. I asked Ms. Linda why she did not engage the student’s question and she stated a lack of time for the discussion. After a couple of days I followed up with the students; one student told me she had not had time to go the library and might not easily get the texts needed as they are old and dilapidated. Again, because of time constraints, a learning moment was missed.

In a similar instance, Ms. Kendra’s philosophy about discussions and debates was that such practices “empowers students, gives them freedom of speech, to even telling us what our government has been doing that they do not like.” Kendra believed that students are empowered to speak and participate even in democratic practices in their government, contributing to the debates. However, findings discovered that classroom practices indicated a containment of student voice. During a monthly examination review or continuous assessment test review, students were asked to give possible answers to a
question inquiring about the responsibilities of a citizen; answers ranged from “obey laws of a country” to “paying taxes.” One student answered that responsible citizens should “expose law breakers such as such as our school prefects” (prefects are students in charge of other students to ensure that they follow the school rules and laws). The students wanted attention to be given to the issue of class and school prefects who abuse the authority by taking power into their hands to punish other students as they wish. Ms. Kendra quickly told the students to stick to the syllabus and the lesson went on. Ms. Kendra had to avoid the students answer as it was un-related to the syllabus topic and there was not room for further discussion. Therefore, the students had no space to discuss their burning issue due to its unrelated context with the syllabus. Later I asked students why they spoke of prefects as law breakers; the students mentioned wide range of problems they face in the school with the prefect authoritative command while the administration applauded the prefects’ positions. One of the major issues that the students raised was that “prefects were acting as presidents and made other students suffer by punishing them over nothing.”

By raising the statement above the students were hoping to get a listening ear from their teacher so that they can get a space to analyze the prefects’ actions in relation to those of society’s law breakers. The teacher brushed off the subject, which may have implied that the teacher shied away because she did not want to be involved in the students’ politics or that the teacher may be supportive of school system that suppresses
students’ rights, in turn making students compare prefects as the president. The experience discussed here complicated further democratic learning in history classrooms.

On teaching resources, the teachers believed in use of multiple resources in teaching their history units. Some of the resources that participants claimed to use were charts, pictures, drawings and other materials like books and brochures from other departments. Ms. Kendra showed me some of the materials such as maps and pictures in her office that she had been using for a number of years in teaching history. These resources were in accord with best practices in learning as recommended in the history curriculum, which suggested the use of resources such as the encyclopedia, pictures and maps, historical time charts, regalia, videotapes, parliamentary documents, and newspaper cutting among others.

Nonetheless, my findings in the classroom observation presented a different picture. First, the classrooms did not have any meaningful charts or pictures for history learning or for other subjects. When one entered the classrooms, the walls were bare except for an occasional picture of an athlete or notices for students on the board. Secondly, I did not see any teacher bring in any visual aids, or use any video tapes, or take any students for an educational trip during my classroom observation. The charts that Ms. Kendra showed to me in her office seemed to be for a ‘show-tell’ and were not used in the classrooms when I was present, even when the materials were relevant for classroom discussion. What was present in the classrooms were a couple of schedules for
classroom cleaning and duties which seemed to have been constructed by the students. Also on the wall there were mostly pictures of famous athletes in the world such as David Beckham, Lebron James and Kobe Bryant. In another class I saw a Christian religious education (CRE) poster with some biblical phrases on morality (CRE is one of the core courses taught in Kenyan schools).

Even though the teachers stated that they use visual aids in teaching history there was very little evidence of their use. Regarding the use of visual aids Ms. Linda said, “What you see you keep it more than what you read,” but her teaching did not involve use of the visuals. Most of the visuals she used were pictures/maps from the textbook and an occasional worn map of Africa. For example, when Ms. Linda taught about the great migrations of Africa, she used a map on the text book entitled “Migration and settlement of the peoples of East Africa” which had arrows showing directions of movement by the Nilotes, Cushites and Bantu peoples (Kapiyo et.al, 2003). Students were required to draw the map as an assignment and as a way of memorizing the movement of peoples of Africa. When I asked Ms. Linda why she did not have other resources other than the textbook to teach about the above topic, she said first, the resources in the office were old and decrepit, and second, they did not have the technology in the classroom to use in teaching. Moreover, even though the teachers were trained to improvise resources, Ms. Linda stated that there was no time for improvisation of resources nor did she know what materials to use for teaching certain controversial issues. I also asked about the school
funding and the buying of teaching resources and Ms. Linda said that usually the funding did not get to the teaching resources because it was insufficient amidst many other significant needs. Such practices demonstrated the complicated nature of teaching history without the availability of resources and technology.

Findings indicated on the one hand, teachers’ belief in using multi-modal strategies in teaching. However, on the other hand, findings indicated a consistent questions and answer format. In all of the observed history classes, students were required to read units in advance of class and summarize the units by writing notes in their notebooks which were constantly checked by the teacher to see if they were up to date. During class sessions the teacher asked questions on the units read, while students answered the questions. Such a practice was perceived as a discussion technique helping students to memorize the facts that would help them pass their examinations. Teachers indicated that the question and answer format enabled them to speedily go through the syllabus in time to fulfill the curriculum directives.

To further explicate how complex teaching of controversial issues (CIs) can be, Ms. Kendra aptly stated about her practice:

We teach point for and points against. We use discussions, debates, we talk, they find it exciting when we talk and they air their view, which empowers them to talk, we do not lecture. The lecture method is not encouraged. We do not spoon-feed them the content. So they read in advance before they come to class.
Ms. Kendra’s belief appears to be that the use of different pedagogical strategies such as discussions gave students opportunities to speak their views because they do not intend to “spoon-feed them with content.” Yet my observation of various history classes revealed an overwhelming question and answer type of CIs approach. Ms. Kendra explained that the time constraint hindered them from using the strategies. However they emphatically indicated that whenever they found time they used those teaching methods. It was evident that time constraints were a huge factor complicating CIs pedagogy, thus teachers were left with the lecture method as an easier way to complete the syllabus in time, thus defeating the purpose of an empowering CIs pedagogy.

The teachers believed also that students’ participation was normal; that is, from the teachers’ perception, students contributed to classroom discussions. Yet in my classroom observation I found that less than a tenth of the students had the courage to raise their hands and answers questions and while the rest of the class answered in a collective voice. After asking teachers why the bigger percentage of students did not participate in discussions, and not receiving any satisfying answers, I concluded that lack of participation was due to teacher centered practices. This is what I wrote on my journal after my observation:

I think I am seeing a replay of what John Dewey (1970) talks about when discussing the nature of teacher-centered classrooms where teachers are ‘knowers’ and students as passive listeners. In this school system, students are
expected to be listeners and teachers’ are expected to be transmitters of knowledge. At the same time the teacher wants to complete the syllabus in time before examinations, therefore there is no time for engaging discussions.

After concluding that classrooms are teacher-centered and students are passive learners because of the nature of the school system in Kenya where silence is applauded, I assumed that such a teaching practice limited learner-engaging activities; after reflecting on the repeated classroom experiences, I came to conclude otherwise. First, my idea of what was interactive discussion and classroom participation was based on what I saw in the US classrooms. Second, I had ignored the cultural knowledge that explained why teacher participants may not have perceived students silence as an issue. To the teachers students’ silence meant well disciplined students. After reflecting on the above issues and rethinking students’ silence, I wrote in my journal:

The Kenyan cultural purview of silence in children may have contributed to students’ perceived inactive role. In most of those Kenyan cultures students listen to the adults without questioning them as it may be perceived inappropriate and indiscipline. Also thinking about the learning moments in the cultural contexts during story telling session’s children listen reflectively to a story and then collectively respond to the questions asked to dissuade attention from an individual. I think that these cultural practices could also be the reason why in the
classrooms I observed students answer in chorus, implying that the collective response or voice was encouraged rather than the individual voice.

My reflexive notes noted how most Kenya cultures support silence in children to signify disciplined children. Also the collective response was more espoused than the individual in the cultural perspectives. That is why a common practice in most classrooms was students answering in a group. The following is an example of collective responses from Ms. Kate’s form three history class discussion about political parties in Kenya; the following dialogue indicates how the students responded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form: 3</th>
<th>Topic: Political parties in Kenya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Topic: Kikuyu Central Association (KCA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students: 58</td>
<td>Time: 11:50-12:30pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher: (after a lecture on an introduction to political parties of Kenya prior to independence the teacher asked questions about KCA with an expectation that students read the unit in advance of class) Who are the officials of the Kikuyu Central Association?

Students: (shout answers) Ezekiel Apindi, Harry Thuku

Teacher: what caused the split between the associations?

Continued

Table 6 Example of classroom observation 2 Kenya
Table 6 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students: (collective response) leadership problems Teacher: remember these stories are similar to other stories on the struggle for independence in Africa. Remember today we are celebrating Nelson …….. (Students: all say -Mandela) day?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(It was July 13th)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: (Explained the struggle for independence and the African National Congress in South Africa and similarities among the associations. Asks students) If you were living then would you have participated in the associations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students: (A resounding) Yes!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: If you were living at the time of Mau Mau rebellion (code switches to Kiswahiili) mgekuwa upande wa mau Mau muende msituni au upande wa Wazungu? (If you were living at the time of the Mau Mau would you be on the side of the Mau Mau fighters and go to the bush or on the British side?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students: (Collectively) Mau Mau</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These student responses sounded similar to the responses one would hear during an oral folktale narration. They were the kind of responses that can be described as an affirmative heartfelt response. When Ms. Kate asked if students would have joined the political association there was a resounding collective response “Yes!” This response did
not leave a doubt about whether or not the students would join the independence movements at the time. Such a resounding response is the only way students knew best to respond. Also, this class had fifty eight students in a classroom, none of whom had a problem with noise making because the students had been trained through their cultures how to actively listen and espouse the collective voice. Therefore, such an experience on the students’ part not only was it a silence but also a reflective listening, which challenged the notion of silence as passivity. Furthermore, such an experience opened conversations into different ways of thinking about indigenous learning.

   My experiences in the Kenyan classrooms revealed how culture can impact learning especially when seen from a perspective where students’ participation is measured by how many students speak during the class. My earlier perception of the Kenyan students’ participation was then deconstructed, given the cultural precepts. Further research for an understanding of these cultural ways of responding as engaged learning is significant, to alleviate a situation where students may be implicated for not actively responding loudly as their Western counterparts.

   Certainly the findings from the above experiences have demonstrated that even though teachers had good intentions and beliefs about best teaching practices that favor the teaching of controversial issues, most of their beliefs were not realized in practice. The teachers lamented that in as much as they would like to realize their beliefs, they are limited by a number of blocks such as time constraints, lack of technological resources
such as computers and internet technology, funds to buy and update current classroom resources, as well as a lack of awareness on what kinds of resources to use especially with teaching controversial issues. In addition to the above constraints the curriculum mandates played a role because of its enormity which did not allow time for consideration of CIs. The exam-centered curriculum limits controversial issues’ (CIs) teaching and discussions. It was as Ms. Kate had earlier reiterated “the system is set in a way that we teach what is expected in the exam. Otherwise we do not waste time on non-examinable issues.” It is apparent that even when teachers made decisions to utilize controversial issues in their classroom discussions they considered the time factor and the possibility of the CIs inclusion on the examination; otherwise they did not felt obligated to examine such an issue. Given these constraints then, the emerging question is how teachers can be helped to traverse these limitations to incorporate CIs practices for the sake of the development of critical thinkers and future citizens.

iii) Complicated Role of Gender and Ethnicity in Controversial Issues Pedagogy

Issues of gender were put in the periphery in the history classrooms, in the textbooks and in the curriculum. This section seeks to understand the reasons behind teachers’ avoidance of issues of gender in their classrooms. I discuss teachers experiences, their identity and the textbooks used to explicate complexity of the issue of gender.
First, even though the teacher participants in Kenya were all female, the issue of gender rarely emerged. However, the teachers’ identity supported some kind of interactions with which students were comfortable. Whilst both female and male students participated in classroom discussions with female history teachers, when a substitute teacher came in to stand for an absent teacher, I noticed that female students did not participate in answering questions unless called upon. This led me to question the issue of teachers’ identity and students’ participation. Also the issue of identity emerged during classroom projects when the students had an option of selecting their partners for the project and most selections were based on gender. The female students chose to work with female students while male students worked with female students; when the gender dynamics were disrupted the students did not seem comfortable in discussing their projects with each other. For example, I observed the girls seated on the other end of the table while the boys took over the discussion. One group was asked why they did not contribute to the discussions, and they said they were shy. This response reminded me of what Ms. Linda had said about engaging students on the topic of sexuality because of the cultural perspective that disapproves girl/boy relationships if not for marriage purposes. She said, “You know form ones are very naïve. They could not even talk about boyfriend/girlfriends.” Ms. Linda’s experience affirms the apprehension concerning issues of gender and sexuality especially in cultures that do not condone girl/boy relationships, such that even simple talk may be seen as leading towards a relationship.
The textbooks seemed to have less on themes, images, and references about women. For example, the textbook and the curriculum left out women leaders under the topic on biographies of Kenyan leaders, even though the society has many well known women leaders. In the text books images of women were lacking and or were presented in subjugated ways. For instance in form one textbook *History and government* by Makongo, Maina and Maboka (2003) there was no image of a woman in the entire 118 page book. In the form two *History and Government* textbook by Kivuitu and Njoka (2003) the greater number of women are given roles as factory workers, traders in the market and as beasts of burden carrying goods in their heads and back, while just one single woman in the text is given the only respectable role of an administrative officer. Additionally, the representation of women in the texts demonstrates no effort in the context of the images that is made to problematize or deconstruct the prescribed image of women. From the examples above, it appeared that the curriculum and the text all continued to perpetuate the androcentric views of women in the society. Such hegemonic views may have penetrated into the minds of female teachers and students who do not conceive the invisibility of women in the curriculum and in their society. In addition, such views also could have guided the thinking of students and teachers to perceive abortion as a “destruction of human lives which is against human rights,” according to one student, hence, veiling students’ minds from women’s rights to reproduction and
abortion. Absence of gender and gender perspectives in pedagogy implied complexities on issues of gender inequities both in the history textbooks as well as in the society.

Findings indicated that ethnicity was another issue that was deliberately avoided by some teachers. The teachers stated several reasons for avoiding ethnicity, among them that the politics in the country was a major reason for their shying away from some controversial issues (CIs). Other reasons included time constraints, and exam-oriented teaching. The politics of Kenya have limited the full discussion of politically sensitive issues such as ethnicity and other CIs. When asked if she teaches about ethnicity, Ms. Kelly stated that she will keeps from discussing a sensitive topic. Ms. Kelly lamented that because of her teaching in an area where her ethnicity is not similar to the dominant ethnic group, she had to avoid any issue that may place herself as a conspirator against the dominant ethnicity. She therefore decided to remain neutral on ethnicity issues without giving her opinion. To do so in the classroom when discussing about political leaders in the country, Ms. Kelly restated the content in the text book without engaging a discussion or making additional comments on the ethnicity of the leaders. When asked why she did not discuss in details all issues about the ethnicity of the leaders like their accomplishments and the mistakes of these leaders, she said:

A discussion on biographies of Kenya leaders is a bit tricky. It is like you are touching on the controversy and silenced reality behind the leaders. As you know history has to be critical and controversial. So you go to Moi, the first Kenyan
president, it is like you are touching the Kalenjin tribe, you go to Raila Odinga you are touching on the Luo tribe, so you have to be very careful especially after the 2007 elections. You do not want to be critical and controversial. So you just brush it without going into critical thinking. Sometimes you can’t even talk about the politicians.

From the above statement, Ms. Kelly explained how complicated the issue of ethnicity was for her. She deliberately did not want to touch on the issue because of fear of raising a controversy and being seen as a conspirator, which would jeopardize her security as a resident in the city. Therefore it was evident that at least some of the teachers were constrained when it came to teaching some controversial issues.

In an analysis of the form one history text by Kapiyo et al. (2003) textbook analysis of the controversial issue of ethnicity was given a paragraph of content and very little debate about it. Before the 2007 elections no new materials had been written on how to teach tribalism, as it is often referred to in Kenya, as opposed to the term ethnicity. Materials in the textbook spoke to ethnic conflicts prior to 2007 that were localized, unlike the 2007 that was national. Nonetheless, the content on ethnicity is minimal and only glosses over the topic, referring to it as “tribal-based wars” that cause enmity and hatred. The text does not provide any details about the issues thus explaining why teachers shy away from teaching it.
Apart from the issue of tribalism, Ms. Kelly asserted that the other topic they brush over is sex education; it is a taboo topic and they rarely do discuss them in class. Ms. Linda also noted that when it came to talking about national leaders in the past and present as well as ethnic affiliations, those were sensitive topics and therefore do not go into them. These contexts then misrepresented the intentions of pedagogy for controversial issues. Even though teachers believed and perceived controversial issues were a step towards democratic learning, they shied away and avoided teaching certain CIs for various reasons. Some of the reasons they gave were; the political sensitivity of the issues; the social cultural view of the issues; lack of knowledge on how to approach the issues; and lack of time due to fulfilling the mandates of the curriculum and ministry of education directives.

4) Challenges in teaching controversial issues

It is apparent that teaching controversial issues was not easy. In this section, I examined some of the challenges that teachers went through in their effort to promote best practices in teaching and learning in Kenya. Some of the challenges discussed here are the struggle to understand democracy and democratic education, insufficient teaching resources, the curriculum mandates of the education system and lastly the social, political and cultural scene in the country.
i). A limited conception of democratic and citizenship education

Findings revealed that teachers’ epistemological beliefs in teaching of controversial issues was essential in developing democratic citizenship skills. However, these teachers’ conceptualization of democracy was limited. Their struggle to understand democracy and democratic education is evident in their narratives and classroom experiences. The teachers and students are beginning to educate themselves on first the concept of democracy as a new subject in the classroom and then secondly on the practice of democratic education. Only in the past eight years have teachers had to teach content on democracy as that content was not in the syllabus prior to 2003. Before 2003, democracy had a different shape. It was a word in the dictionary but did not fully translate to reality.

To illustrate, Ms. Kendra said, “For me, I find it difficult to teach because I find myself in the two worlds, where one side is democratic and the other world that we were not democratic.” Ms. Kendra’s statement is reflective of the story of many teachers who lived in two worlds, the non-democratic world and the progressively democratic one; a world where Ms. Kendra lamented that teachers would lose their jobs for saying anything against the government or teaching topics thought to raise awareness against the corrupt leadership. Thus after a failed realization of democratic ideals through a system that did not fully recognize freedom of speech, teachers and the people of Kenya learned to keep to their ideas and opinions to themselves, to be safe and to survive in the system.

According to Kendra, when they were young, they went to school during the time when it
was not acceptable to question or talk back to a teacher nor to a parent. However, after the introduction of a multiparty system of governance, there was a progressive toleration of freedom of speech. The progress was slow because of the cultural beliefs about speech. When asked about freedom of speech and why the Kenyan cultures contributed to the lack of free speech, Ms. Kate asserted that in her culture, women and children do not speak in public but speak though their husbands or fathers who then relate their message to the elders; otherwise women spoke amongst women but not amongst men. Similarly in Ms. Kate’s culture, children spoke mostly to other children and to their parents but could not speak publicly in the community. When asked about her thoughts on what contributed to the lack of speech especially for women, Ms. Linda stated that Christianity was to blame. Linda said, “In my church women have not been speaking and leading masses until recently where we see women preachers and pastors.” Therefore living in that sort of “non-democratic world” where teachers lost their jobs for teaching topics on democracy, teachers were not free to bring up these issues in their classrooms. Hence, findings suggest that it was difficult for the teacher to teach any controversial topic especially the burning political issues of the day. They would have to keep their opinions to themselves and teach the official government ideology. On the other hand, in the assumed Kenyan democratic system, it was believed that teachers are free to teach what they want. The participant teachers pointed out that the notion of democracy was still uncertain. Moreover, what is entailed in the democracy as freedom of expression is also
not clear and as a result the teachers cannot freely express themselves even in the classrooms.

Because of the uncertainties as to what democracy and freedom of expression really looked like or meant in Kenya, the teachers are now learning democratic education by taking the initiative to further their own education or increase their understanding first about democracy and be able to understand democratic education. A case in point is the unlearning of societal practices that purge freedom of speech by young ones by finding ways to encourage students to speak in the classrooms. Also, they are learning to look at issues in balanced perspectives without condemning prejudicially and prematurely because of their own biases shaped by their cultural beliefs and familial practices. For example, Ms. Kelly declared she would not ordinarily engage the topic of sex education in class or with her own children. But because she was studying the topic in college, she attempted to go outside of her comfort zone to teach sex education, even though she still had challenges from the community who do not understand why she was interested in the subject. Nonetheless the struggle was not very successful because other sensitive issues such as gay/lesbian rights and societal disapproval of homosexual relations were still deemed closed topics and inappropriate for classroom discussion.

Moreover, findings showed that students have their own fears that they carry from home. Ms. Linda said that students, “are afraid of asking questions because they think they might cause trouble or ask the wrong questions.” According to her, the students felt
that they might ask the wrong questions. When I asked a student in the class she they did not ask questions, one female student said that sometimes she is terrified of some teachers’ reaction to her questions. Also, the student said that her questions may make the teacher mark her as a troublemaker, so she decided to be quiet. Therefore teachers in some way may be purging the student’s freedom of speech through uneasy classroom atmosphere.

Nonetheless, even as they struggle to understand democracy, students indicated their interest in learning about different controversial topics. The teachers asked the students to list the controversial issues they know and think are important for discussion, and why they think they needed to discuss them; their responses gave the teacher an idea of what was in the students’ minds on the critical issues. Most students listed democracy and citizenship in their lists and then included other controversial issues as “abortion,” constitution,” “students rights,” “early marriages,” “prostitution,” “corruption by leaders,” “members of parliament salaries,” and “human rights”; others are listed in the appendix together with those issues teachers thought were critical. When asked why they needed to learn about democracy the students regarded knowledge about democracy and its contents and how they can be helped to know their rights. The students’ ideas indicated an interest and a yearning for learning about different controversial topics. On the other hand, their responses about why they needed to learn about the democracy indicated that students are ill-informed about democracy. Similar to their teachers who
are also ill informed, the students have not seen democracy in practice in the government to understand how it works. It is thus a challenge for teachers to educate their students in ways that will inform them about democracy and help them participate in democratic practices.

It is evident that the conceptualization of democracy is still hazy for the teachers and students. Teachers need to do more and learn more to be able to teach students about democracy. Therefore measures need to be put in place by the curriculum developers to have more democracy and citizenship content and more teacher training programs to increase teachers’ knowledge on the same issue.

ii). Insufficient teaching resources

Findings demonstrated that Kenya’s high school history curriculum offered suggestions on teaching and learning resources such as videotapes, resource persons, regalia, statues, flow charts, historical time charts, biographies and autobiographies; however, these resources were not available in the classrooms. Teachers affirmed that insufficient resources are huge challenge to the teaching of social studies. Teachers were always advised to improvise their own resources because the government and school funds could not support the buying of resources. Most of the funds went to ensuring that at least two students share a textbook and the teachers had their own teaching guide book and text book. When asked about teaching resources most teachers quickly said they do have them. On further questioning I realized they meant having their own individual
copies of textbooks for teaching. In further conversation with Ms. Kate on teaching resources she said:

In my class I use novels, which are available in the library and most students have them from home. I also make use of the recommended texts by Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) and occasionally I will include my own improvised resources or pictures that I have used over the years. But in the school the teaching aids are few and very old and sometimes you waste time to find them.

I asked Ms. Kate to give me an example of an improvised resource she has used and she showed me one picture cut out from a local newspaper. She specifically used the cut out when discussing human rights in education. It was a picture of an 84 year old man, Kimani Maruge, who began schooling after free primary education was introduced in Kenya. He became the oldest man to start school which found him a spot on the Guinness Book of World records but has since died (BBC News May 24 2004). Ms. Kate used the picture to lead a discussion on how rights to education have benefited many.

In my classroom observation and conversations with students it was clear that students shared main textbooks, and whenever the parents were able, they provided textbooks for their children. Those unfortunate students whose parents are not wealthy enough to buy them textbooks shared the old, dilapidated textbooks that sometimes lacked pages, more so had difficulty in negotiating about who keeps the textbook for the day. Textbooks became a problem in one class when a teacher provided an assignment
for students to draw some maps from the textbook and each one of the students wanted to take the book home to do the assignment; the student who did not have the text had to borrow the same text from another student in a different class to complete the assignment. If the students did not complete the assignment then, the repercussions would be some sort of punishment which ranged from the cleaning of the corridors, sweeping the compound, kneeling down on concrete to picking up papers in the school compound. Students always dreaded such punishments.

Amidst this lack of sufficient teaching and learning resources, the findings were clear, that exam-oriented curriculum left little room for the teachers to utilize teaching resources. Ms. Kate noted that it was time consuming to find resources available in the school. Therefore time limits de-motivate teachers from using the teaching and learning materials. Apart from the pictorial charts that Ms. Kendra showed me in her office, my classroom observation revealed no use of teaching resources other than the recommended history textbooks and for Ms. Kate, her literary texts, given the insufficient funds for resources.

iii). The demands of the education system

The curriculum was another challenge to controversial issues teaching. The findings demonstrated that the curriculum masqueraded as the authorized knowledge. Then the curriculum was reborn, or restated, in the form of a required history textbook. This study’s findings revealed a strict adherence to the textbook, in other words the
curriculum, leaving no room for extra materials or discussions. The teachers expressed their thoughts about the curriculum and the textbook. Ms. Kate said, “Students are just taught what the government wants them to know,” and Ms. Kendra said, “We get inspectors to check if the KIE guidelines are being followed and the curriculum.” These statements are evidence that teachers were guided and possibly haunted by ministry wing’s strict rules on education KIE that ensure that government ideology was disseminated in the classrooms. KIE as a government branch is entrusted with the purpose of developing and providing curriculum and teaching materials to teachers. An example of authorized knowledge was the presentation of controversial issues from a single lens perspective that overlooked the critical arguments of the issues. When teaching about abortion, the political ideology presented the accepted public conception of the issue as immoral without consideration of the reproductive women rights arguments.

In addition the teachers indicated that there was little content on controversial issues. For instance, in the high school history curriculum, controversial content included wars, conflicts in the region, HIV/AIDS, drugs, abortion, human rights, and the constitution. Some of those issues were introduced as topics in the social studies syllabus in 2007 such as democracy and citizenship content. Teachers had no prior training in teaching those topics yet were required to teach those topics as mandated by the curriculum. Earlier, social studies in Kenya focused on civics education, a topic familiar
to teachers due to their college training. With the introduction of citizenship education aligning with the history curriculum for form one to four, teachers needed to incorporate definitions, responsibilities, rights of citizens, and elements of good citizenship. Similarly, the curriculum required students to learn information about the definitions, types and principles of democracy as opposed to the controversy behind the issues.

An examination of these few aspects of democracy in the curriculum denoted a superficial type of democratic content that only looked at definitions and types and did not examine the deep structures of democracy. Some of the deep contexts of democracy examined examples of functioning democracies or democratic governments and its in/efficiencies. Learning only the content without an analytical examination did not prepare students to understand democracy in its character and practice, but such is the ideology that the government needed to be promoted in the classrooms. In such a context, where information is scanty and all one sided perspective, it was not possible to teach democracy in its entirety.

Besides having less controversial issues and minimal content on the controversial issues, the curriculum itself is geared for evaluative purposes. The teachers noted that the curriculum and the textbook and the teaching style and methods are all geared towards ensuring students pass the exams. In both of the schools that I analyzed, students did monthly Continuous Assessments Tests (CATs), a midterm and an end-term exam. Those in form four, the final year of high school, do CATS, mock final exams and a national
examination called the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE). Students excelling the KCSE meant a higher possibility for admission in the national public universities. Failing this final examination meant that a student would not be admitted to college or university and would have only an opportunity to go to trade schools and middle level colleges. Thus the system is exam-centered, with the teachers at the core of the setting of these exams locally, district-wide and nationally.

Apart from the exam oriented curriculum, findings showed that the Kenya Institute of Education’s (KIE) oversight of the country’s education demanded that the teachers cover the entire syllabus in a year. The participants said they never were able to cover it in its entirety. Ms. Kate said, “We rush to cover the syllabus, and most teachers do not cover by the end of the year as required.” Ms. Linda said, “It is like you are rushing to clear the syllabus just to make sure that you are done.” Also Kate reiterated, “We have to follow strictly the syllabus and texts recommended by KIE.” The teachers explained that the syllabus was wide and required less classroom disruptions to complete it. Therefore such a rush to cover the syllabus implied that the quality of teaching and learning suffered. Furthermore, Ms. Kelly noted:

Because for me topics like the constitution are so important, but we end up not teaching it because it is put at the end of the text. There we need to have more time for the students to engage in issues in the class otherwise we try to bit a
deadline to finish the whole syllabus. Sometimes whether the students understand or not I have to finish the syllabus.

Kelly showed that the topics of constitution democracy and citizenship are left out because they are at the end of the syllabus and therefore most likely are not taught if the teacher does not get to it fast enough. These experiences portray the challenge of teaching controversial issues in an exam-oriented curriculum and a syllabus that is wide and needs to be covered by strictly adhering to the curriculum content.

**iv) The social, political and cultural scene**

Findings revealed that the Kenyan political scene was the greatest challenge when teaching hot-button political issues. A brief recent history of some controversial issues (CIs) in the country explicate how and why politics of the country were a hindrance to CIs teaching. In 2007, Kenya held general elections that were marred by violence. During my research data collection, I noted that it was common knowledge that the elections were rigged, and that the current President Mwai Kibaki had not been elected to office but forced himself into power. After the President took power, a conflict arose between supporters of the incumbent President Kibaki and the opposition leader Raila Odinga, whom the media reported as having had lost the election. After the citizens learned that President Kibaki was sworn in instead of the opposition leader, violence ensued immediately. The President’s allies, including his ethnic group and every other ethnicity, grouped themselves into opposing warring groups. More than 1,300 people died between
both factions. With the intervention of international community led by former UN secretary general Kofi Annan, calm was restored and a government of national unity was formed.

Even though calm was restored the teachers found themselves in the heat of the conflict. Most of those teacher participants were working in communities where their ethnicities were a minority, thus, there was animosity between the minority ethnicities and the dominant ethnic group. Teachers living and teaching in a community where they were minorities were unsafe; for instance those living and teaching in areas that majority ethnicity was Kikuyu, and the teacher’s ethnic group was Luo, meant that the teacher was marked and therefore would risked their lives and their family’s lives by continuing to live in the area. Homes of those on opposing sides were destroyed. There was utter chaos and inhuman acts such as killing of non Kikuyu people in Kikuyu dominated regions, or killing non-Kalenjins’ in Kalenjin dominated region. In such circumstances the teachers said it was best not to disclose one’s ethnic affiliations to be safe. Therefore, a topic touching on ethnicities, political leaders, land issues or migration became sensitive issues and always brought up memories of 2007 election violence.

In the same vein, Ms. Kelly provided an example of another topic on the new proposed constitution on which a vote was due during my stay in Kenya. She said, “You go to class, you cannot say Yes or No (the two warring positions of the constitution. Yes meaning they want the new constitution to pass, while No they want the constitution not
to pass)…So you are treading very carefully.” The community within which the teacher resided and its’ perception on the issue was crucial. At that moment, the implication was that there was speculation in the media that one’s choice on the referendum issue might mean devastating repercussions. Leaflets distributed in some communities stated that if one voted for the *Yes* faction of the constitution as opposed to the *No* faction that the community pushed for, then such people had to leave the region. Such an experience brought memories of the 2007 election violence which was still fresh in the minds of people. Teachers whose ethnicities were a minority in the region understood what it meant to be from a different and hated ethnicity. Thus such a perception lead Ms. Kelly to insist that one had to “tread carefully” to avoid far-reaching repercussions of one’s handling of such delicate and sensitive issue in class.

It is important to note here that the proposed new constitution was passed in August 4th 2010. Since then, the government has been in a period of transitioning from the old constitution enacted after independence to embracing the new constitution. This research was done during the heated moment when the *Yes* and *No* factions of the proposed constitution were still a hot-button topic. The interviews and classroom observations described in this chapter have helped clarify what the teachers’ views were about the issue of the constitution as well as uncovering the fears of the past violence that was and continues to be fresh in their minds.
Accordingly, findings suggested that in addition to politics, the cultures of the Kenyan people become another stumbling block. The teaching of sex education and the practice of female genital cutting were hugely limited due to the culture. In the African cultural societies the practice of female genital cutting is still practiced in some communities; the Western perspective deem these rites of passage practiced by certain cultural groups as barbaric. Therefore, most Kenyan individuals and some communities are against the practice although some communities still practice it. The government’s perspective was that the practice was outdated and infringed on the rights of the girl child and women, however, there was no consensus on the pros and cons of this practice; when discussed in class, it caused endless contentions because of the differing beliefs about the practice. Reinforcing this stance was Ms. Kendra’s statement that “As a teacher I like to tell them what I believe in, but as for something like FGM I will teach them the content about it but I will not dwell on it, I do not like the practice itself.” Likewise, in the majority of Kenyan cultures, the topic of sex education is taboo and therefore difficult for teachers to bring it up in the classrooms. Ms. Kelly had earlier reiterated how her postgraduate studies empowered her to teach sex education, a topic about which she could not even speak with her own children.

Gay and lesbian rights are closely related to sex education and my findings noted that gay issues are not mentioned anywhere in the textbooks or in the cultures of Kenyans. Recently Kenyans of gay/lesbian community have spoken openly to the media
of their experiences and the injustices they have faced. The media has courageously increased its awareness about the presence and life of gay people through the telling of their stories. *The Standard*, a daily newspaper, reported a statement made by Esther Murugi, a minister in the government; essentially she said that gay and straight people in Kenya should co-exist together peacefully; her statement caused a furore; churches called for her resignation.. Some Kenyans thought that the minister erred terribly when she appeared to sympathize with the gay community since the word gay was and still is a taboo and is seldom used(August 10, 2010). The subject of gay rights is therefore another hot button issue that is bound to animate heated debate in classroom discussions as it does in the public domain. For their part teachers have to tread carefully as Ms. Kendra mentioned because of the widely accepted social position about the issue.

It is apparent that the history of controversial issues in Kenya is politically, culturally and socially determined. Because of this teachers have been required to make decisions to tread carefully or brush over the issue or shy away from them, thus, defeating the purpose of democratic learning. Thus the political scene, determined whether or not teachers chose to teach or not to teach about controversial local issues. From these examples it is apparent that the conception and construction of controversial issues in Kenya complicated and problematized the teaching of said issues. Therefore, even when teachers had good intentions of covering contentious issues in the society,
they were inhibited or prohibited and thus limited controversial issues pedagogies to some extent.

The challenges which the teachers presented need to be addressed if not, the teaching of hot subjects as sex education, HIV/AIDS, and gay rights will continue to be difficult topics of discussion for teachers. Also, because of the exam oriented curriculum and time constraints, students have no time to engage in discussions on controversial topics. Therefore, there is need to address these complications for the advancement of controversial issues teaching.

**Teaching about Ethnicity, the Constitution and the MAU MAU**

This final section provides detailed examples of controversial issues teaching based on what was observed in the classrooms unlike the previous sections that only presented fragments of the discussions. These examples of controversial topics that were part of the classroom discussions were the issues of ethnicity, the “constitution” and “MAU MAU.”

i) **Teaching about Ethnicity**

For heuristic purposes, it is significant to note that findings suggested that the topic of tribalism was not included in the school syllabus nor in the textbooks; the topic emerged during a form one history class discussion about migration and the teacher to engage in it with her 65 students, all from different backgrounds and ethnicities. Also the teacher used the term ‘tribalism’ or ‘tribe’ in this particular class in place of the word
ethnicity. Tribalism was taught as the sub topic The Bantu Peoples of Kenya under the bigger topic on migration of peoples of Africa. The students had prior knowledge of migration since they had begun the topic a few weeks prior. The lesson focused on the Bantu language group in Africa; Nilotic and Cushitic language groups were included but are not reference here.

Ms. Linda began by recapping the previous lesson about the different migrations of people in Africa. She asked several questions on the reasons for the mass migrations in Africa, then began a discussion about the Bantu people of Kenya. Prior to the class, some students had been asked to research different ethnicities in the Bantu group which would be presented and discussed in class; the presentations were allocated to students by choice but most of them chose to talk about their own ethnicities as a way of demonstrating their grounding in those cultures. Students also were expected to read the text book in advance of class to be able to participate effectively in class activities.

Ms. Linda introduced the lesson by explaining the different categories of the Bantus, the Western, Eastern, Central and Coastal. Through a series of questions and answers, the students named the different ethnicities in the Bantu group of Kenya. Ms. Linda used a migration map to show the students the region where the Bantu of Kenya finally settled in the region.

After the introduction, the student presenting on the Abaluhyia Bantu group was asked to present his research on the history of the people, their cultural practices and
similarities with other ethnicities. The student presented his research on the different subgroups in ethnic group in about five minutes. He then named the different Luhyia groups and dialects and the activities they carry out. Besides facts about the group the student included cultural practices and pictures of what the ethnic groups liked doing that separates them from other ethnicities. He mentioned activities such as agriculture and made fun by reinforcing the stereotype that the group was known to like eating chicken meat. Finally, the student stated that the Abaluhya people are found everywhere in the country and that presently many people love to eat chicken and it is not just the Abaluhya’s and thus the student discredited the stereotype about Abaluhya group.

Ms. Linda then introduced an oral tradition about the origin of the Luhyia people of Kenya and explained that oral tales of origin are common in many African ethnic groups. She showed on the map of Africa the regions discussed in the oral tales. Next she introduced the topic of tribalism and asked a few questions such as what students thought about ‘tribalism,’ what it means to be hated or prejudiced because of one’s ethnicity, what it means for the one discriminating against the other ethnicity, and how it feels to be discriminated upon. A few students were involved in the discussion but, seemingly, because of the sensitivity of the topic, some students did not participate. The tension from the previous 2007 Kenyan elections made everyone aware of ‘tribal’ affiliations and every student had been affected. The region where the school was located was diverse but had been adversely affected by the election violence and students and
people in the community were not free to state their ethnic affiliations. However, Ms. Linda knew that students understood the controversy from different lenses and had reminded the students during the introduction of the lesson and history of Kenya that everyone in Kenya is an immigrant; she had stated that all moved from different parts of Africa to settle to where they are presently, so there is no one who can claim possession of any land. Through questions and answers she discussed the foundations of the African culture that emphasize community and collectivism and how it is always against the ills of tribalism. She emphasized the cultural values that bound Kenyans such as the Harambee spirit which symbolized the communal and collective spirit of togetherness.

She then asked a few questions about the lesson and asked students to draw the map on migration and finish note taking for the lesson. Finally, she asked the students to prepare for the next lesson by reading about other ethnicities among the Bantu groups.

The process and procedures in this class were typical in many classroom observations and exemplify how teachers approach controversial issues. Although there was more discussion that could have taken place, action plan strategies and resources that could have been implemented to develop active democratic citizens, and other perspectives about ‘tribalism’ that could have been brought in, but, because of time and the mandates of the curriculum, the teacher did not continue with the discussion. She said she would only come back to it if students brought it up and if they had time to discuss the topic.
Some important points surfaced as the teacher used the students as resources. Ms. Linda engaged the indigenous culture of Kenyan ethnicities to speak about ethnocentricism. Also besides being made aware of the peoples of Kenya, students explored the journey of migration through the maps and brought the discussion closer to home by speaking about the importance of embracing the Harambee spirit. Harambee philosophy was introduced by the first president of Kenya Jomo Kenyatta who used it to encourage Kenyans to work together in self help activities to build their communities and nation.

ii) Teaching about the Constitution

The constitution was a topic taught towards the end of the school year in the form one history syllabus, but because of the political debate circulating the country about the adoption of a new constitution, the teacher decided to discuss the topic months in advance. The Kenyan voters were about to vote for or against the new constitution. The media, a government propaganda tool, was full of one-sided information about the importance of the new constitution and its benefits. The media also promoted the government’s ideology and its support for the new constitution which, for half a century, have been in the top governments agenda. However, the Church and other blocs were against the constitution because of some elements in it that seemed to be against the values and morals of the Church. For example, the Church’s believed that the new
constitution would accept gay and lesbian lifestyles yet the Church viewed these sexual orientations as going against the Christian religious beliefs.

When teaching about food situation in Kenya, Africa and the world, the constitution issue arose in Ms. Kelly’s form one class. She had begun the lesson by explaining the current food situation in Kenya including discussion about the causes, effects of and remedies for food shortages. Students were expected to have read the topic in advance of class and be able to answer questions asked. During the discussion of remedies of food shortages, the idea surfaced of opening up agricultural land and enhancing utilization of lands laying bare, to enable Kenya to feed its populations. Ms. Kelly referred to the clause in the new constitution on land use that stated, “Parliament shall…enact legislation to prescribe minimum and maximum land holding acreages in respect of private land” (68, C,(i)]. She explained that this clause was included to ensure that, previously idle land would be taken away and put to efficient and equitable use; previously, such idle land would be for the benefit of the rich and therefore deny the poor access to it. Ms. Kelly encouraged discussion by asking students what they thought about that element in the new constitution and she provided two sides of the issue. On the one side, taking the land away from the rich and putting it to use would mean more people would have food and would benefit from the land either through farming or work. On the other hand, the same idle land might not profit the common man who had no money or resources to put it to use and might end up in the hands of the rich who could make use of
the land. To discuss further the issue the teacher decided to use a debate. She asked students to organize the debate and position themselves on one side of the debate, where they would either be for the new constitution or against it. As citizens of the class and future citizens of the country, the students took different positions in their class society such as teachers, clergy, government leaders or common people and then they debated the issue. They examined the history of the land issue and how it affected food distribution and shortages. At the end of the debate, as citizens of the class, the students wrote steps to rectify and/or provide a framework for land ownership and management for the purposes of increasing food production in the country. Both the debate exercise and the writing exercise engaged the students as they participated in the class constitution-making process regarding the land issue. They were actively engaged in the democratic process on their class and country consequently preparing them as future active citizens of the country. Finally, the teacher gave students an assignment to write a reflective report on their views on the food shortages and land issue.

iii) Teaching about the Mau Mau

The Mau Mau was a controversial movement in pre-independent Kenya. The movement was a discussion topic in Ms. Kate’s form three history unit on Political Developments in Kenya after 1945. Ms. Kate taught series of several lessons in one week and began the unit by discussing political organizations that were formed after 1945. One of the organizations she discussed about was the Kenya African Study Union
(KASU) which was formed in 1944 and later came to be called the Kenya African Union (KAU). Ms. Kate described the formation of KAU as the first political organization in Kenya formed to fight injustices by the British colonial administration. Using a series of questions to discuss the KAU, she asked; What were KAU’s grievances against the colonial administration? Who were the leaders associated with KAU and what were their roles in the organization? What were the differences between the moderates and the militant leaders of the group? Ms. Kate asked students to discuss the topic and questions in groups and present a report on the above questions based on the textbook information they had read prior to class.

After the presentation, Ms. Kate introduced the Mau Mau rebellion movement that emerged from the radical militant wing of KAU which began as Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA). Ms. Kate approached the topic from known to unknown knowledge that is, from students known knowledge to the unfamiliar. She asked students if they had relatives or had heard stories of people who fought for the Mau Mau movement and asked them to describe what they knew about it. Later, she explained that speculative meanings of the name Mau Mau; the Europeans called for denying agency for the Kenyan rebels because using the earlier name KFLA Mau Mau fighters would legitimize the movement. It is speculated that the acronym Mau Mau derived its meaning from the Swahili for Mzungu Aende Ulaya, Mwafrika Apace Uhuru (The Europeans should go back to Europe, For the Africans to gain independence) or the Kikuyu secret
codeword for Uma Uma (Get out, Get out) which, when transposed, became Mau Mau. Ms. Kate led a discussion about the different members and leaders of the Mau Mau and how they conducted the oaths for new members to ensure their loyalty. She then discussed Mau Mau from the colonial British administration point of view, where the members of the Mau Mau were seen as a terrorist group rather than freedom fighters. After introducing the controversy between Mau Mau as a terrorist group vs. Mau Mau as freedom fighters, Ms. Kate asked students to form two groups to debate the issue. One group was assigned to present anti-Mau Mau arguments while the other was to support the movement. Students were given time to prepare their arguments and provide evidence for their opinions.

After the debate, Ms. Kate continued the discussion on the Mau Mau, by giving the students a group exercise; they either wrote a timeline of events leading to the Mau Mau rebellion up to independence or researched and wrote about individual leaders of the Mau Mau movement, such as Dedan Kimath and Bildad Kagia. After students presented their topics, Ms. Kate ended the classroom discussion by a deliberation on the issues of human rights violation, social injustices and consequences of the Mau Mau uprising. Also she discussed current news about the Mau Mau veterans seeking compensation and an apology from the British government for their human rights abuse. The final assignment was first writing an essay and then a choice of writing either a poem or drawing an artistic work about any facet of the Mau Mau movement. For the essay, students were
required to compare the Mau Mau movement with other uprisings or independence movements in the world such as the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa. In addition, they were to focus on similarities/differences/consequences among the causes and the organization of the uprising, and about acts of injustices.

This lesson was one of the few detailed lessons observed particularly because it developed over several sessions. In this particular lesson, Ms. Kate wanted to show how she enacted a controversial issues lesson; her intention was to empower her students to reflect and analyze a controversial topic in history, and then incorporate other similar world events to broaden their perspectives on the issue. She also wanted students to have a feeling and comprehension of what happened in their country’s history and how those events impacted them and their future. It supported the belief that teachers can enact controversial issues pedagogy that empowers and encourages analysis and/or critical thinking to broaden students’ perspectives of controversial issues.

Conclusion

This section on Kenya revealed of the following significant findings: 1). Teachers believed that teaching controversial issues within democratic citizenship education was significant in developing local-indigenous, national and global citizens. 2). Teachers’ perceptions of controversial issues and citizenship education was varied, complex and fluid. 3). Teacher disclosure was dependant on several social, political and cultural issues. 4). There were limitations to actualizing teachers’ beliefs and philosophies about
controversial issues pedagogy and practice. Teachers’ epistemologies impacted their classroom practice. Teachers faced multiple challenges in teaching controversial issues including limited understanding of democracy and democratic classroom engagement, time constraints, exam-oriented curriculum and mandates of the curriculum and education system, and lack of resources.

The following section presents findings from the US.

Part Two: US Findings

Introduction

In this chapter, I present emerging themes from the US participants. I present the narratives of teachers as they constructed their ideas around the teaching of controversial issues in their classrooms. In an attempt to give teachers a voice, I explicitly tell their narratives and describe their classrooms experiences. I also make an effort to provide ample space for the teachers’ experiences and thoughts. However, their stories do not claim to represent the stories of all teachers in the research location but are solely the views of the participants. In this section also, I try to incorporate the voice of the researcher in interpreting the research contexts and participant voices, and by the data collected in the two regions. Various categories that emerged from the data were analyzed multiple times and in multiple ways.
The following are the emergent themes which guide the sections of this chapter:
1) Teachers’ perspectives on controversial issues, 2) Teachers’ perspectives on controversial issues and citizenship education, 3) Teachers’ use of controversial issues pedagogy, and 4) The challenges in teaching controversial issues. To explicate in detail my classroom experiences, I present lessons from my class observations that demonstrate how the teachers taught controversial topics in their curriculum.

1. Teachers’ Epistemological Beliefs in Controversial Issues

In this section I present findings that reveal how teachers’ epistemologies are constructed, shaped and reshaped through a variety of social and educational factors. Also, I discuss how their epistemological beliefs about controversial issues impacted the decisions they made in their social studies classrooms. A discussion of teachers’ portraits is presented in the appendix A.

a) Construction of Teachers Epistemologies

In this study it was evident that teachers’ epistemologies played a role in influencing their reasons for teaching controversial issues in their social studies classrooms. Epistemology as described from these teachers’ perspectives meant the teachers’ knowledge about controversial issues and their interpretation of that knowledge. Teachers’ ways of knowing were informed by a variety of sources. Those discussed here are education experiences, their mentors and the society in which they live.
Regarding the influence of education experiences, Mr. Emanuel, a tenth grade world history teacher, underscored the significance of his college education in the construction of his ideas about controversial issues (CIs). Mr. Emanuel taught a class of twenty four students, seventy percent Caucasian, ten percent African American, and twenty percent Native and Asian American backgrounds. Mr. Emanuel asserted that constant updating and additional knowledge have influenced his perspectives about CIs. Mr. Emanuel said about his education experiences:

My minor in college was political science. So I did have some good background knowledge from what I learned in college and I am just keeping up with it. I read the newspapers, or at the very least a headline on the internet page just to keep up with the current events and be aware of who the leaders are and what they are saying and just listening to the radio.

Mr. Emanuel’s response underscores his belief that his college education had an impact in his thinking about controversial issues; his political science courses influenced his perspectives on political issues and he said that he would struggle teaching social issues if it were not for his political science background. Aside from his collegial knowledge, Mr. Emanuel keeps up with new information and current events which he often uses in his classrooms. He has a keen ear to hear what the politicians say and analyzes their views in line with democratic ideals. For example, when talking about Apartheid laws legislation in South Africa in 1948, Mr. Emanuel recalled that he had read in *The New York Times*
news about the newly enacted Arizona immigration laws that “make the failure to carry immigration documents a crime and give the police broad power to detain anyone suspected of being in the country illegally” (April 23, 2010). In class, Mr. Emanuel linked the Arizona law to Apartheid law to give students a sense of what the Apartheid Native Act of 1952 looked like, the act that forced Black South Africans to carry identification documents at all times. However, there were times that Mr. Emanuel thought that he did not have sufficient knowledge. He stated, “There was certain times when I wasn’t educated but I did a lot of reading and took several college courses. For example, about some issues related to apartheid and a lot more details about it came to light afterwards.” Therefore Mr. Emanuel frequently read and took courses to help construct his knowledge about CIs.

Mr. Dan, an eleventh grade social issues teacher, mentioned that his way of knowing and teaching of controversial issues (CIs) was mostly constructed through taking courses in education. Mr. Dan taught eleventh grade social issues course in a class of 28 students. Eighty percent of the students were Caucasian and twenty percent were Asian and African Americans. His passion for education led him to take extra post-graduate studies in education to develop his pedagogical skills on CIs. Some of the classes that changed his CIs teaching were on democratic and political education. He believed that these courses were particularly useful because they “helped me frame the social issues approach” to teaching and learning. He explained that his social issues
approach to be a step by step analysis of the type of issue to capture all arguments and evidences, especially if it concerned facts or values. Also he believed these classes taught him how to view issues from different perspectives and in ways that can effect social change. Similar to Mr. Emanuel, Mr. Dan’s epistemology had progressively been shaped and reshaped as he acquired new knowledge.

Ms. Elizabeth, another teacher participant in this study, also attributed her knowledge of controversial issues (CIs) to education and international experience that was critical in informing her epistemology. She taught tenth grade world history course with about thirty tenth grade students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Fifty percent of Ms. Elizabeth’s class were Caucasian, and the rest were from diverse backgrounds, including African American, Asian, and Native American. When asked if constructive educational experiences influenced her knowledge of teaching (CIs), Ms. Elizabeth said:

It definitely does. It influences every course you teach but I hope they come out of it more pro- feminists, like in women’s history, we look at issues of contraception, what it is and what it is not, and also we look at abortion. I definitely have taken some courses focused on specific topics. I do lots of reading and teaching especially in social studies we constantly learn about what’s going on and around the world. I think a good teacher in some ways should be a good learner, love learning and particularly as in world history there is more to pick apart and to learn.
In this excerpt, Ms. Elizabeth explained how her knowledge has been created over time by taking college courses on specific topics. Also her passions for reading and gaining new knowledge constantly added to her ways of knowing. Ms. Elizabeth specifically noted how she approached CIs by picking them apart through critically examining the issues. In addition to education, she mentioned that fellow teachers in the district have been part of her knowledge construction. She mentioned that in her school district they had “a movement that teachers can meet and reflect on how our students are doing, and not really to evaluate our students, but to reflect on how we teachers how we are doing and share ideas.” She observed that these movements or groups, were helpful in adding to her social studies knowledge and for teaching controversial issues. Furthermore, Ms. Elizabeth appreciated assistance by fellow teachers in the school. She indicated that by constantly observing fellow teachers’ way of teaching CIs and the materials they used, she was able to construct her own CIs teaching model. She gained teaching resources from colleagues and she showed me a timeline of historical events on her classroom wall that she obtained from one of her colleagues. Ms. Elizabeth explicated that the timeline was used, for example, to demonstrate time and events that culminated to World War I. Besides education and colleagues, other educative experiences such as international travel and teaching for one year in a high school abroad had greatly added to her social studies scholarship. Some of the issues she learned from her international travel allowed her to interact with other cultures and be knowledgeable of other cultures.
Mr. Bryant, another participant who teaches ninth grade history course, explicated how regular interactions with other teachers had molded his way of teaching controversial issues (CIs). He taught a US-history course that was a required course in the school and therefore had students of different ability levels. He had 28 students in his class and the class demography included about seventy percent Caucasian, and thirty percent Asian, African American and Native American. He always had at least two assistant teachers with him, one who helped with reading and literacy skills while the other helped with special education needs. When asked what informed his epistemology, Mr. Bryant was quick to mention his colleagues. He said that fellow social studies teachers had added to his knowledge and skills in teaching controversial issues. He said that meetings with other teachers where they discussed how to tackle controversial issues had been useful.

Apart from constructive education experiences, some teachers indicated that their mentors had a tremendous effect in their construction of knowledge about controversial issues (CIs). For example, Mr. Emanuel stated that his epistemology was developed and enhanced by his teaching mentor. He stated:

When I was in high school I had a teacher who was very much willing to bring up controversial topics and he would challenge us and our ideas, you couldn’t be sure what side he really believed but he was going to challenge your belief system on that, so I model a lot of my teaching style after him. I sometimes play the devil’s
advocate and create an interesting classroom environment where I challenge student’s belief system on an issue.

Mr. Emanuel considered his high school teacher as a significant factor in his life and someone who changed the way he thought and the way he now teaches. As mentioned he models his teaching style after his mentor especially in creating “interesting and emotionally driven classroom environment.” Mr. Emanuel also implied that experiences from his mentor were useful in molding his teaching practices and said that still looked up to his mentor’s teaching model while constructing his own. Moreover, his high school teacher provided him with an important lesson in challenging his students’ belief system. He indicated that by playing the devil’s advocate, especially when discussing controversial issues and to challenge students to think critically and to help students support their beliefs about a discussion issue. Lastly, regarding knowledge acquisition, Mr. Emanuel posits “I am still figuring out how to efficiently use his (mentors) expertise in my social studies classroom.” His statement indicated that knowledge construction is still an exploration process, an affirmation that as worldviews change, epistemologies are reshaped and constructed.

Mr. Dan’s mentors were his mother and sister both of whom are feminists and who influenced his perception and teaching about abortion. He explained that at the onset of his teaching, he was against abortion but after much interaction with his mother and sister, he now perceives abortion in a different lens. Because of his newfound ways of
understanding abortion, he was able to teach abortion in this classroom from a newly constructed perspective.

Similarly, Mr. Bryant stated that his epistemology was founded on his mentor’s teaching model. He explicated that his father was a former social studies teacher and was his mentor; he constantly taught through oppositional approaches and tackled the challenging subjects in history head on. For example, he showed me a document he inherited from his father entitled *Thinking like a historian*, which he believed had a great impact on his teaching of history in general and controversial issues in particular. He even had the document posted on his classroom wall for the class to reference constantly. To explicate how the poster was critical in his teaching, he stated, “The poster presents core questions that tie to basically any lesson, any grade in a history classroom. These questions engage students and enhance their thinking as historians.” Some of the critical questions he used from the poster were: “What were the causes of past events and what were the effects? What has changed and what has remained the same? How does the past help us make sense of the present? How did people in the past view their world? How did past decisions or actions affect future choices?” Nevertheless, although the teacher’s epistemology was based on teaching CIs using the poster, it was not always realized in the classroom discussions because of some constraints discussed later in this chapter. Furthermore, the poster itself also demanded scrutiny because of its generalizing of historical issues and ignoring critical issues of race, gender and class among issues.
The society in which they lived was another aspect that constructed the teachers’ epistemology. Societal input came from the family as discussed in Mr. Bryant’s case and Mr. Dan’s experiences. The community also was another facet that informed the participants’ thinking. They all acknowledged that the Mid-West city in which they live was a liberal community that shaped their understanding of controversial issues. Thus, the people in their neighborhoods were more inclined to be open-minded and encouraged controversial issues’ discussion. Teachers said they felt free to touch on sensitive issues without fear of reprisal. The community was open to new ideas, making learning conducive and creating fewer community controversies. Ms. Elizabeth expressed about her feelings on her community by saying, “I feel free to take on controversial issues being in this mid-West city. The community and I know the school board will support looking at controversial issues. But I guess I do not feel like anybody would say that I can’t teach about this or that issue because I do present the controversy and not just one side of it.” It seems that the open-minded nature of the community inspired the teachers to engage in CIs as long as teachers are presenting a balanced view of the issue at hand. However, even though the community in general supported and contributed to controversial issues discussion in schools, based on their beliefs, some families questioned the learning of some controversial issues in some social studies classrooms, although such experiences were rare.
Overall, it appeared that teachers’ epistemologies were socially and educationally constructed. The teachers believed that without the infusion of knowledge from different sources such as education, peers, mentors and the society, their teaching would suffer. These various experiences shaped and molded their ways of knowing and teaching about controversial issues.

b) Teachers’ Epistemological Decisions

In this section, I examine how teachers’ epistemologies informed their ideologies about controversial issues (CIs) and how their ideologies impacted decisions they made in their social studies classrooms. Some of the decisions they made were based on personal epistemological beliefs and positions which then influenced their pedagogical practices. Accordingly, their epistemological standpoints determined what issues to take up and the nature of materials to be used in the classrooms. Teachers’ personal life experiences had an empowering impact in their decisions to teach hot-button topics. For instance, when asked about what influenced him to teach CIs, Mr. Bryant said, “Some level of personal interest for me, you can spend a lot of time talking about the war, but in the end it is gravitating more towards the bigger things that happened, in our lives and more kids will gravitate towards it.” His passion for issues of the world was a major contributor to decisions he made. Mr. Bryant believed that his students would appreciate discussing issues happening in their lives because of their connection to and knowledge of the issues. Similarly, another teacher also presented similar sentiments; he believed that when he
discusses something which particularly interests him, students are more likely to see his enthusiasm about the issue and become motivated to learn about it. One of Mr. Dan’s personal interests included the health insurance debate, which often elicited immediate interest from his students who became passionately engaged in the discussion. Both teachers demonstrated that when teachers make decisions to be invested in the issues discussed in their classrooms, students are likely to become invested in learning as well.

Ms. Elizabeth’s explicated her belief that one cannot “shy away” from teaching controversial issues (CIs) because history in itself is controversial and the news in the world is made up of controversial issues. Thus in teaching her world history course for tenth graders, she emphatically stated, “I have to engage all kinds of issues from independence movements, Apartheid in South Africa, the Rwandan genocide, Israeli/Palestinian conflict, drug policy, and immigration policy, HIV/AIDS, Iran and Iraq war and many others.” She strongly believed that students needed knowledge about “hot” topics to be able to make good future decisions.

On a political stance, Ms. Elizabeth revealed that her own passion for CIs made her to chose to cover critical issues such as feminism and feminist standpoints as her newfound ideological position. Because of her enthusiasm for feminist consciousness, she has added the topic to her eleventh and twelfth grade course entitled Women in America. Also, when observing Ms. Elizabeth’s world history class, I noticed that her teaching style was influenced politically by her ways of knowing and her ideological predilection. She
constantly referred to a quote on her classroom wall that stated, “Be the change you want to see in the world” by Mahatma K. Gandhi. Utilizing Gandhi’s quote in her class revealed her passion for transformative democracy as well as a desire to equip her students with skills to transform their world. In the classroom, Ms. Elizabeth used the idea behind the words of the quote which she saw as thought for social change. Inspired by the Gandhi’s thought she raised questions of ‘how,’ ‘why,’ ‘evaluate’ and ‘explain’ to get students to consider what they can do about a situation or contentious issues.

For instance, in deliberating about Apartheid in South Africa, the Ms. Elizabeth posed the questions of How did Black South African’s view the idea of ‘Black Consciousness’ and how does it compare to the idea of ‘Black consciousness’ in the civil rights movement? And What Apartheid laws were oppressive and what would you have done to transform these laws to best suit the South African majority Black population? These questions not only speak to the situation during apartheid but further prepared students not only to reflectively think, analyze, compare and contrast, but also inspire them to want to participate as actors in conception and enactment of laws and policies that are in line with democratic ideas and ideals.

Therefore, it seemed that Ms. Elizabeth’s epistemological beliefs impacted her decision to take up issues of gender, race and globalism in her classrooms. She believed in effecting change through transformative ways of teaching such as the use of critical questions, examining issues of power, and by inspiring her students to be the change they
want to be in their society. The previous examples suggested that taking up the issue of race through critical thinking and an oppositional ideology is more meaningful to students. Looking at the issue of race during apartheid and examining the perspectives of both the White South Africans and Black South Africans, and then juxtaposing the South African experience to the US civil rights experience, made the experience meaningful. Consequently, she gave students different perspectives on the issue of race and how it played out in different societies locally or globally, and how these hot button issues speak to each other in different contexts.

Ms. Elizabeth’s position on feminism was the greatest motivation for her teaching of the American women’s course; being female may have been a cause for her intrigue with feminist issues. It appeared that for teachers to engage controversial issues in meaningful ways, their passion and investment in the issues guided what they approached in their classrooms.

Similarly, Mr. Dan chose inquiry as a method in his classroom. He gave his students issues that they examined and investigated and about came up with evidence for their positions. His teaching philosophy was getting his students to always “figure out” issues. If it was the health insurance issue, he let his students figure out the best way to solve the issue and let them make policies about the issue.

On decisions about classroom, the teachers followed their epistemological beliefs to make decisions about what materials they would use. Mr. Dan chose affective materials
and resources for teaching controversial issues (CIs). He believed that those affective materials “get an emotional response from the students, because often times it’s our emotions that connects us to an issue.” Mr. Dan viewed affective CIs resources as a way of getting students actively involved. His passion for effective controversial issues pedagogy and his use of effective teaching experiences that elicit emotions in his students seemed to guide his knowledge and way of teaching.

Besides use of effective resources, Mr. Emanuel observed that when he used such materials “they tend to get teenagers more interested in the lessons.” Therefore well-selected resources affectively connected students to the issue and kept them attentive in the class. For instance, Mr. Emanuel would include an image on abuse and use of drugs during a drug policy issues lesson; to attract students’ interest and thinking he used pictures of athletes who have used steroids to enhance their performance to build their bodies’ strength and size. His students would then ask questions such as “How can someone do that to their bodies?” and “Is that real?”, expression of their disgust at the extreme usage of steroids. One student commented, “But you know even in this school student athletes use these steroids, which they say they buy from health food stores,” and the discussion continued. Therefore, it is apparent that when teachers and students are both affectively involved in controversial issues discussions in classrooms, the discussion takes on new meanings as they shape and construct their understanding of those issues.
Also it can also be said that the epistemological stances of teachers emerges from their investment in the issues, which emanates from their epistemologies.

My findings suggested that a teacher’s enthusiasm and passions resulted in students who were more engaged in classroom practices. For instance, Mr. Dan’s students illustrated that when they were enthusiastically and emotionally involved in discussing and deliberating on societal issues such as gay rights and health insurance. He also noted that the students give ‘real’ contributions to the issue, particularly when it emanated from their affective or emotional stances. He provided an example of discussed discussion about gay rights, when students wept profusely in the class while watching the film *Laramie Project*, the story of Matthew Wayne Shepard, a gay man, who was murdered because of his sexual orientation. The students were emotionally affected and asked, “Is being gay a crime?” and “Why is HIV/AIDS presented in the film as a gay disease?” and stating, “The film represents what is happening in this city, people are ignorant here, we have been structured to think homosexuality is bad.” These students’ viewpoints about the film indicated their support for the injustices faced by gay/lesbian people.

In the above context, Mr. Dan could talk freely about gay/lesbian issues because of student investment in the issue. Students were passionately involved in the discussion in order to consider taking a step beyond the class discussion. The students deliberated on what they could do to raise awareness of the issue, which was discussed in the class relative to the expected perception in the school. One student, a self-proclaimed gay made
his position clear in the discussion. This classroom scenario demonstrated that a teacher’s investment in the CIs meant that students could also be invested in the issue.

2) Teachers’ Perspectives of the Controversial Issues and Citizenship Education

a) Controversial Issues for Healthy Democracies and Citizenry

In the previous section, I presented teachers epistemologies and rationales for their teaching of controversial issues. This section follows teachers’ perspectives of controversial issues in their classrooms and how their interpretation impacts the teaching of democratic citizenship and global citizenship skills, which align with the development of healthy democracies and citizenry. Lastly, I examine teachers’ perspectives on the disclosure of opinions in their social studies classrooms.

i) Teachers Interpretation of Controversial Issues in the Classroom

In this section, I examined teachers’ interpretation of ideas about controversial issues as they attempt to make meaning of what they perceive as controversial issues. In speaking about how they interpreted their idea of controversial issues (CIs), this is how they perceived CIs:

Ms. Elizabeth: I think all of social studies is controversial. Like history, is a controversial subject, because how you interpret history and how you present historical issues, you are always making choices and there’s always biases presented and its people that recorded history and what they chose to record and how they recorded it. It was recorded by people and
they have their biases but try to present both sides of the controversial issues and there is more to pick apart and learn.

Mr. Bryant: There are a lot of people who are for and against it, and often times, even though I would not agree with one side or the other, especially, over the highly controversial things, how does one teacher about abortion and things like that, the more established educational controversies in our societies.

Mr. Emanuel: I see controversial issues as touchy issues, I try to come up with topics that are not just controversial but are real life experiences of things that kids are interested in reading about or already know a little bit about.

Mr. Dan: This is an issue that is alive. It is an issue as a society we are still trying to figure out. That issue is an issue which students will be deliberating about, discussing it and trying to figure it out now and after high school, so it is an issue that is not settled yet.

According to Ms Elizabeth’s knowledge and definition of controversial issues, she sees history and specifically social studies controversial. Ms. Elizabeth asserted that history is
made and “recorded by people and their biases,” and is therefore essentially one-sided. She stated that she always has taught both sides of the any given topic in history, as she believed history to be controversial. As a teacher, she made decisions on what controversies in history to teach and how to present these controversies in a balanced manner, where balance implies differing arguments being presented side by side without biases. Ms. Elizabeth also maintains that CIs can be taught through oppositional pedagogy. She exemplified the oppositional approach in her teaching of the Israeli/Palestinian war through an analysis of the media portrayal of the issue; she included perspectives from both the Israeli and the Palestinian sides, which created fierce debate and also refuted biased perspectives. Then she included the American perspective and historical background on the issue. She said, “We showed this documentary by an Israeli woman Terry Boullatta and her account about living in two places divided by an “Apartheid” wall, the Israeli/Palestinian wall.” Then Ms. Elizabeth looked at the 1972 Olympic team massacre in Munich, Germany, when the Israeli team was held hostage and murdered by so-called Palestinian terrorists; she traced the history of the rivalry back to the Roman invasion of Palestine and the birth of prophet Muhammad in 570 AD, and the subsequent emergence of Islam. Such an historical lens presented a clear picture of how and what the situation was at the time. Here, Ms. Elizabeth utilized counter arguments and counter narratives to discuss the controversial issue. In a sense, Ms. Elizabeth used an oppositional pedagogy that entailed first, considering the biased
political narratives in the Israeli/Palestinian issue including the US perspectives and then providing counter narratives from the people living in those countries. Secondly, she stimulated a critical and political interest in students by engaging the discussion from politically authorized perspectives promoted and presented in the media and the US position on the issue.

Findings indicated that controversial issues are defined differently. Mr. Bryant defined controversial issues (CIs) as more or highly established issues in the society. He understands CIs as issues that have specifically do not have one agreed upon position. Similarly, Mr. Emanuel believed that CIs are touchy real life issues. He selected controversial issues in which his students have interest and of which they are possibly aware. When asked about some of these real life issues Mr. Emanuel, mentioned election, teenage sexuality abortion, 9/11, immigration, and drug policy. Both Mr. Emanuel and Mr. Bryant categorized controversial issues in real life experiences as those that are highly controversial or established issues in the society. The teachers engaged these topics as they emerged in their classrooms and their curriculum.

Mr. Dan interpreted controversial issues (CIs) as “alive issues.” To him a CI is an issue that is real and current as well as one that is debatable. To Mr. Dan these controversial issues may be such as abortion, same-sex marriages, and race and racism; these are some of the issues he discussed in his classroom, as ways to motivate students
to critical, deliberate thinking and to identify what he referred to as “pro-con arguments” on the political topic.

In analyzing these teachers’ understandings and interpretations of controversial issues (CIs), it appears that they have varied definitions about the meaning of CIs. They perceived controversial issues as touchy, highly established, alive, and more established issues. Even though teachers’ definitions of controversial issues are fluid and varied, they all agreed that controversial issues demanded consideration in the classroom. In her interpretation of CIs, Ms. Elizabeth perceived CIs as issues in which “you are always making choices and there’s always biases presented.” Mr. Bryant perceived CIs as issues where “a lot of people are for and against.” Thus they interpreted CIs as issues that are inconclusive, without an answer and therefore required presentation of arguments from both sides of the issue.

In summary then, we can conclude that teachers interpreted controversial issues as issues that are debatable, and those for which there is no conclusive answer. Teachers also believed that controversial issues (CIs) should be analyzed with balance and taught through oppositional lenses to raise awareness of the issues and at the same time, to present the issues authentically by giving different arguments. By using oppositional pedagogy, teachers also wanted to deconstruct the biased opinions about issues in order to empower students with critical and political consciousness. In sum, the previous discussion seemed to suggest that teachers prefer to use oppositional pedagogy because
their students became more engaged in classroom discussions, and because of the tensions these arguments present and the democratic skills the students learn and use.

ii) Controversial Issues Teaching for Democratic and Citizenship Skills

As previously discussed, teachers perceive oppositional pedagogy as an effective approach to controversial issues (CIs) discussions. Oppositional pedagogy implies the teaching of different oppositional arguments about the hot topics with a view to developing students who are critical and are prepared to critically analyze the different perspectives. As a result, the teachers believed that oppositional pedagogy is one such approach towards developing healthy democracies. In this section, I present teachers’ understanding of democratic and citizenship education and how it is connected to oppositional pedagogy. Their views are divided into three parts: first, CIs for democratic education; second, citizenship education and third, global citizenship skills learning.

Teachers’ definitions and understanding of democratic education and citizenship education revealed some fluidity, as both concepts intertwined and informed each other. However, it was evident that the teachers perceived democratic education as being in tandem with oppositional pedagogy, which intends to teach students to make informed decisions about issues, question issues of injustice, political and social issues and to make informed choices in their future life and participation in the public society. In this context teachers perceived citizenship education as training students to understand democracy and its values, participate in civic activities and be responsible citizens. The teachers presented
global citizenship skills as a preparation for students to actively participate in the global world. In other words, while oppositional pedagogy is intended to develop critical and politically conscious students, democratic learning advances the same intentions of oppositional pedagogy by developing learners who are informed, critical thinkers, who actively engaged in issues in their society. Both approaches to learning advanced democratic and citizenship learning objectives.

To illustrate how teachers approached democratic learning practices, the following are some of the teachers’ responses to a question about their perceptions on teaching for democratic learning:

Mr. Emanuel: I hope that the students will be democratic citizens as result of democratic learning. I think that it is one way to get students involved in the democratic processes for them to realize that who they elect in the government and who represents them is going to have an influence on those controversial topics and that is their way to participate.

Mr. Emanuel thinks that democratic education is a way to get students to participate effectively in the democratic processes of the country. He employed teaching strategies such as discussions, deliberations, and evaluations of controversial issues (CIs). Mr. Emanuel indicated that he tries to raise the interest of his students by showing a deplorable image from a controversial issue to start the discussion; he may read an article for background information, and critically analyze the content, and then re-launch the debate
to figure out what can be done. His intentions were to ensure that students can present evidence-based/oppositional arguments on both sides of the issue. Thus, through discussions of CIs, students were equipped to make good decisions about critical key issues that are a critical component of democratic learning. Also, he believes that CIs motivate learners to be involved in discussions, and to know how to participate in their immediate political society. In one class, he encouraged students to practice writing policies that could be useful in fighting against Bantu-education in South Africa that marginalized the majority Black population.

In this study it emerged that democratic education was closely associated with the development of informed citizens. Mr. Emanuel stated, “Majority of our students aren’t very interested in history when they come in so we hope that by the time they leave that they have become curious by the time they become juniors.” In this statement, Mr. Emanuel implied that his objective was to develop informed students who are inquirers of the issues in the society. Mr. Emanuel clearly viewed democratic skills as a means to first, arouse students’ enthusiasm for democratic values, and second, to empower students to participate in activities in their society. However, his teaching fell short of the activist models of learning where students actively participate in their social change. There were limited activities that denoted activism in his classes, such as the writing of anti-Bantu policies, which encouraged social change. However, outside of class transformative practices that engaged activities of social change in the society were missing.
On the same topic of democratic learning, Ms. Elizabeth posited that her objective in teaching for democratic learning is:

To have students think critically and have a voice on issues and so if we just present issues as matter of fact, then how are they going to be empowered? I feel like they need to see that choices are always been made and people are always taking stands and they feel that they need to be given the chance to formulate their own opinions.

Ms. Elizabeth’s idea of democratic training was to develop students’ reflective thinking so that in the end they could make informed decisions. Ms. Elizabeth also felt strongly that giving students a voice or empowering them was crucial in enabling them to make reflective decisions in their lives. She argued that students are not going to be empowered with knowledge and skills in decision making if the teacher does not teach the controversy behind the issue. An example of how she let students make informed decisions was through use of inquiry. After a group of students had presented on HIV/AIDS in the world, Ms. Elizabeth noticed an omission from the presentation. She asked, “From your presentation I did not see the mention of United States as part of the statistics in countries affected with the disease. What did you find out?” A student reached for the computer and provided results that shocked the rest of the students, leading to an oppositional discussion of the controversy and arguments why HIV/AIDS in the United States is not as publicized as in the developing countries, yet it deserved immediate attention. Her reference to
HIV/AIDS in the US was in opposition to the media perceptions of HIV/AIDS as a disease of Third World countries. 

In another instance, Ms. Elizabeth asked students to cite one of the current events in the news reports that week during a current events lesson. In preparation for the current events class, Ms. Elizabeth asked students to identify and think about any current event that they would discuss for a few minutes during the current event lesson. During that session, most students seemed to be interested in the controversy regarding the newly passed Arizona immigration law. The teacher allowed a student-directed controversial issue by letting students discuss the Arizona issue. Students engaged with different facets of the issue through questions such as “How does the American constitution describe a citizen? How do other countries describe their citizens and how is their description of being a citizen different or similar to the US? Why is citizenship an issue even when discussing about our US President Obama?” The student-directed inquiry led them to make their own conclusions about who were Americans and what it meant to be an American citizen. Because of the limited time for the lesson the teacher directed students to investigate more about the issue. It was clear that in training students to be inquirers, and particularly in this case, Ms. Elizabeth let her students choose their own topic for discussion and let them debate, investigate and make conclusions on the issue with little direction from her.
As a second point, the teachers used CIs to promote citizenship skills. Citizenship skills in social studies are different from democratic education which emphasized critical and reflective thinking skills, and the making of informed decisions in preparation for future political lives; citizenship skills in social studies were intended to encourage the learning of rights and responsibilities, civic education and participation in civic activities. All the participants incorporated citizenship skills in some manner in fulfilling the objectives of citizenship education. For instance on citizenship skills training, Mr. Dan explained:

I think of social studies as citizenship training in part, and that is, living in a society where you can have your voice heard and where you can analyze issues and figure out what you think is right and then act on that. And that’s what I want for my students, being able to look at issues and analyze them and think about what is the right policy response to formulate, where they have to try to figure out what is right or wrong and that is all part of democratic and citizenship learning. His example implies democratic and citizenship training for students teaches them to be able to speak out, to analyze issues in their society and then, as future citizens, to think about the right policy response on those issues. To demonstrate, Mr. Dan gave his students the following assignment for the purposes of infusing citizenship skills after discussions on same sex marriage: He told his students, “Imagine you are walking to the voting booth; how would you vote on same-sex marriages? Write your justification or your position
defending your vote and give three arguments for the unit.” This assignment required
students to write a policy response essay on their position, giving arguments and reasons
for their positions. The intention was for “students have to figure out what they believe.”
Mr. Dan wanted to understand what his students really believed; such an exercise not only
made students participate as citizens by giving opinions on policies, but also enabled them
to become active participants of the current issues in their society.

Another scenario to demonstrate citizenship training was when Mr. Bryant taught
about Japanese internment; after the discussion he asked students to imagine living during
that period and to write their feelings to the then president about his decisions to put the
American Japanese in internment camps. This exercise trained the students to critically
weigh their ideas on the issue and then to take a step and write the letter to the then
President Roosevelt with their ideas, whether in support or against the internment issue.

My findings suggest that citizenship education seemed to advocate mere token
participation rather than active participation in their society. Citizenship was about the
issues and not about actions to effect change. Stated differently, the lesson was more
theoretically inclined than inclined to active involvement in the society. When asked why
their citizenship training does not go beyond the classroom, the teachers cited time
constraints and that activism is a concept they are still conceptualizing as an idea and a
practice. However they noted that the small steps they practice in class, like letter and
policy writing, have been engrained in their students’ minds even after they graduate. As a
result some students have become involved in their local and global society. In sum, it can be said that citizenship in these cases took on CIs in the society or globally and then extended the discussion to some semblance of participatory action-based learning through the writing. This case implied that for citizenship to contribute to social changes in the world, more needs to be done to go beyond the mere semblance of activism to actual out of class activities that promote social change.

iii. Controversial Issues Teaching for Global Citizenship

The final findings in this study demonstrate that the teaching of global citizenship skills was closely related to teaching global perspectives; in other words, citizenship education was given a global lens. The teachers made use of current global news/events as a way to stir the interest of students about the global issues. To incorporate global perspectives in citizenship education, Mr. Emanuel used current world events. He devoted one day each week for current events so that each student was prepared in advance by listening to or watching the news or reading the news in the print media or on the Internet for current events in the world and then share with the rest of class what they have garnered. During the discussions the teacher would shows clips of the controversial issues in the world news from the Internet and which guided the current events discussion. Other teacher participants also incorporated current events including both local and international in their courses. As seen in Ms. Elizabeth’s class the discussions
were student-led with little teacher input. Student-led discussions were also common during current events discussion in most of the classrooms observed.

Additionally Ms. Elizabeth observed students’ engagement in world issues. She asserts that “Students can be engaged in their world, I think it gives them more motivation. Looking at the different controversies gives them tools that they could use in their own life as citizens and training in how they can get their points across.” She cited the example of her teaching about the Israeli/Palestine war in which she used original primary sources written by both the Israeli and the Palestinians about the war to provide a broader perspective on the war and not just a US perspective. This exercise prompted students to think globally and not just locally, thus promoting global awareness.

Additionally, when teaching about Rwandan genocide she asked “What was the international response? Why did the United Nations pull out? Why did the US pull out?” These questions were intended to let students reflect and problematize the international silence and inaction on the genocide. To Ms. Elizabeth, then, having students ‘engaged’ in their world entailed exposing them to both the local and the global controversial issues and question issues of injustice in world. It meant that through the learning of current controversial events they were equipped with tools to use in their future lives. Similarly, Mr. Dan stated that he incorporated global perspective on controversial issues in his ninth grade history and his philosophy courses. Unfortunately, he said, his social issues course did not allow him to focus on the global social issues; during my observation Mr. Dan did
not consider a global perspective on any of the social issues he discussed. Mr. Dan’s experience delimits the global perspective at the local level, and furthers the concept of teachers’ agency especially in making decisions to exclude any global perspectives due to course restrictions. However, he posited that the skills he gave his students will be useful for their analysis of any issues they come across in their lives, thus giving lifelong skills that extended beyond the classroom. Some of the skills he taught his students under what he called the “three-tiered approach” were deliberation skills, analysis skills, and evaluations skills, which he said can be applied to the global controversial content. Further, he mentioned that when students engaged in deliberations it trained them to become more willing to accept and tolerate other ideas and people different from them in the community and in the world.

Some of the global historical and contemporary content Ms. Elizabeth, Mr. Bryant and Mr. Emanuel incorporated in their history classes included Apartheid, Terrorism, Nazi Germany, HIV/AIDS and immigration. These teachers attempted to use the global content and global current events to prepare students and make them conscious of the world and its interconnections and interdependencies. However, similar to citizenship education, global participation and activism was missing in the lessons except when Ms. Elizabeth mentioned that some of her students have volunteered abroad years after taking her course because of the interest developed in her class for serving locally and internationally. The above findings imply then that the affection for global perspectives,
issues, and experiences developed in classes can impact future students’ decision to participate in social change. Consequently, teacher participants agreed that controversial issues pedagogy is paramount for healthy local and global democratic citizenry.

This discussion raises questions about the kind and nature of global citizenship that the teachers present. The teachers appeared to use societal and world issues to stimulate interest about the citizenship education. The focus then was on how the local informs the global and how the global informs the local; in other words, the local issues cannot be fully explained without incorporating the global and to explain the global, the local has to be used as a reference. Moreover, my finding indicated that in classroom discussions teachers were not afraid of raising questions about the US role in the global context. For example, one teacher raised questions about the deafening silence of the US government during Rwandan genocide and another teacher questioned the meaning of social justice in the US government’s decision to put people of Japanese ancestry in internment camps while at the same time criticizing Nazi Germany for the Nazi concentration camps. Thus, the actions of the US government led to a discussion on the international play of power within nations and especially within the so called “First World” and the “Third World.” The nature of global citizenship in this context was to develop informed students, interested in issues of the world and ready to question injustices and contribute to their global world.
In conclusion then, the examination of global citizenship education in these social studies classrooms revealed a theoretical lens to teaching global citizenship skills. In providing a theoretical perspective, teachers focused more on awareness of global issues without a focus on participatory or activist activities. In each of the three areas, democratic education, citizenship education and global citizenship education, it was clear that teaching and learning practices promoted the goals of democratic local and global citizenship education. These findings demonstrated that the teaching and learning practices fell short of activities that promoted social change even though most perceived controversial issues discussion as a way to promote social change. Therefore raising questions as what can teachers to promote participatory activities in the classroom and outside the classroom.

Asked about incorporating outside of class activities, Mr. Dan indicated that sometimes he would ask his students to make fliers that promote awareness of a certain issue discussed in the classroom. Later, after preparing the fliers, the students would distribute them in the school and community. Or sometimes he asked his students, “What do you do about these beliefs you have about the controversial issue we have been deliberating on?” And they would respond, “I volunteer here” or “I do that.” During classroom observation the above issues did not come up because, he insists, “My course doesn’t say we are taking a week and we are going out in the community and some courses do but mine tends to be more of a deliberation approach, it’s a lets figure it out
type of course.” Mr. Dan suggested that the course description may limit out of class societal activities. During my presence none of the participants incorporated out of class activities and citizenship goals were limited to a theoretical discussion which did not fully uphold the goals of transformative citizenship education. The teachers reiterated that with more time in the curriculum and knowledge on ways of infusing participatory activities, they would enact these transformative practices in their schools.

b) Teachers’ Perception about Disclosure of Opinion

In this section, I look at teachers perspectives about disclosing or withholding opinions on controversial issues and how their opinions are impacted by time and space. For the participants disclosing personal opinions was a matter of choice. Some teachers indicated that they disclosed their opinions but at different time frames within the lesson. While other teachers stated that they do not disclose their opinion at all. However, during the class observations I noticed some revealing their opinion even after stating that they withhold their opinion and without the intent to challenge students. The following section presents teachers responses to the question on disclosing opinion, followed by individual participant cases to show how they went about disclosing or withholding opinion. Participants responded with the following comments to the question “Do you give your opinion to students about the controversial issues you discuss in the classroom?”:

Mr. Bryant: Usually, when students are going to do something with the issue afterwards either through a writing assignment or something like that, I try not to
express my opinion about the issue, but I will tell them eventually. This is because I don’t want to influence their thinking, so that they say ‘because Mr. Bryant thinks this way, I want to write my paper the same way so as not to get a bad grade.’ So I try to go along with the kids in their conversations, and sometimes I will jump in when I think it’s appropriate, at times I would try to restrain what I think is my personal opinion, which may be biased. But when kids ask about my opinion I will tell them what I think but first I like kids to hear what other people say from the materials we read before I tell them what I think.

Mr. Emanuel: You know there is a part of me that wants to remain neutral and there is another part of us especially when we are interacting with other adults wants to appear authentic, however, on some topics I do offer my opinion but I do let students know that this is my opinion and they should be formulating their own, and they should challenge my opinion as well. But I do not worry too much, because I feel like we teach in a very supportive community, and if there was a controversy that came about, one could apologize.

Ms. Elizabeth: We try to give both sides of the issue. We want to open up dialogue. We don’t want them to say something because this is what Ms. Elizabeth thinks. Like the Israeli/Palestine issue we discussed in class, I don’t
think I said which side I support but I definitely gave weight to the story that has not been told. I don’t say “This is the side I am on,” but I try to keep the dialogue flowing, sometimes I do think that students probably have a sense of where am going, but I think this is something I would like to keep working on, because I don’t want to shut their voices especially when someone feels very strongly about an issue. I want them to see another perspective. They might feel like am going against them, but I want them to see another perspective on the matter.

Mr. Dan: No, I do not give my opinion although I try to keep the issue clear for the students and for the arguments to be clear as well. I present them with equal passion and kind of force as best as I can for both or all sides. Now that does not mean that am Mr. Objectivity, of course students can tell sometimes my position, they look at clues and other things and probably they can tell from some of my values. Be sure to cite.

The above responses revealed that Mr. Bryant and Mr. Emanuel believe in disclosing opinions, but disclosure within the lesson differs. Mr. Bryant indicated that he has to restrain himself until the end of the issue discussion to avoid influencing one argument over another, while Mr. Emanuel posited that he does not have a specific time within the lesson to disclose. However, Mr. Emanuel said that he makes clear to students what he discloses is his personal opinion and can be challenged by the students. His rapport with
his students left no doubt in my mind that his students can and are empowered to challenge the teacher’s opinion. Both Mr. Bryant and Mr. Emanuel’s experiences depicted the complexity of dealing with disclosure and at the same time teach the issue in from an objective viewpoint. Mr. Emanuel revealed that he has internal conflicts as he wants to appear authentic on one hand and wants to present an objective discussion on the other.

While teachers Bryant and Emanuel told students their opinions, Ms. Elizabeth did not. She preferred being neutral, so as not to sway the students to think that her opinion is the right one. At the same time she pushed the students through dialogue to continue with the conversations by providing both sides of the perspectives and ensures that she gives students a voice to allow them to have opinions. Mr. Emanuel’s inclination is to remain neutral, but he maintains that his opinion depends on the issue at hand. In some cases he told the students his opinion but in some cases he did not. For example, when teaching about South African Apartheid, he stated his views, which were against Apartheid laws, but allowed the students to formulate their own views, which also seemed to be against Apartheid laws. In the Apartheid laws discussion, he analyzed events that led to the revolt by Black South Africans against the White bourgeois of South Africa at the time. Students were provided with some of the Apartheid laws and some of the responses from prominent South Africans at the time, such as Desmond Tutu and members of the African National Congress (ANC); ANC was a movement used by
Black South Africans to fight against the White government and leadership. After examining the Apartheid laws such as those on segregation, the students’ questioned the existence of the inhumane laws. Even though students had the freedom to challenge the teacher’s opinion they took a unanimous position against Apartheid.

Another instance where students challenged Mr. Emanuel’s position was on a current event discussion about gun control policies. While Mr. Emanuel indicated his opinion for gun control policies to limit its misuse, some of his students challenged him, stating that they disapprove of gun control because it does not assure citizens that guns will not find their way into the hands of criminals, therefore implying that citizens need to be armed to protect themselves. Another group of students supported the teacher’s opinion by stating that guns should only be accessible to police. When asked why he presented his opinion and may have influenced some students, Mr. Emanuel said he was playing devil’s advocate to understand his students’ views. Moreover, Mr. Emanuel indicated that if the issue was a touchy issue and it raised a controversy he does apologize to students. For instance in the above context he says if a group believed against gun control as opposed to his opinion on gun control policies, he would apologize and explain why he thinks the way he does. Over all Mr. Emanuel, was quick to state that the community is very supportive therefore he does not expect any members of the community to come in to school to complain about his teaching issues. Mr. Emanuel’s
considered such a supportive society as a good environment for CI discussion and the freedom to disclose opinions.

Mr. Bryant, on the other hand, withholds his opinion especially when he has an assignment for the students; when it is done, he states his opinion. Whenever his students asked about his opinion he preferred to let the discussion go in both directions before he told them what he thought. An example was when he talked about the Arizona immigration laws; he let students state what they knew about the laws, then he provided the latest news on the issue and its background, which later led a discussion. At the end of the lesson he passionately stated his opinion about the immigration law; he noted that, “The laws are ridiculous.” Mr. Bryant’s passionate opinion seemed conclusive, although he did not allow a debate on the issue. His opinion was presented at the end of the lesson and there was no time for a follow-up discussion since it was not in the curriculum at the moment, according to Mr. Bryant.

For Mr. Dan, he did not disclose his opinion but rather let students guess from his clues what his opinion is. But when the students asked about his opinion he revealed it. However, he said it was very rare for his students to ask for his opinion. On the other hand, while observing Mr. Dan’s class, he unknowingly revealed his opinions on some issues in class. For instance, a student had disclosed that he was gay and believed that gay epithets such as telling someone “That’s so gay” were acceptable to him. The student even stated that he used the terms himself and did not mind anyone using them to refer to
him. The teacher became passionately involved, which influenced other students to speak against the epithets; a few other students including the self-declared gay student were on the minority opposing side, and they felt intimidated by the response from the teachers’ side. When Mr. Dan was asked why he revealed his opinion and feelings he said, “I did it knowing that I was doing it. I thought I was checking and making a point. I think that I was justified here and I talked a little bit, about how I personally felt when such an issue arises in my classroom and I thought of it as a kind of an honest but also a rather subjective opinionated point.” After rethinking his actions in class, he reconsidered his statement about not disclosing opinions.

My findings suggests that even though teachers’ decisions to disclose or withhold opinions differed, when they engaged contentious issues, they let students examine arguments on both sides of the issue before they offer their opinion, and thus empowered students to make their own arguments. In classes where the topic emerged from the students rather from the curriculum, there was not sufficient time and space for discussion, and therefore most students did not participate in giving their opinions. Also, the teachers’ opinions in some cases may have hindered students’ participation, and in other cases may have contributed to students’ participation. The complexity and contradiction about disclosing or withholding opinions suggests the need for further investigation of how teachers’ opinions encouraged or problematized students’ participation in the deliberation of controversial issues.
Closely related to teachers’ withholding or revealing opinions is the impact of time and space on opinions. Participants exemplified how their attitudes and views towards certain CIIs have changed over time and space. Consider the example of Mr. Emanuel, who said:

I know one particular issue that I remember I had an opinion that changed. It is about capital punishments, I know it’s something, I have changed my mind about two or three times in my lifetime and part of what has influenced my decisions is part of my experience and a lot of it has been through the conversations I have had with students, when I was in high school and conversations I had in college and the conversations I have had as an adult.

Mr. Emanuel credited his change of attitude towards capital punishment to passage of time, living in different spatial locations and conversations in schools and in colleges as an adult. Mr. Emanuel’s open-minded attitude allowed him to conceptualize and reconstruct his thinking on capital punishment. Even though he did not indicate his present position about capital punishment, it can be inferred that he had found a space within which he is comfortable to teach about the issue.

In the same vein, Mr. Dan mentioned that his thinking towards capital punishment has changed over time. He indicated that:

I used to believe in capital punishment more, and I always said that I wouldn’t mind capital punishment if we knew we could do it right, but since it’s so racist,
classist, and probably unfair, I believe in it in a perfect form but I do not believe in it as a practice, so I can not endorse it.

Mr. Dan’s rethinking ideas about capital punishment led to a change in his thinking. He changed from supporting capital punishment to being against it, but still left room for a change of mind if there might be a perfect form of capital punishment. He added that he has changed his thinking on other issues such as abortion and gay rights. Mr. Dan posited that, “Actually I grew up in a very pro-choice liberal family, strong mother and sister who are very feminists but I really appreciate the moral concerns about it.” He stated that he cannot empathize with women on abortion because as a man he does not know how women feel in the process of abortion, but because of the pro-choice influences around him, he now sees abortion differently. However, he mentioned that abortion was still an issue with which he had to grapple each time he taught it, in order to teach it right. On the gay rights issue he stated:

It is really hard for me, because I have had numerous gay friends over the course of my life and still do, but I think this is an issue that in the future will still be linked upon as a kin to racism or sexism, that our biases will peel away and it’s hard for me to teach it as an issue sometimes because I think the answer is just how people are socialized to feel about it its prejudiced principles. There is no rational argument against gay rights in my view, I feel that so strongly, and that is
why when I teach this unit. I will be giving these arguments and I do not mind
play-acting, I think that is part of what I like about the class.

Mr. Dan’s quote suggests that he is convinced that “there is no rational argument against
gay rights” and that he thinks that the lesson can be taught with finality. As he rethought
his view on gay rights and considered his gay friends, he reconstructed his ideas and
concluded that, with time, people’s biases on gay rights will “peel away”; he believed
that they will see gay rights as they perceive other issues such as racism and sexism,
which are taught with a conclusive viewpoint.

These findings disclosed how complex neutrality and objectivity are for teachers
when engaged in teaching controversial issues (CIs). This study revealed that when a
teacher chose to be neutral, it appeared that more students participated in discussions, as
in Ms. Elizabeth’s classroom, where disclosing her opinion may have shut down the
voices of students with differing opinions. A preference for disclosure or withholding
opinions, however, cannot be conclusively said to exist. Additionally, the experiences
recounted here also reveal that teachers can unknowingly reveal opinions either through
word or sometimes through the classroom resources used; sometimes the resources
leaned towards one opinion, although the teachers’ main reason for using single
perspectives resources was an issue with finding balanced resources with balanced
arguments. A third point was that the sharing of opinions, such as Mr. Dan’s self
proclaimed gay student, indicated that classroom deliberation moments may be a way to
share opinions that would otherwise be silenced in the school or the society. In addition, Mr. Bryant’s passionate opinions imply political teaching; he angrily stated that the immigration laws in Arizona were ridiculous and he said that it was unfair for the US government to discredit Adolf Hitler’s Nazi concentration camps during World War II, while, Japanese on US soil were interred in camps; he clearly was promoting his own political beliefs in the classroom. Mr. Dan heatedly shared his opinion on anti-gay epithets in the classroom by stating that he was “making a point.” His words denoted his political views on the issue and by supporting his opinionated argument, he advanced his political opinion. As a result of Mr. Dan’s opinionated discussion on gay/lesbian rights, some students asked what they could do to stop the use of such phrases as “That’s so gay” in the school. Some students volunteered to make tee shirts supporting gay rights while other students engaged in a discussion analyzing the politically correctness of such tee-shirts with opinionated messages and if they would be acceptable in school. These classroom experiences suggest that there is a possibility of enacting social change through the use of controversial issues discussions.

3) Teachers use of Controversial Issues Pedagogy

In this section, I examine how teachers use controversial issues pedagogy (CIP) in their social studies classrooms. This three part examination of CIP practices begins with an examination of how teachers enacted CIP, analysis of the complexities in using CIP and finally the complicated role of gender and race in teaching controversial issues.
i). Practices of Controversial Issues Pedagogy

After understanding what empowers teachers’ perception and practice on controversial issues (CIs), I attempt to explain how their epistemology and beliefs translated into practice. In controversial issues pedagogy, the teachers employed reflective critical thinking skills and opposing arguments on controversial issues discussion. Through interviews and classroom observations, I understood what controversial issues pedagogy (CIP) looked like, and the complexities of teaching CIs. Two aspects emerged, teaching pedagogy and teaching resources choices.

Regarding the use of controversial issues pedagogy, Ms. Elizabeth said that she used “multiple intelligences.” That is, she incorporated multiple intellectual perspectives to understand an issue; she then incorporated supplemental materials, visuals images, cartoons and varied materials to aid learning and grounding of the issue. To those who shy away from the teaching of controversial issues in social studies, she stated, “It is ridiculous to shy away; all history is pretty much controversial, and that is what we want to analyze as long as you are teaching them to look at other perspectives.” Her belief is that students need to learn controversial issues from multiple perspectives and counter narratives. For example, she engaged viewpoints from the Israelis, the Palestinian and the Americans and contrasted those views when teaching about the Israeli/Palestinian war. 

Mr. Emanuel believed that to engage historical hot-button issues in the local or global context he needed to incorporate a critical perspective of the controversial issue.
For instance, he pointed out that “When we talk about historical events we can compare and contrast it with something that happened in their lifetime in terms of how much impacted the populations.” Cite For example, Mr. Emanuel began with the issue of the Israeli/Palestinian issue, looked at details surrounding the issue, and considered the United States’ and the Israeli and Palestinian positions on the matter. He further examined individual stories by people from those regions, then compared and contrasted the different narratives from the Israeli and Palestinian people with the US narratives; he introduced other closely related topics such as religion to get the bigger picture on the issue and how it complicated the issue. He said that one of his teaching philosophies was “playing the devil’s advocate and creating an interesting classroom environment where I challenge student’s belief system on an issue.” To illustrate he began his class by asking students to share what they knew about the Israeli/Palestinian issue and then asked students why they think as they do, what moved them to arrive to their conclusions about what they know. In the process, students employed reflective and critical thinking skills to support their beliefs or arguments. Both Ms. Elizabeth and Mr. Emanuel employed critical pedagogical skills in teaching of controversial issues. While Ms. Elizabeth used “multiple intelligences” to have students see controversial issues in different lenses and arguments, Mr. Emanuel problematized and challenge students’ belief systems through critical questioning. Both of these approaches were successful in providing students with the skills they need to interrogate any controversial issue.
Mr. Dan believed in what he termed a “three-tiered approach.” In this approach he associated four skills with his pedagogy of any controversial issue (CI); the skills were deliberation, analysis, evaluations and action skills. Mr. Dan believed deliberation skills are effective in teaching democratic citizenship education as students are empowered to speak what they think about the CI. He used analysis skills to engage discussion of determining the right policies, then followed the discussion using evaluation procedures. For example, when discussing reproductive rights, students were asked, “What are your personal feelings about abortion? What do you think the law should be if we had to vote on a law? Do you think it is constitutional?” After the questions were deliberated, analyzed and evaluated, Mr. Dan concluded with actions skills, politically engaging exercises, such as having students re-write a policy on a discussion issue and presenting it to the policy makers.

Teachers utilized an oppositional pedagogy to disrupt, challenge and deconstruct the dominant, mainstream ideology that overwrites the knowledge of the helpless people locally and globally. For example, to ensure that students were politically involved in scrutinizing a film for its biased content, Mr. Bryant utilized analytical questions that presented opposing sides of the issues and countered the prevailing ideologies presented. To illustrate, Mr. Bryant previewed an HBO documentary on the Band of Brothers episode Day of days; the episode captures the events in a World War II battlefield. To get his students thinking of the larger idea of critiquing films, he asked them to differentiate
between movie and documentary, and had them examine the movie through a lens of
critical questions. Who is the producer? What are the intentions? Were the intentions of
the film producers and film fulfilled? Did the film achieve its goal? How does the movie
portray the underprivileged/issues of race/ethnicity? Does the style over exaggerate or
stretch the truth? What are the challenges and how are these dealt with?

When showing the episode, Mr. Bryant paused it and posed critical questions such
as “Whose voice is being promoted in this clip?” He however delayed the discussion until
after the movie. I observed students making notes of their thoughts during the film. When
the episode ended, Mr. Bryant reviewed the preview questions and wrote answers on
board. Generally, the discussion questions were well placed in enhancing oppositional
arguments. These critical questions pushed students to disrupt arguments in the film that
might have been perceived as truth, and also centered discussion on the silenced voices in
the film.

Another example was the discussion on Vietnam War. Mr. Bryant stated

In the Vietnam War African Americans refused to go to war since the cause they
were fighting for was not fair. The African Americans felt that they were fighting
for a government that was discriminating them at home.

Mr. Bryant’s ideas presented a case of government’s use and misuse of its authority and
power, as well as illustrated oppressive situations leveled against its people. He compared
the situation in Vietnam with that of US where, at the same time period, African
Americans were fighting for a government that racially discriminated against them. These comparisons were meant to open students’ minds to critically examine the actions of the government at the time. Mr. Bryant also compared the treatment of Nazi Germans by the US by condemning their Nazi concentration camps and yet at home, the people of Japanese heritage were put in internment camps. These discussions revolved around the issues of race and power. By exposing such practices by the US government the teacher developed a critical engagement of issues. Students were taught to critically analyze actions, challenge issues of injustice, and question and resist oppressive situations which advance oppositional pedagogy.

In the same vein, Ms. Elizabeth demonstrated political teaching in a class discussion about the Rwandan Genocide. After viewing the film Hotel Rwanda she raised to the class several critical questions. In response to “Why did the United Nations and United States pulled out of Rwanda when they really needed to help?” A student said, “The US and UN did nothing because the Rwandans’ were Africans.” Ms. Elizabeth asked her students to determine if the case of Rwanda was just an issue about ethnic war or an issue about power and race. She led a discussion on the different ways that the US could have handled the Rwandan situation and compared the situation to other countries where the US stepped in to stop violence. By posing the different narratives on the issue and explaining why things happened as they did, students became more politically involved in the discussion and questioned the issue.
My findings suggest that amidst the mainstream perspectives that dominate the media and media productions, teachers used these productions to train students to politically challenge the popular views and question government decisions on past events. Also teachers utilized classroom experiences to train students to question issues of power as they relate to issues of race. In some cases the teachers moved beyond just teaching how to resist dominant knowledge to ways of enacting social change. Ms. Elizabeth, taught about “divestment” as a form of protest. She used the example of Apartheid in South Africa where international communities pulled out their resources and funds from South Africa as a form of divestment, sanctions to force the regime to put an end to Apartheid. In a discussion on the Israeli/Palestinian war she asked students to state ways in which governments could use divestment to solve the problem. In the deliberations students were involved in critical discussions on the Israeli/Palestinian issue; at the end of the lesson they felt invested in the international discussions, and those discussions were helpful in leading them to think about action and participation in their society. Ultimately they practiced their critical thinking skills.

Mr. Dan used a similar participatory approach when discussing the same sex-marriage issue. He asked students to write a letter to a state representative or judge arguing to keep or repeal the State’s Constitutional Amendment defining marriage as between one man and one woman. Mr. Dan’s assignment also involved them in a sensitive societal issue, which in the long run led the students to actively participate in
their society’s policy making and activism. An analysis of the above discussion about enacting a decolonizing pedagogy and practice seems fitting with the premises of anti-racist and decolonizing ideologies. It is apparent that teachers and their students can participate in the transformative work in their society. Nonetheless, the above examples suggest that such transformative work demands committed and knowledgeable teachers who are passionate about enacting transformative practices in their classrooms.

The previous section advanced transformative practices for social change through promotion of the value of media literacy, rethinking war topics, going beyond nationalistic perspectives, and advancing social justice. On the value of media literacy, it seems that the teacher participants utilized the media for teaching purposes. The teachers did not take media resources as words of truth but challenged their content, their intentions, and the overall goals of the media for the purposes of training critical literacy skills. The teachers utilized critical questions such as What is the truth? What are the intentions of the film/producers? How does race/power/oppression play out in the film? Such questions were critical and useful for the students to use in interrogating other media resources.

When reflecting on war topics, the teachers were imbedded the idea that war may not be as clean as it seems. The questions used by the teachers implied that there are underlying issues that needed scrutiny. By using the examples of Vietnam War and Rwandan Genocide, the teachers illustrated how power can corrupt and lead to
oppressive situations such as African Americans fighting for the country that racially discriminated against them. Therefore the teachers promoted discussions that encouraged the rethinking of war and the role of the government and its power.

Regarding going beyond nationalistic perspectives, Ms. Elizabeth described how teaching beyond students’ borders could be useful in enacting change. When teaching about Apartheid in South Africa, she described how going beyond our nationalistic perspectives and engaging in international campaigns and interests can effect social and political changes internationally, especially in countries with conflict. She discussed how divestment policies such as those in the case of South Africa were necessary to push for the end of Apartheid.

The example of social justice in this section shows how controversial issues discussion does promote social change. The South African classroom discussion on Apartheid depicted the human injustices; African Americans fought in the Vietnam War for the US interests and yet their own civil rights were not met, an example of a duality of injustices. Students’ critical understanding of these issues, their participation in classroom activities and deliberation of the issues combined with actions that can produce social change, promoted informative learning moments in those social studies classrooms.

To extend controversial issues pedagogy (CIP), the teachers used varied critical materials to realize their visions and philosophies. Teacher participants agreed that controversial issues materials are available, alive and can be found everywhere, be they
Mr. Bryant explicated how he conceived controversial issues resources in history and in the media, and how they may be biased and problematic as they portray a one-sided view of the issues. He noted for example the media portrayal of the events surrounding 9/11 and how the government reacted. He conceived the government’s reaction as biased. He stated, “I think the broader issue becomes how the government reacts when there is a threat, we look at the idea of government power like in WWII, it is good to show that it is not just the Nazis were bad, but we do some things that are not that great either.” Mr. Bryant suggested the need to present different and balanced perspectives to students, such as stating reasons why the government acted the way it did and what were other possible reactions. He gave another example of how he approached Japanese Internment and how, during World War II, the US government condemned the Germans for Nazi concentration camps and yet at home, incarcerated the Japanese and Japanese Americans in internment camps. One of the teaching resources used was the poster *Thinking like a Historian*. He gave students a reading assignment and asked them to find three points that represented the ideas on the chart. The ideas from the chart were, What were the causes of past events and what were the effects? What has changed and what has remained the same? How does the past help us make sense of the present? How did people in the past view their world? How did past decisions or actions affect future
choices? These questions invoked the power of reason and moved students to analyze and evaluate issues discussed.

As for textbooks, teachers perceived them as promoting the official public knowledge and agenda. Mr. Bryant stated:

I think the textbook is not so much about being unbalanced; it’s about the gaps in it. It’s not so much what they say, it’s about what is omitted, and I think it just doesn’t present different positions on issues.

Mr. Bryant lamented that textbooks presented unbalanced viewpoints and one sided positions on issues. He gave the example of the Japanese internment where the text did not provide the perspective of the interred Japanese Americans. Thus teachers who believe in democratic learning like Mr. Bryant must endeavor to find texts that provide a balanced view of the issues discussed.

Of the analysis of media materials, Ms Elizabeth was able to put into practice her belief on teaching CI through multiple intelligences because of the support from the social studies departments in the school. She said, “We have a lot of resources, we have department money, that we can spend to buy whatever I want and you acquire materials over the years.” Cite She chose not only topic documentaries but also carefully selected those from authentic sources and written by people from those regions. Ms. Elizabeth posits, “We push them to look at the BBC side, Aljazeera side. Just to see how different media sources present the issue. That’s the skill we want. They might forget everything
that is said but they learn how the media presents things, and I would feel successful.”

Ms. Elizabeth did not dismiss the media as all celebrity news but looked to different media stations that portrayed different views about an issue, especially if it was an issue that needed a local and an international focus.

Mr. Dan appreciated controversial issues (CIs) materials from the media because they were available all the time. He was quick to note, however, that the challenge was to keep up with the materials because they are quickly outdated. He added, “The social issues course is not set up like a class and so I have no problem bringing in things randomly because I think when you bring up news from the newspaper, that’s the way life is.” Most of Mr. Dan’s materials were gleaned from newspapers, television clips, scholarly journals and the Internet. He utilized materials on the Internet that addressed the controversial issues such as those on the history of gay rights in the state and nationwide; he used movies and films on the same topic and then finalized a lesson with critical scholarly articles. When asked about resources that students might find difficult to grasp, he said he read the articles and identified those that students would easily understand; if he found an appropriate but difficult to grasp article, he would unpack the content in small portions of information.

Conversely, my findings indicate that not all teachers use media in the classrooms. When asked about what he thought about using controversial issues materials drawn from media, Mr. Emanuel said, “In my perspective the news is not very
controversial. Most of the controversies in the news tend to relate to celebrities or personal scandals that people are having and we don’t usually spend a lot of time on those in class.” Mr. Emanuel dismissed materials from that the media because of their focus; he said that most of the time is the media leans towards celebrity news and scandals that interest people and therefore is not controversial. However he still found specific teachable moments from the media. He stated that he selects issues to bring up in his classroom that have learning experiences rather than celebrity scandals. Even though Mr. Dan employed many resources from the Internet, Mr. Emanuel seemed to be cautious about resources from the Internet as he considered them geared towards celebrity scandals. These teachers’ experiences demonstrated the teachers’ diverse ideas about materials from similar sources, and how these diverse materials can be engaged in a variety of ways in the classrooms.

Below I examine controversial issues teaching as it was demonstrated in the classrooms. The teacher practices included discussions, handouts for questions, handouts on reading materials on the topic, and viewing of video clips or whole films; lessons were completed with discussion and the answering of questions from the handout. This classroom procedure was typical when addressing controversial issue pedagogy (CIP) on a sensitive topic.
Teacher: (Question) What caused the events leading to the atomic bombing of Japan?

Student: Because of war

Student: It was the US fighting back the Japanese.

Teacher: Before engaging on the Japanese bombing. The teacher shows a map of their city and identifies some of the key areas and neighborhoods including the location of their high school. Talks about what would happen if a megaton Airburst was dropped on the central business district, and asks students what would happen.

Students: we will all die…

Teacher: Shows another map with zones of destruction if the megaton nuclear bomb would be exploded in the central business district. The zones are 1-6, and each zone has its measure of destruction.

Student: How will one survive? Does our school have a bomb shelter?

Teacher: Because of the close proximity we would need to have 1000 feet under the shelter to survive.
Table 7 Continued

**Teacher:** Discusses about the events leading to the US dropping the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki Japan, and its destruction. Then leads a deliberation of the controversial event in history. Teacher then gives a handout with three possible approaches that the US government would have dealt with Japan before the dropping of the atomic bomb. Asks the students to choose a possible approach from the three that would have been the best way to deal with Japan.

**Students:** (Discuss the possibilities in groups)

**Teacher:** Leads a class discussion of the possibilities and its consequences. Final exercise asks individual students to assume they were President Truman US president at the time, and have to make the best decision possible about the issue. Then collects the students’ essays and then discusses what President Truman’s choice was in dealing with Japan through viewing a film on the atomic bomb. The teacher then further deliberates on pros and cons of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

This pedagogical approach is an example of the processes followed in most of the courses I observed. The lessons usually proceeded as follows: statement of the issue; understanding of students views about the issue; teacher presentation of content on the issue; use of a film or chart to begin the discussion; asking critical questions for healthy engagements of the controversial issues (CI); teacher presentation of different arguments.
and similar real life context that demand students opinion on the issue; students write an essay or policy or action statement. These procedures were not always strictly followed in all classes and for all the topics every day; the teachers varied their pedagogy depending upon their preferences and circumstances.

In other contexts the teachers decided to use a learner-centered CIP approach where students took on controversial issues deliberations. For example, Ms. Elizabeth related how she practiced learner-centered controversial issues teaching (CIs); she said:

   In students’ projects we suggest the controversial topics they chose instead of them taking their own topics. We have them take on a side that they might not necessarily agree with and then they teach the topic to their partners in the other group. So this approach makes it less competitive and more learning through a deliberative discussion.

   In this learner-centered CIs practice, Ms. Elizabeth used projects assigned to groups of about five students, who then researched the topic and presented to the class. These topics were not necessarily be the ones preferred by the students, but she assisted them to think from a different, and possibly uncomfortable, perspective in order to train them to feel and understand the evidence and arguments on all sides. The students presented on topics as drug control, immigration, child trafficking, HIV/AIDS, and war. The questions that guided the presentations included: How have countries of the world addressed issues of the 20th and 21st century? What are the similarities and differences across cultures in
terms of policies? How do policies in the United States impact the policies of other countries? How is the United States impacted by policies of other countries? Which policies make most sense for citizens of the country and for the nations?” Students used these questions to guide their background analysis and development of the issue; they used a variety of sources from different countries and created an engaging lesson in which the whole class participated and concluded with an assessment.

One group presented a power point presentation on HIV/AIDS. The group discussed the HIV/AIDS background, its prevention and treatment. Then the teacher presented statistics on HIV/AIDS cases and infections in Brazil, India and Africa (South Africa). At the end of the presentation, students used a bingo game with questions to review the issue. After the review the teacher led a discussion and had the class ask questions of the group and share what parts of the presentation surprised or concerned them. At the end of the class the teacher asked why the United States statistics were not included; students were surprised that the US has a large HIV/AIDS population, and they questioned the moneys sent to supporting developing countries when their own country needs help. This example not only presented an engaged pedagogy, but also introduced questions about why some information is withheld from the public, such as the silenced US statistics on HIV/AIDS.

Ms. Elizabeth’s approach is to fill in the gaps on controversial issues. For instance, regarding the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the US, she began by
asking students what they knew about the issue, then progressed with multiple sources. After hearing what the students knew, she used media materials about the event to develop a discussion on the different arguments ranging from the American point of view on the event to the so called “terrorists” point of view.

Mr. Bryant liked to present a controversial topic before class discussion and follow it with a student writing assignment. As his students discussed the issue, he intervened whenever appropriate and ensured that students knew both sides of the issue. He then used supplemental materials to show different perspectives of the topic. He learned these practices from his father, whom he stated greatly influenced his practice.

Mr. Emanuel stated:

I try to just pique students interest, and may be show them something that maybe shocking such as an image, or read something that is really surprising to them just to get the discussion, the debate going and then I like to take a step back and unpack it, and make sure the students understand the background information about the issue and then re-launch into a debate about the different sides pertaining to the issue. I usually like to draw them to something spectacular or fantastic or really horrible in some cases and that grabs their attention and then we kind of go back and try to figure out how we got here and how did this happen.

To get beyond the classroom, Mr. Dan encouraged his students to think beyond the now and participate in controversial issues discussions outside of class. For example
he encouraged students do something with what they learned such as making and distributing fliers for an issue about which they are passionate or volunteering in organizations outside of class. Another approach that he used was asking students to share their classroom discussions with others outside of school especially a heated societal. An example he gave was that of national health insurance issue. He stated, “I really enjoyed the discussion on national health insurance, where students went home and shared with their parents or guardians about health insurance the ones that connect them with their families.” In sharing what they learned in the classroom students participated in an awareness campaign on the health insurance issue and also become initiators of controversial issues discussion at home.

Likewise, Ms. Elizabeth students engaged in activities for social change by volunteering as teachers abroad when they graduated. She stated:

They have traveled abroad; they have done semesters abroad, volunteered abroad in different activities as teachers or with non-governmental organizations. In general they have had interest in the world, lot of them have just graduated from college, since I started teaching the sophomore and seniors a number of them I know of, are teachers of social studies in elementary schools.

Most of Ms. Elizabeth’s students were motivated to engage in activities for social change abroad because of the global citizenship foundation they had in her classroom; that foundation inspired their choices to participate in global service because they saw
themselves as citizens of the world. Thus, classes where the teachers encouraged activities beyond the classroom led to students’ participation in the local and global community.

In sum, my findings suggest that teacher participants perceived meaningful CIP practices as involving the use of multiple intelligences, critical, political, oppositional, and counter perspectives, the three-tiered approach, deliberation, analysis, evaluation of the issue and students involvement in activism. As evidenced from their stories, they also perceived meaningful CIP learning when students became engaged both deliberatively and emotionally in their own learning, to a point of actively promoting their political agendas outside of class and participating in their local and global societies.

Thus far this section has presented what teachers believe as effective controversial issues’ teaching and learning, given best case scenarios. However, there were complexities which led to practices that did not fully align to the above CIP practices; these complexities are documented in the next section.

ii) Complexities in Using Controversial Issues

As noted, teachers visions did not always translate to practices because of complexities and, as a result, the CIP practices fell short of achieving their goals. In this section, I present my observation on the contradictions between CIP meaning and teacher practices. Contradictory practices noted were avoidance or ignorance of controversial issues and claiming to use multiple perspectives and multiple resources but in reality not
following through. Finally, I will discuss what the teachers said were the causes of the use of contradictory CIP practices.

On the avoidance of controversial issues (CIs), some teachers claimed that they incorporated CIs in their teaching and their classroom experiences revealed that they did. However, they avoided or ignored some of the more established controversial issues. The reason given for avoiding such issues was the fear of causing an uproar in the classroom. For example, when teaching about religions of the world, Mr. Emanuel said, “We criticize Christianity very well since it is well-tolerated than we would Islam or Judaism.” When asked why he took such an approach, he said that Christianity was well tolerated and one could critique it from many corners, but, given that some students were Jewish and others Muslim, it was difficult to interrogate the pros and cons of how religion is a factor for example in Israeli/Palestinian war. I observed that Mr. Emanuel did leave out religion in the Israeli/Palestinian discussion.

My findings indicated that teachers often avoided discussions surrounding race and racism especially in the local society. Mr. Emanuel said that before he knew how to approach issues of race and racism in the class, he avoided it; after he became knowledgable on how to approach race, he gained confidence to tackle the discussion in class. I found out that when race issues come up on discussions about Apartheid, Ms. Elizabeth openly discussed race and its impact during Apartheid; however when it came
to discussing race in the US during civil rights and when the laws of segregation were compared to Apartheid laws of segregation, little racism discussion occurred.

Ms. Elizabeth’s example presented another complexity. When a discussion of race was focused outside the US, she was more comfortable engaging it than when the discussion was closer to home. It appeared to discuss global controversial issues than it was to discuss sensitive local issues. When asked why controversial issues were ignored or avoided, she indicated that some of those issues such as racism are too touchy for the students.

One perspective that went unmentioned was the influence of the teachers’ racial background and the teaching of race issues. One White assistant teacher was present in one of the classes when the issue of race came up and was totally avoided; she mentioned that for White teachers and staff, it was difficult to approach race in classrooms with a number of Black students for fear of causing controversy. Mr. Dan concurred; he acknowledged that he was comfortable teaching about race until a Black student enrolled. He thought because the student enrolled days after he had began the unit on race, it would not be a good idea for the student to sit in class. He chose to go over the lesson with the student and let the student decide if he were comfortable attending the class. It appeared that part of the discomfort came from the facts that all of the teachers and the majority of the students were White and twenty to thirty percent were non-White. These teachers’
narratives might have been different if there had been teacher participants of diverse ethnicities.

A second complexity was the meaning of what constituted multiple perspectives in discussing some controversial issues. There was an apparent contradiction in the belief that multiple sources and perspectives were used but in reality multiplicity of perspectives was lacking. For instance, in teaching about Apartheid in South Africa the teacher used materials about the history of Apartheid through Nelson Mandela’s release from prison; impressed in the minds of students was South Africa in the context of Apartheid. The missing link in that discussion of South Africa was contemporary issues in South Africa and deconstructing the myth of South Africa as sealed in the historical Apartheid. Yet, South Africa is regarded highly by other African nations as well as other first world countries as an exemplar in modernization in the region. The lack of updated information could be attributed to the curriculum that focused only on Apartheid even though there was leeway to discuss contemporary perspectives of the issue.

My findings suggest that the use of multiple resources were mainly presented from a one-sided perspective; that is these resources portrayed similar perspectives that perpetuated the myths and misconceptions about people of the world. For example, a tenth grade World History class was discussing the topic on the Rwandan Genocide. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher presented students with a handout containing these main themes and topics of the lesson: genocide, Hutu, Tutsi, Rwanda Liberation
front (RPF), Juvenal Habyarimana, Paul Kagame, and the Intarahamwe. Next students were given handouts from CBS News Online, August 22, 2003, which contained excerpts of the history of Rwanda as a colony of Germany in the 1890s, up to the events prior and during the genocide in 1994. This handout had some horrifying images of bodies and piles of human skulls. Additionally, students were given a sheet with questions, the answers for which were on the Rwandan background information handout. Students were given a few minutes to answer the questions and then the teacher reviewed the questions in a question-answer format. Toward the end of the class the teacher showed a segment of the film *Sometimes in April*, which was shown for a series of lessons until completed. After that students viewed clips of *Hotel Rwanda*, a similar story about a family in which a Hutu father and the Tutsi mother and their children survive the genocide in which nearly half a million Hutus and moderate Tutsis perished within one hundred days.

*Sometimes in April* was set in the one hundred days events leading to Rwanda genocide. Like *Hotel Rwanda*, *Sometimes in April* is a survivor’s story of a former Hutu army captain, whose Tutsi wife and children died during the war. Both these films provided horrific pictures of Hutu extremists killing the Tutsis and any Hutu’s who were loyal to the Tutsi. They showed men marching around the slummed city wielding machetes and guns and burning houses. Some sections of *Sometimes in April* were so gruesome that I wondered how the teacher thought it was appropriate viewing material
Throughout the lesson and by using the films, the teacher created and engaged different views on Rwanda genocide. However, it was apparent that the presentation of Rwanda in the social studies classroom promoted stereotypes of Africa as a war-torn region, as the students were not provided with prior debriefing of what Africa is like now. Though different or multiple resources were used, they were from a Western perspective. I drew several conclusions from my observation. First, the list of themes provided at the outset focused on the Rwandan genocide and events and the people involved. Second, the handouts and movies also focused on the same horrific events that nativize and exoticize Rwandans; the teacher did not compare the Rwandan genocide handouts to texts written by people from those regions, nor did the teacher empower students with oppositional stories to enable them think reflectively and see a different and current image of those countries. The perspectives were all from Western thinking and the students were not given an opportunity to brainstorm about the film, a critical analytical component in pedagogical learning. Also an image of Rwanda after the genocide was missing so students lacked an updated image of Rwanda today. At the end of the lesson students learned that Rwanda was/ is a war region that sometimes is generalized to signify the African condition. In speaking with the teacher about the lesson, she said had not thought of the films as promoting one agenda, and asked me to speak to the class about my perception of Rwandan genocide and what it is today.
In a ninth grade class classroom observation, the teacher co-taught fictional literature with the literacy teacher, allowing students a different approach to World War II issues. One of the books that raised a controversy in the class was *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, by Art Spiegelman, a Polish Jew and holocaust survivor. Students were asked to read the book over the course of a series of lessons. At the end of the reading for each day, different activities including a reader response were assigned. After students had read completed reading the book, the teacher asked them to sit in groups and talk about how the story informed them about World War II. One group of students began name-calling; one said the term “schvaser,” meaning Black man. A Black student quickly called the other student a “Jew.” The exchange seemed jocular to the students but was an issue that needed to be addressed; however, the teacher ignored this reductionist view and racial stereotyping of the student who happened to identify with Jewish or Black culture. After I alerted the teacher, he reviewed the issue the following day and asked students to refrain from using those terms to one another. The literacy teacher was more comfortable and knowledgeable discussing the race issues and took the opportunity the following day to discuss the incident. When asked what made her comfortable dealing with race issues she stated that she had been going to workshops and seminars on how to handle questions of race in the classroom. The history teacher’s handling or mishandling of the issue, signaled some uneasiness for his engaging such issue.
My findings of the classroom observations alluded to the assumption that most of
the teachers avoided hard-core, sensitive local issues. Issues such as immigration laws in
Arizona or racism were not brought up even in current events discussions. A World
History teacher said that World History does not include local or current issues. Mr.
Emanuel mentioned that race and racism were not topics he was previously comfortable
discussing; because much is written about them, he views them as any other controversial
topic and is confident more ready to talk about them in class. Nonetheless I did not see
race or racism discussed in class when the topics emerged.

It appeared that there were various reasons attributed to the avoidance of hot
button issues as well as the complexity in teaching controversial issues. One of the
reasons was insufficient knowledge, which led to lack of confidence in approaching an
issue. Most teachers stated uneasiness with issues such as race because of their societal
sensitivity. The literacy teacher in the 9th grade history class seemed comfortable
approaching race issues because of her interest, knowledge, and preparation in how to
deal with issues of race when they emerge in the class.

iii) Complicated Role of Gender and Race in Controversial Issues Pedagogy

In this section I present findings on how issues of gender and race were
approached in the classrooms and how teacher’s feminist inclination and ambivalence
towards race issues defined their pedagogical perspectives. On gendered pedagogy, the
only teacher who was female was more inclined to include issues of gender in her
classroom discussions than her male counterparts. Ms Elizabeth continually posed questions about women and women’s rights. For instance, in an HIV/AIDS presentation, the presenters did not include gender in their statistics. Therefore, Ms. Elizabeth asked the students about the number of females with the disease compared to males and how women seemed more impacted than men. Also in her women’s history course and for World history projects she asked students to select topics about women in America and to write essays about them and their achievements; then the results were presented to the class. There was evidence of such projects on her classroom walls, where pictures and short biographies of American female heroes were posted. When asked why she incorporated gender in her teaching, Ms. Elizabeth stated, “I hope they come out of it more pro-feminists,” Cite implying that her pedagogy is a political venture. She is moved to teach women’s issues, gender issues and sexuality issues because of her feelings about the bigger struggle in voicing women’s issues and as those issues are social justice issues.

When asked about how he teaches women’s reproductive rights, and especially abortion, Mr. Dan explained, “I grew up in a very pro-choice liberal family, strong mother and sister who are very feminists but I really appreciate the moral concerns about it, that is why I love the Jenny Hagan’s piece so much, because these concerns is kind of my thing.” From this statement and my conversations with Mr. Dan, his inspiration in teaching abortion appears to be his female, feminist relatives, whose lens he uses to examine and teach about abortion. Such a feminist perspective of looking at reproductive
rights resulted in his selecting teaching materials that are gender sensitive and are those written by women.

Despite their inclusion, it appeared that issues of gender were peripheral. In some classes the composition of discussion groups did not matter, yet students would group themselves by gender and race, thus denying a broader and diverse perspective in a discussion. Mr. Dan, on the other hand, ensured that students had a definite seating arrangement and they were diversely positioned with different genders and races. When asked why he set the fixed seating positions for his students he said it was first, to ensure that students were able to interact with each others in the class, and second, to maintain class discipline. He also ensured that almost all groups were called upon to participate in classroom discussions. While observing in another classroom, I noted that students of the same cultural groups sat together in their corners for the whole period. Those close proximities led some of the students to disrupt the class with side conversations, some of them in languages other than English.

My findings from an analysis of the tenth grade World History unit guide uncovered a masculinist focus on topics discussed. For instance, the South African topics assigned and analyzed included Apartheid, Black consciousness, Reconciliation, Divestment, Nelson Mandela, Stephen Biko, FW de Klerk, Desmond Tutu, Afrikaner, and African National Congress (ANC); there was an apparent absence of women and female related topics. Such a view misrepresents the actual Apartheid struggle and
elevates the place of men in the struggle, although women such as Winnie Mandela were significant in the struggle. It appeared from my analysis of these textual and classroom contexts, that issues of race and gender were put on the periphery because of the teachers’ insufficient knowledge of and discomfort with confronting gender and race.

Another finding suggested that, similar to matters of gender matters of race seemed to be peripheral or sometimes non-existent. During my interviews with teachers and observations of their classes, controversial issues of race and racism were not discussed or given attention. For instance, when asked why race was not one of the topics they selected for discussion, Mr. Emanuel stated that he is still figuring out how to appropriately teach race in his class. He said he is slowly gaining knowledge and confidence to approach the issue. In other classes when issues of race emerged the teachers avoided the discussion. When one teacher discussed Apartheid laws in South Africa and how they discriminated and oppressed the Black people, one student mentioned race as a factor and compared it to the Civil Rights period in the US. The teacher had an opportunity to discuss race but seemed to avoid it. This Apartheid law which the student equated with the Us Civil Rights period reads:

Reservation of separate amenities Act, No 49 of 1953: Forced segregation in all public amenities, public buildings and public transport with the aim of eliminating contact between whites and other races. “Europeans Only” and “Non-Europeans
Only” signs were put up. The act states that facilities provided for different races need not be equal (Apartheid Legislation in South Africa).

This statement symbolizes the segregationist laws that discriminated against the majority of Black South African people, separating the Europeans on one hand and other races on the other. It is evident that issues of race were the founding rationale for segregation in South Africa, and merited further examination for students to comprehend the foundations of race.

In one incident, a student shouted to another, “You are a Jew!” after reading a Holocaust text wherein the term Jew was used as a racial slur, and the teacher ignored the name-calling. The literacy skills teacher approached the social studies teacher and encouraged him to address the issue and deal with racial epithets and ethical procedures. At the beginning of the class the following day, the social studies teacher stated that students should not call each other names such as “Jew,” or “Jap” because they are “bad terms.” The literacy teacher expressed to me her discontent with the way the issue was handled; she said she expected the social studies teacher to delve more and go beyond the names as just bad terms; she hoped more would be said about the inappropriateness, culturally sensitive nature of the terms as racial epithets and their diminutive meanings that reinforce stereotypes of the Other. In the same class during discussions of the same texts, one student’s written response to text on the theme of Japanese internment was “sending Japanese to the internment locations was good because it gave them the needed
facilities.” Another students asked, “Why was it only the Japanese and not Germans and Italians?” The teacher’s choice not engage a discussion on these statements presented the narrow view of the deep-seated societal issues that demanded discussions.

In another instance, I asked Mr. Dan if issues of race come up in his classrooms. He explained that at the beginning of a semester he gave students a list of controversial issues from which they chose discussion topics, and, most often, students selected race and racism. However, it is his decision to teach race towards the end of the year because of its seemingly sensitive nature. Mr. Dan believes, “Race is very touchy… I have not touched race yet and I do not do that until the class has built more trust.” Once Mr. Dan gained the trust of students he thought that they could be free to discuss race. He opted to teach race towards the end of the semester because at one time he found himself in an awkward situation in an affirmative action discussion in his US history class; one well meaning White liberal student made the statement that “Maybe for the Black students that aren’t academically ready they could have like a special class to help them prepare.” A bi-racial student of Caucasian and African American parents busted out, “A special class? Do you know what it feels like being here at this almost all White high school?” Mr. Dan concluded that:

There was more education and a lot of the reading that day than any other; it was really hard for me as a teacher and stressful but it was worthwhile because that students had no idea that there was that much emotion and much hurt, which
students would never know. Anyway at the end of the class the students were still friends. The bi-racial student approached the White liberal students and finally said, “I know you do not mean this in a bad way, but that your statement really hurt me.” I was amazed, there was a lot of real feeling involved. So that is the reason why I decide to place discussions on race to take place later in the semester.

Mr. Dan’s explanation sheds light on the intensity and sensitivity towards issues of race and racism, feelings that are felt not only in the classroom but in society as well. His experience elaborated why some teachers decided to delay race discussions until later. Unlike Mr. Emanuel, who felt insufficiently prepared to approach the issue, Mr. Dan seemed confident and knowledgeable to discuss race issues. However, according to the literacy teacher who pushed in to social studies classes using fictional texts, her constant collaboration with colleagues and discussions on culturally responsive teaching approaches has helped her learn ways of engaging issues of race. Therefore, the cited experiences revealed the intricacy in teaching about race and gender in most of the analyzed classrooms. Furthermore, it was evident that teaching issues of race and gender required confidence in and knowledge about how to approach the issues.

My findings on classroom textbooks exposed the overwhelming perpetuation of mainstream knowledge. In the texts there was little content or narratives of minority Americans. For instance, a ninth grade text by Cayton and others, *America: pathways to*
the present (2003) gives little space on the controversy about controversial issues, and stifles content on controversial issues such as slavery by reducing its content to less than a page and overriding it by surrounding it with narratives. Thus, when one reads about slavery, the racial underpinnings are glossed over to present an uncritical image of slavery. Similarly, an issue such as the Japanese internment is described from an American perspective with no narrative from the Japanese American themselves to provide their perspective. The American narrative of the Japanese confinement is glossed over by a simple apology from the government and a tax-free award of thousands of dollars to portray a good image of the American government. This textual analysis depicts misrepresentation and the lack of attention to issues of race and gender. These discussions revealed the intricacy in teaching issues of race and gender when textbooks and the curriculum put them in the peripheral, leaving the teacher to struggle to find resources useful for teaching the issues.

4) Challenges in Controversial Issues Teaching

Teacher participants noted that teaching controversial issues was not easy. I have grouped the given contextual, structural and political reasons into four categories; first, teacher agency and controversy behind the issue; second, the demands of the curriculum; third, the insufficient or lack of CIs materials; fourth, politically charged parents. All these factors contributed or discouraged best teaching practices of controversial issues pedagogy.
First, my findings suggested that teachers avoided the teaching of controversial issues (CIs) especially when they are not knowledgeable or confident about a topic. It is of note that all teachers in this study displayed a measure of confidence in their engaging CIs, however, some shied away from CIs as indicated by previous examples. For instance, one teacher avoided discussing the issue of race as it emerged when a student called another “a Jew”; additionally, there was no further follow up on the topic. Another teacher stated that he used to avoid teaching about issues of race and racism because he did not know much about them, but now is confident and sufficiently knowledgeable to teach about them. Another teacher disclosed that previously he could not teach about race and racism because he felt unprepared and therefore eschewed the topic. In those cases, lack of knowledge resulted in ignoring or shying away from the issue. In my analysis, I found that the teacher’s fear of engaging in the issue because of the controversy behind it, or lack of confidence and know how, may have impeded effective controversial issues discussion.

A second finding suggested that curriculum mandates have significantly contributed to the eschewing of controversial issues. On a positive note the data collected revealed that World History teachers have had freedom and input in determining what they teach as a department in the school. To illustrate, Ms. Elizabeth and Mr. Emanuel said;
Ms. Elizabeth: We have a framework as a department that we created and follow, but there is a lot leeway in what we do in the classroom. I mean in the US history class more is agreed on but in world history course there is more leeway on what we do in the classroom. We have a framework but with lot of variation between the different classes. In US history, it is more agreed on, in what we cover. In world history there is so much to cover so we go with our passions.

Mr. Emanuel: I think we get a lot of freedom to develop our own curriculum at the high school level, we haven’t had one that’s been prescribed to us of everything that we have to follow but e kind of agree on certain themes and stuff, and how we teach those themes is decided by the teacher and I like that aspect of teaching in this particular city that we have that freedom.

Such agency in constructing a curriculum that favored controversial issues was only possible if teachers could include more controversial topics in the units and in their pedagogy. However, in US History classrooms, Ms. Elizabeth explicated that the curriculum is more rigid and they had to follow the state and national content standards. Also an examination of texts books revealed less controversial issues content, such as issues of race and racism or Japanese internment, and more content on the mainstream ideology as explicated earlier in this chapter. Additionally, time constraints seemed to impact the teachers of US History courses; the teachers indicated lack of time to deeply
engage controversial topics because of the mandates of the curriculum. Ms Elizabeth said this about time constraints, “It depends if we have time we try to incorporate the controversial issue because a lot students have lots of different questions and issues.” Therefore as Ms. Elizabeth and Mr. Emanuel have opined., they enjoy teaching World History class because of its flexibility and space to engage sensitive issues in the curriculum.

An examination of the state social studies standards showed an emphasis on students learning history by first understanding the historical roots of past events and then understanding how these events have shaped the world today. Also the standards emphasized students understanding how life in the past changes over time making the past and present relevant in discussing the future.

However, much of the content in the state social studies standards involve knowledge of the US history and focus on mainstream US history and knowledge. For instance, the units do not mention the minority groups or history of the Native Americans, the history of African Americans or even the civil rights movements and slavery. This lack of inclusion explains why the previous textual analysis for ninth grade history places minority issues and content on the periphery; yet national curriculum of social studies standards (NCSS, 2010) stated the significance of “social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity” or “social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of
interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.” It is therefore a challenge for teachers to digress from the American centered ideology by critically examining that knowledge and including controversial issues pedagogy amidst and beyond the limiting time, content and standards.

Similarly, findings suggest that the tagging of classes in accordance with the schools regulations made it difficult for all students to take classes that include more controversial issues. One of the teachers said that those students who take elective courses get more controversial issues discussions, which implies that those students are also more interested in controversial issues than those taking only the required courses. This research study found that controversial issues are mainly discussed in elective courses and tagged classes, such as honors classes. Mr. Emanuel said about World History courses, “For the most part, the population in our classrooms is the ‘higher tier’ of students tagged ‘honors classes’ and some of those students might be more aware of controversial issues.” Mr. Emanuel stated that honors students are more interested in the course and provided a lot of input in the deliberations because of their passion for the course. When asked about when he used CIs, Mr. Bryant said, “I use them a lot in my elective classes with some of my older students.” Mr. Bryant’s response suggested that more CIs are used in elective courses and those students taking the course are more likely to be interested in the course. Similar sentiments were expressed by Mr. Dan whose social issues class was populated by students who liked to engage in controversial social
issues. Mr. Dan stated that because it is an elective class, there is less interference from parents who, although they may not agree with the class debates, have allowed their children to enroll in the courses. He provided an example of a parent who went to the superintendent of schools because he taught about same-sex marriages. The superintendent ruled in favor of the teacher because the parent consented for the student to take the course and therefore was aware of the curriculum content. Moreover, the teaching was done according to the school’s social studies department’s stipulation.

My third finding suggested that lack of and appropriate resources for controversial issue teaching raised concern among the teachers. The teachers described the challenge of the lack of balanced resources providing all sides of an issue. Regarding the textbooks teachers stated that classroom textbooks are used just as reference books; they refer students to the texts to get information, but it is not the only book used; some taught the text to be biased and dull and in many cases, that it perpetuated mainstream ideology. Mr. Bryan concluded about the textbooks:

Most textbooks are dull, and the problem is that the narratives are not very interesting. It is like an encyclopedia. It’s great if you want kids to go find some information, but it’s a great place to go and look. The kids are not interested in it. Quite frankly I am not interested in it, so I think finding some of those more interesting things and getting more from them is the right way to go.
Mr. Bryant perceived that the narratives told in the textbooks were not interesting to students. Also he compared the text to an encyclopedia which indicates a disconnection between the curriculum developers who recommended these textbooks and the teachers who were expected to use them in their classrooms. If teachers are not interested in the texts it is unlikely that students would be interested, therefore denoting the futility of resources. An investigation of *America: Pathways to the present modern American history* (2003), a ninth grade text by Cayton and others, further revealed an overwhelmingly American-centered curriculum that where the Americans are mainstream populations. There was a lack of fair representation of minority populations and women in the narratives, with the majority being narratives of White Americans. Minority populations were represented through short biographies of heroes while the White American heroes had numerous pages devoted to their narratives. Findings revealed that global perspectives were delineated to the periphery and only presented stories of American minority populations as global perspectives leading to the issue of what global perspectives really entail. This brief examination of the texts explains why Mr. Bryant concluded that social studies recommended texts are biased and uninteresting to students.

Similarly, the teachers noted a lack of relevant resources to teach CIs. For instance, Ms. Elizabeth noted that she has challenge teaching about gay rights to her students there are very few teaching materials that present a balanced perspective; however, she does teach the topic with the little she has. On the one hand, there seemed
to be differing views about sources of teaching resources. Some teachers such as Ms. Elizabeth claimed there was a lack of resources for teaching some hot issues like gay rights whereas Mr. Dan stated that he has plenty of resources “everywhere.” To him everywhere meant the Internet, newspapers, and electronic research databases. Mr. Dan claimed that his challenge is to keep up with the materials since they are outdated quickly and new resources appear daily. According to Ms. Elizabeth, teachers find the materials, “from some universities which have current issues with historical time events and some documentaries to present, current events articles to see how it is viewed by different populations in the world.” Mr. Emanuel posits, “Increasingly we are using articles from the Internet and going straight to the Internet to look up videos and too, sometimes, it’s a good source of firsthand accounts of materials.” What is problematic to the teachers is finding critically balanced materials and finding the time to identify these resources. Nonetheless the teachers do their best to locate materials with first hand information and accounts that provide a wide range of perspectives and narratives through the eyes of those impacted by the contentious issue.

Due to lack of balanced resources, some materials used for class may be extreme in their portrayal of a controversial issue, and this may pose a problem for students who may be extremely emotionally involved with an issue. To explicate, Mr. Dan expressed that there were times when his students seem overwhelmed by emotions when discussing some of the sensitive content and resources. In one instance, “with national health
insurance, I showed parts of the film by Michael Moore *Sicko* (2007), and the students were upset that people suffered because they did not have coverage. So they were kind of like ‘This is wrong, we got to figure this out.” The film deeply enraged some students because of the suffering people go through because they do not have health insurance; others made a personal connection because of their own experiences. In another instance Mr. Dan related:

Talking about race is going to be very different in a class that is 90% White students, as a teacher I can abstractly talk about it without feeling alienated. So today in my US-11 class, I have one student who could be considered bi-racial and the rest, a few Asian and Latina students and no African American student. Then I started showing clips of a video on issues of race and gang violence. So I had a student add today, an African American girl from Chicago. She enters the class and it is all about gang violence and all the stereotypes of young Black males. I felt bad for her because she had missed the earlier class that prepared the students for the video. So without a lead up, there was no context. I called her aside and gave her the text book and we checked it in together and I explained where we were with the discussion, and that I was not comfortable with her watching what the rest of the class was watching without any preparation for it. Therefore, most of the time I have to do a lot of checking in with the students to prevent students from getting very emotional on the topic.
In this narrative, Mr. Dan appears uneasy that the African American student was watching the film on gang violence because she had not prior mental preparation for the movie while the rest of his students who had prior preparation were comfortable with the film. One would speculate that the students’ cultural composition was not impacted by the film that concentrated on Black gangs in Black neighborhoods, thus enabling those students to be comfortable; the new Black student may not have felt comfortable even after she was prepped for the film. It is possible too that Mr. Dan chose the film because of the cultural composition of the class and that if the Black student was enrolled prior to that lesson, the film might not have been shown. I concluded that sometimes teachers chose teaching resources according to their own comfort zone and the racial and cultural composition of the students. Nonetheless, in putting away the issue of race and choice of resources, Mr. Dan’s classroom experience suggests a challenge in finding resources that speak to the diverse classroom cultural representation. At the moment, Mr. Dan continues to prepare students before watching or using resources but still cannot guarantee that there will be no emotional breakdown in his classroom.

My findings further suggested that politically charged parents may present a challenge. One of the teachers recounted that at one time he was summoned to the principal and then the superintendent of schools for teaching a controversial topic, however the case was dismissed because of no evidence. The issue further validated his teaching of the CI that a parent thought should not be discussed in class; the parent
apparently was expecting his student to be taught one-sided and generally acceptable perspective on the controversial issue. According to the teacher, “The superintendent wrote a wonderful letter in defense of the course saying, if your son or daughter wasn’t ready to discuss issues why are they in a social issues class? Choose a course that seems an appropriate discussion of the topic, so I felt vindicated there.” It seemed that even though the society in this mid-Western city is liberal there are individual families who are opposed to multiple perspectives of an issue.

In general most of the parents and community are passive and liberal according to the teachers. All but Mr. Dan noted that their communities have not posed any concerning about their teaching or discussing controversial issues in the classroom. Mr. Emanuel stated that his school community is open-minded and liberal in thinking, making it favorable for engaging hot-button issues. Moreover, the teachers indicated that even the state encouraged the teaching of sex-education, which is a greatly heated issue in many parts of the US. Ms. Elizabeth stated that the state forfeited national funding because of teaching sex-education as its inclusion went against national funding stipulations that want abstinence rather than sex-education to be taught.

In sum my findings have suggested that teaching controversial issues is not easy because of the demands of the curriculum, which in itself has less content on controversial issues, and is biased in many ways, while avoiding touchy issues. Additionally, teachers spoke of the challenge in finding balanced resources, and that
available resources may be extremely emotional for the students. Thus finding ways of dealing with intensely charged materials is a challenge. Also, Mr. Dan’s experience raised the challenge of teaching touchy issues of race in classrooms that are not equally culturally represented, and the discomfort minority students may have when discussing issues that affect their culture or identity. Finally, parental interference may pose a challenge to open discussions on controversial issue discussions in classrooms.

**Teaching about Same-Sex Marriages and Abortion**

My findings indicate that the teachers were willing to engage with such topics. In this section, I present brief lessons on two controversial issues as they were observed in the classrooms. The teacher presented lessons that they thought provided effective teaching and learning experiences of controversial issues. These lessons were; A). Same-sex marriage, and B). Abortion. The two lessons were selected from among several controversial issues’ lessons because, first, they represented issues that seemed societal established and alive as the teachers described them. Second, they were among lessons that symbolized effective controversial issues discussion from the teachers’ perspectives. Both lessons were taught in eleventh grade social issues class. According to the social issues teacher, the social issues curriculum is formulated by the school’s social studies department and the teacher of the course has the most input as what topics to include based upon students’ interests.

**a) Teaching about Same–Sex marriage**
Same-sex marriage was a controversial issue that most of the teacher participants confided that they were not confident teaching about it; however, it was one of the hottest controversial issues (CI) in the national news and in the senate because of the “Don’t ask, don’t tell” (DADT) policy; the DADT policy sought to end the ban on gays in the military. The three week same-sex marriage unit was taught in an 11th grade class. The teacher systematically presented the lessons using a three-tier approach that included deliberation, analysis and evaluation skills learning. It is important to note that the other controversial issues such as gay rights, polygamy and polyandry were embedded in the same-sex marriage unit.

The teacher began the first lesson by giving the students this scenario, “There is a teaching an idea that states same-sex couples are not an example of family in the society. The question is should schools follow such a curriculum or take a position?” He then let students think Just think? about the questions and then he followed with an explanation of the situation of gay/lesbian people around the country as well as the situation of gay teachers in the schools around the country. After a brief question and answer synopsis of the this country’s same-sex marriage situation, the teacher used the documentary Stonewall Riots in New York City to give a background of the history of gay rights. The Stonewall Riot was one of the first riots in the history of the United States of America in 1969. It was a gay rights and freedom riot that was organized by the gay and lesbian
community. The riots marked the foundational moment for the gay and lesbian rights movement against the government led victimization of homosexuals.

Before the film the teacher prepared students by reminding students to critically view the film through two perspectives, that of gay men on the one hand and of the government on the other hand. Subsequently, the teacher handed out questions based on the documentary which the students would answer after watching the film and which would be used for deliberation. The questions focused on how the video enriched student’s understanding of the history of gay life in the United States and included: What was the significance of “Stonewall Riots? Identify ways in which the society stereotyped or discriminated against homosexuals. Explain how the video informed your understanding of gay life in the United States. After the film the teacher gave students time to complete the assignment then embarked on a discussion of the questions. The teacher engaged the story of civil rights movements in the US during the same time period as the Stonewall Riots and explained how gay people worked towards the goal of achieving civil rights for the Black people. To contrast the gay and civil rights events and enrich the discussion, the teacher followed up with current gay and lesbian struggles.

In another lesson, the teacher introduced the film Laramie Project. In preparation for the film the teacher asked students to look at the film not with the “them” perspective but with “complexity”; complexity implied that they should try to see from what perspective each one speaks and see if the scenes can be said to be true of their state.
The *Laramie Project*, is based on the murder of openly gay Mathew Shepard of Laramie, Wyoming; the film is situated around interviews of people who were close friends to Mathew, other gay and lesbian people around the community and follows the court case of the suspected murderers to the final ruling on the case, and its impact on the community. After viewing the film, the teacher asked about the film with leading questions such as: How was it written? What is the validity or accuracy of the film? Are scripts written for the sake of entertainment? Who did the film? How much is it a script? Do you think it is a Hollywood formation like other films? How does the film compare it to other sources of the content on gay/lesbian issues discussed? What was the accuracy of the interviews? What are the costs of being gay? Are these experiences representative of the rest of the United States? What is the origin of hatred in the film? What is the perspective of the religious priest? The gay reporter?

Students then discussed and analyzed the review questions in groups of five students. The teacher composed the groupings to ensure diverse representations of students’ culture and identity. After the student group discussion the teacher reconvened the class to discuss the question as a large group. Students were asked to select the questions they want to discuss first. Students chose the question on gay epithets, which included whether or not these terms could be used; the teacher exhibited examples from current television news broadcasts about anti-gay activists who shouted anti-gay slurs at the funeral of a gay soldier. Other questions were discussed, and then the teacher led a
deliberation on “Don’t ask, don’t tell,” a repeal vote under discussion by the Senate which states that gays and lesbians in the military should not reveal their sexual orientation.

After discussing same sex-marriage in other states, the teacher brought the issue closer to home. He talked about the state laws and how same sex marriages are viewed by the state. Then he showed a clip created by state advocates of traditional marriages and the vote on same sex marriage. He asked questions such as: How does the state describe same sex marriages? What rights should both the same sex marriages and traditional marriages have? What are the laws in the state and what rights do they give to each union? Then he showed a clip titles “The Battle for marriage in the State.” He initiated a discussion on the rights of married people and the rights of same-sex partners, and asked, What are the laws? How do they view laws? Is it fair?

Finally, he ended the lesson with critical articles on same-sex marriage that presented arguments of both the traditional public conception of marriage as a union between a woman and man and the perspective of same-sex unions. Krauthammer’s article, *When John &Jim say “I do, ,”* and Wright’s *Civil Union, Not Marriage, Licenses Needed.* Both articles discuss various kinds of marriages, how they are defined and their history, and also critique both traditional and same-sex civil unions. The teacher analyzed the meaning of the articles through discussions of the authors’ different arguments. Finally the teacher returned to the initial questions about which curriculum would they
choose, the one that stated same-sex marriage is not an example of a family or the one that defines a traditional family as that of a husband and a wife. He allowed the students to draw their own conclusions on the matter. On the final evaluation, the teacher asked students to answer questions that required analysis and policy responses of the issue. One of the essay questions for the unit on policy response was: When you are walking into the voting booth, how would you vote on same-sex policy? Write your justification or your position defending your vote and give three arguments for the unit.

In this section the teacher used a three-tier approach that focused on deliberation, analysis and evaluation skills. The deliberation section was used almost throughout the unit, while analysis was employed when examining documents and resources used for the unit. The final evaluation discussions and questions focused on overall skills. This approach enabled the teacher to easily incorporate controversial issues pedagogy (CIP) with a democratic kind of learning approach as well as embedding transformative experience at the end of the unit.

An examination of the lesson revealed what the teacher believed to be controversial issues pedagogy (CIP). Classroom deliberations were informative, and students felt they needed more time for the discussions; because of the limited time in the curriculum, however, the conversations had to end. Students seemed free to discuss the issue, and write on the issue. The teacher revealed that some students’ essays engaged the discussion by passionately presenting interesting arguments on same-sex policies
informed by resources used in the classroom and research based resources. Writing the policies during the final exercise enhanced critical thinking skills and presented students with an approach to participating in policy making. However, an activity outside of the lesson was missing from the experience. In sum, the lesson presented a possibility for successfully engaging controversial issues pedagogy. A question that remained unanswered is how such a lesson on same-sex marriage could be structured to include activities outside the classroom in order to effect societal change.

ii) Teaching about Abortion

The unit on abortion was taught to an eleventh grade class under the bigger umbrella of reproductive rights of women, a topic in the school’s social issues curriculum. The teacher perceived that the best way of learning a controversial issue was to use three learning approaches in an attempt to give students skills to analyze the topic; the three approaches used were definitional issues, value issues, explanation issues; after analyzing the issue the students thought about what would be a right policy response. Definitional issues look at the wording and terms in the statement or issue; value issues bring in questions on values or opinions about the issue; the explanation issues consider the facts of the issue and answer why it is an issue. In the policy response students were asked to reflectively think about and make a political decision on a policy solution for which they would vote, if given the opportunity.
The unit began with a definition of terms on what pro-life or pro-choice entails, the former opposing pre-marital sex and abortion, while the latter, in favor of a woman’s reproductive rights and a choice to terminate a pregnancy. Teacher led a discussion on values to discuss the moral and ethical issues involved in the two choices. To begin the deliberation the teacher read from Roe vs. Wade (1973), a landmark Supreme Court case ruling that protected a woman’s right to abortion as her private decision and a decision made between her and her doctor. Previously, the law had stipulated that abortion was criminal and equated to murder. However, the bill passed, giving women the right to abortion for any reason up to the first trimester of pregnancy. The teacher used this case because all other court cases he discussed in the unit revolve around Roe vs. Wade. Then he showed the pro-life film Life’s Greatest Miracle. The film is a narrative of development from sexual attraction, to fertilization through birth stages and is intended to encourage students to think about and understand the process of conception through birth. Discussion questions included: What do you think the message was in this film? Was it an objective film or a biased one? What are some of the issues that the film does not say? After examining the definitional issues of the controversial topic, the teacher introduced the history of abortion in the state of Connecticut. In 1879, the law in Connecticut prohibited the use of any drug that would prevent conception and use of contraceptives. He distributed an article about Griswold vs. Connecticut (1965) which discussed the issue of abortion and how the Griswold decision violated the 14th amendment which states that
no law shall reduce the rights of citizens or inhibit equal protection of the law. Estelle Griswold fought the 1879 Connecticut law that prohibited the use of contraception and the law was nullified and deemed to have violated privacy rights. Before the film the teacher asked students to write the history of abortion and to identify the pro-choice perspectives and evidence of attempts by the state to control women in the article. He also wanted students to look for the definitional issues, especially when examining the 14th amendment, and to see how its definition and interpretation applied to the Griswold article. After the exercise the teacher discussed the Griswold Connecticut’s Connecticut paper with the students, unpacking the little details and leading the students to think about the above three skill components.

After the discussion he showed a film on a pro-life campaign called *Purity Balls*. *Purity Ball* is a film about a group of girls who pledge abstinence in the presence of the fathers as an anti-abortion campaign. The teacher asked students to write a factual explanation about the film through questions such as: What do the (students) want to know from the video? How did the film affect your perception of abortion? Is it a sexist issue that treats men and women differently? He asked students to use the issues above to analyze the film and the topic on abortion in general. At the end of the film the teacher used factual explanation issues to discuss the facts presented in the documentary. Thereafter the students watched a film on Planned Parenthood that focused on the only state abortion center in South Dakota that helps with post abortion trauma, and the
center’s fight with the pro-life community over the Roe v Wade Supreme Court case ruling. The students and the teacher discussed the film and connected it to all other court cases and films they had watched. After discussing abortion away from home, the teacher introduced an abortion discussion about the home state. The teacher brought in the history of the issue in the state and related it to the present current news on health insurance bill that states no public money will pay for abortion.

To summarize the different perceptions on abortion in the state and outside of the state, the teacher brought in a critical article. He used article Higgins’ Sex, Unintended pregnancy, and poverty: One woman’s evolution from “choice” to “reproductive justice” to introduce details on feminism and its relation to reproductive choice. Because of the deep intellectual nature of equality and reproductive justice, the teacher took time to analyze the article in-depth with the students. This article introduced arguments that the teacher used in his discussion and revolved around questions such as: Does the history help understand abortion? How do you understand abortion from the perspective of the pro-choice women? How is abortion an issue of the haves and the have not? How do the pro-life present abortion? What is the history of contraception and how does it impact the community? Does abortion increase promiscuity? Lastly, the teacher gave an evaluation of the unit through essay questions positing: What is your position on abortion? Discuss the framework of reproductive justice. Argue out your position giving
evidences using resources from class materials or others; or write a policy on Roe vs. Wade case as a Supreme Court justice.

This teacher analyzed the issue of abortion from two perspectives, the pro-choice and the pro-life. Moreover, the teacher incorporated other arguments that supported or deconstructed the arguments including issues on feminist, social injustice, and how abortion is not just an individual issue but a structural issue of class and race. The final essay writing exercise seemed to be an effective way to conclude the lesson by students taking a position and supporting their arguments for said position. More could be done to include questions on how the students intend to use their knowledge and positions on the issue to increase societal awareness and social change. Such a step would forward the struggle for social justice.

**Conclusion**

This first section on the US presented teachers’ epistemologies, understanding, conceptualization and construction of ideas about controversial issues as well as their perspectives on what controversial issues teaching looked like in their classroom. Some of the major findings from the teachers’ experiences included: 1. Teachers’ construction of ideas on what controversial issues entails was varied and fluid and that their ideas emanated from their epistemologies and belief systems; 2. Teachers believed in controversial issues as a path towards healthy citizenship and democracie; 3. Teachers disclosure on CI was fluid and sometimes complex; 4. Teachers epistemologies do not
always translate to practice; 5. There are possibilities in teaching controversial issues in social studies classrooms.

This chapter presented teachers’ ideas on controversial issues in two regions, Kenya and the United States. Similar themes emerged in an attempt to theorize the teachers’ experiences and world views. However, as noted, there were similarities and differences in interpretation, understanding of controversial issues and in enactment of pedagogical practices which was influenced by their epistemologies. Some of the more pronounced findings were, first, that epistemological beliefs that influenced teachers’ understanding of controversial issues and was the lens through which they examined and made sense of controversial issues, encouraged or problematized their classroom practices. Secondly, it was evident that teachers agreed that on the significance of controversial issues’ discussions in their classrooms as a way of empowering students and encouraging critical thinking skills necessary for developing democratic citizens. Finally, experiences from both regions revealed the complexity in teaching some controversial issues such as race, ethnicity, and gay rights issues. The following chapter engages an in-depth discussion of the findings in relation to the theoretical frameworks discussed in chapter two.
CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARDS AN ACTIVE DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION THROUGH
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES TEACHING

“To write the world from Africa or to write Africa into the world, or as a
fragment thereof, is a compelling and perplexing task” Mbembe & Nuttal, 2006,
p.348.

Introduction

This study has been a journey towards an understanding of teachers’ construction and
interpretation of ideas about controversial issues and how their conceptualization impacts
their pedagogical practices. I began this journey in chapter one by presenting issues that
depict the complexity of controversial issues discussion in the classroom and in the
society. For instance, I recounted how one US social studies teacher found himself in the
office of the States Superintendent of schools for teaching a controversial issue
concerning what freedom of speech really means in the US and about a surgeon general
in President Bill Clinton’s administration who lost her job for advocating for sexuality
education in schools. In Kenya, I touched on how protests emerged when a minister in
the government spoke about gay rights in a public rally and was later asked to resign
from her position, or how Kenyan teacher-participants feared for their personal security
for teaching some controversial issues such as ethnicity in the society. Then I discussed why controversial issues teaching is a path towards democratic and citizenship training as well as explain the process that this journey would take. I subsequently analyzed in chapter two, literature that informs and is informed by the study in the two research regions. Specifically, the literature review forwarded the teaching of controversial issues as a foundation for the development of informed active democratic learners in the local and global society. In chapter three I presented the process through which the study was undertaken resulting in the findings in chapter four. This journey in the United States and in Kenya was enlightened by high school social studies teachers who shared their world and worldviews with me, affording me an opportunity to learn about their understanding of controversial issues, understand what influences their teaching and how they do what they do as educators. The research question that guided this research was; how do teachers construct or interpret the idea of controversial issues and how do teachers’ ideas impact or complicate their teaching of local/global controversial issues? Other questions investigated were: What influences teachers to teach about issues deemed controversial in a particular setting and how do these influences impact their teaching, how do teachers conceptualize and enact democratic citizenship education, and how do teachers teach about controversial issues in the world?

This study was informed by postcolonial and critical theories and utilized a qualitative research inquiry in an attempt to deeply understand and delve into the research
process and context. Through continuous interactions with research participants and
listening to their voices we were able to come up with the selected findings that this
chapter will discuss. In my discussion of the findings, I recognize what Mbembe and
Nuttall (2005) reiterated above, that my task will be an intricate one because, “To write
the world from Africa or to write Africa into the world…. is a compelling and perplexing
task” (p. 348). Therefore, I try to analyze the findings from the teacher participants’
viewpoints and juxtaposing it with my interpretation and distancing myself from an
imposing prescription of their experiences.

In this chapter, I revisit teachers’ ideas of what controversial issues and teaching
means and its relatedness to democratic citizenship education, the significant findings of
research, implications and applications of the study, suggestions for rethinking a
participatory democratic global citizenship education and future research. It is my hope
that the discussion in this chapter will influence and add to the knowledge in the social
studies field and particularly democratic citizenship education discussions in Kenya and
the United States. The following section discusses some critical findings of the study.
They are as follows; the value of rethinking controversial issues, conceptualizing and
enacting a controversial issues pedagogy, discrepancies in the enactment of controversial
issues pedagogy and the framing of teachers’ epistemologies.
A) The value of rethinking controversial issues

In conceptualizing and rethinking controversial issues, I revisit scholarship on democratic education through controversial issues teaching. Scholars in the earlier chapters indicated that controversial issues teaching is a way of training students to be reflective and critical thinkers, and who are conscious of their democracy and best practices in good citizenry (Graseck, 2009; Grimberg, 2010; Hess, 2010; Ochoa-Becker, 2007). The research findings affirmed the above scholars’ views, that controversial issues are significant in developing critical thinkers and good citizens. Moreover, this study found that successful controversial issues pedagogy entailed presenting oppositional arguments about the controversial topics in the social studies classes. The teachers’ perceived oppositional arguments as a way for students to reflect on the issues discussed make informed choices and decisions that prepare the students for active democratic and citizenship participation in their local and global environments.

Even though teachers endorsed the teaching of controversial issues for democratic citizenship education, in both research contexts, the participants’ conceptualization of democratic and citizenship education were varied, complex and fluid. One reason for the fluidity was the teachers understanding of the context and nature of democratic and citizenship education. In Kenya, for example, teachers’ epistemologies and beliefs indicated an indistinct understanding of the democratic and citizenship education compared to their counterparts in the US due to insufficient or lack of training.
in democratic citizenship education and pedagogy. On the one hand, it could be said that the teachers had their own conceptions of democracy and citizenship derived from their social and cultural purview. The social and cultural perception of citizenship was based on affiliation, active participation, identification with ones ethnic group. On the other hand, they revealed that their conceptualization of democracy and citizenship as it is understood in the West is still new. The teachers said that those terms had recently been introduced to the newly revised social studies curriculum in 2007. As a result, the teachers were still trying to understand the concepts and meaning while at the same time required to teach the topics in their classrooms. Therefore, the inherent character and nature of democracy was indistinct especially when the teachers’ idea of a democracy did not match the country’s governance. Democracy and democratic ideals from the Kenyan teachers’ perception were still farfetched further complicating the discussions on democracy. One teacher Ms. Kendra stated that “it is difficult to teach [democracy] because I find myself in the two worlds, where on the one side is democratic and the other world that we are in, not democratic.” Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the country’s governance is slowly progressing towards democracy. For instance, with the introduction of multi-party democracies and then introduction of ‘citizenship’ and ‘democracy as topics in the social studies curriculum, as well as the newly constituted constitution in 2010 all prove that there is progress in the country to uphold democratic ideals. Therefore, teachers in Kenya were re-learning democracy from its content, nature
and practice in governance, leading to an in-between conceptualization of both democracy and citizenship education. Similarly, findings revealed that the idea of citizenship is still fluid. Teachers’ conceptualization of citizenship was derived from the indigenous settings and linking it to the national and global settings. They first thought of themselves as citizens of their ethnic communities before they extended it to the national and the world. For instance, to the participants citizenship began with membership in their own indigenous ethnic communities, then as members of their country and moving towards discussions of memberships as citizens of the world. Other aspects of citizenship that emerged were identity, building of healthy communal relationships, participation in societal and national activities, which have continued to change and take different shapes and meanings with time.

My findings in the US suggested a familiarity with democracy and democratic citizenship education. The teachers understood the nature and scope of democracy, democratic education and how citizenship education looks like in the social studies unlike in Kenya where these concepts were a new. The task for most teachers in the US was to put into practice in their democratic ways of teaching and training and also working towards moving beyond the local to global citizenship education by infusing content on global controversies and education as well as encouraging participatory activities such as volunteering abroad in different programs. One teacher, Ms. Elizabeth, narrated how her students, “engaged in their world,” through community work, teaching and volunteering.
abroad. Therefore, the US teachers looked for ways to develop interest in students for participating in local and global activities as part of democratic and citizenship learning skills. Unfortunately, in the US teachers’ awareness and knowledge of democratic citizenship pedagogy did not always fully manifest itself in the classroom reality. In other words sometimes pedagogical strategies failed to go beyond content knowledge and fell short of oppositional arguments or in actuality what was advanced in these social studies classrooms was at times controversial issues knowledge for knowledge sakes and awareness purposes.

B) Conceptualizing and enacting a controversial issues pedagogy

This section considers findings on how teachers conceptualize and enact controversial issues pedagogy and what influences them to do what they do in the social studies classrooms. First in exploring how teachers conceptualize and enact controversial issues pedagogy, it is imperative to note that amidst the level of understanding of controversial issues’ in both the research regions discussed in the above section, teaching using controversial topics was an agreed practice, but fluid in its definitions. The definitions of controversial issues ranged from it being emerging issues, alive and real issues, debatable issues, issues raising conflict, established contentious societal issues to shaky and touchy issues. The concept of controversial issues in the society ranged from first, issues that are still debatable with never ending conclusive answers. Secondly, issues that have conclusive answers, and lastly, issues that have through space and time
have evolved to give different answers. Besides the definitional differences, the way the
teachers’ interpreted, and enacted controversies in their classrooms was in multiple ways.
Teachers in Kenya believed that the teaching of controversial issues was necessary for
citizenship training. For example one teacher explained that she believed that students
should be taught decision-making skills, understand and fight for human rights and social
justice awareness that will equip them to be good and knowledgeable citizens. The
findings in Kenya proved beyond doubt that teachers believed in controversial issues’
teaching as a significant path towards democratic citizenship education.

In the US, teachers presented the same feelings as the Kenyan teachers about their
appreciation for democratic citizenship education. For instance, Mr. Dan articulated that
citizenship education train’s student to be participants in the society and the world
because it pushes student to think on issues and act upon what they learn, thus implying
that controversial issues teaching is an important component in democratic and
citizenship learning.

In Kenya as discussed in chapter two, in line with the goals of education for
developing informed citizens, in 2008 the Ministry of Education through the Kenya
Institute of Education, (KIE) proposed a new curriculum called ‘Life Skills Education’
(KIE, 2008). This life skills curriculum is intended to develop critical thinking skills and
reflective decision making skills which align to the intentions of controversial issues
teaching. Even though KIE does not specifically promote controversial issues pedagogy
in its methodological approaches, it however, promotes other approaches to teaching that are in tandem with controversial issues teaching skills, such as debates, and discussions which are components of a successful controversial issues pedagogy. Teachers were encouraged by KIE to use controversial issues debates to provide students with an opportunity to express their opinions with the purposes of understanding each other’s views, train for decision making skills and non-violent conflict resolution (KIE, 2008). Similarly, the Kenya secondary history syllabus’ main goal is to addresses controversial issues which it refers to as the “challenges of the day” through issues such as honesty and health, to help students cope with the days challenges and, “to develop students as useful members of their society” (KIE, 2003).

Another proponent of democratic citizenship pedagogy, Sifuna (2000), a prominent Kenyan scholar, asserts that for democracy to flourish there must be a “politically literate and active citizenry” implying that the youth need to be trained within democratic and citizenship education, so as to participate in building a democratic country. Said differently, Sifuna asserts that without democratic literacy and participatory citizenship the country is bound to be undemocratic. These propositions align closely with other social studies scholars ideals in the West that I discussed in the earlier chapters. For instance, Parker (2001) asserts that schools should teach controversial issues as an element that advances democracy. Consequently, in this study the teachers themselves revealed that when students were given the opportunity to engage in
citizenship concerns in the social studies classrooms such as in policy making, they enthusiastically participate, and contribute to the hot-button issues in the society or in the political sphere.

C) Discrepancies in the enactment of controversial issues pedagogy

In chapter two, I discussed how the US social studies researchers have posited that enactment of controversial issues pedagogy in the classrooms leads to democratic citizenship training (Grimberg, 2010; Hess, 2010; Ochoa-Becker, 2007; Parker, 2001). More specifically, I analyzed Levine (2010) who reiterated that students are confident to participate in a democracy if they are taught how. Additionally, I pointed out how the above scholars and their ideologies align to Freire’s (1970, 2000) foundational idea of a learner-centered education as empowering to students, to equip students with good decision skills, critical thinking skills that move away from narration sickness or teacher-centered approach to teaching.

Observation of the enactment of controversial issues in the social studies classrooms revealed a complex finding in Kenya. Teachers had an imagined conception and interpretation of controversial issues (CIs) that did not translate to the actual practice in the classrooms. In other words, their imagined vision of CIs best practices was different from the one enacted in the classrooms in most cases. The teachers’ conceptualization of controversial issues pedagogy in both regions was somehow problematic. For example on the one hand one teacher’s interview, demonstrated a series
of effective and engaging CIs practices such as discussions, debates, and role play, but on the other hand classrooms practices revealed a teacher-centered approach with lecture approach taking center stage. The above teachers experience was a common occurrence in the social studies classrooms, yet the ministry of education in Kenya encourages critical thinking skills.

However, the teachers cited some limitations for not achieving their demonstrated objectives. One of the major limitations was time constraints which restrained the teachers from engaging in discussions, while another limitation was the exam oriented curriculum which they maintained hindered them from teaching for democratic learning. Whereas time and exam-centered curriculum hindered best practices, my perception was that even though some teachers tried their best to infuse democratic learning strategies, my analysis identified insufficient or lack of training in teaching controversial issues. Most teachers did not know how best to incorporate controversial issues in their classrooms, given that democratic practices were unfamiliar in the society and in schools. As a result undemocratic learning practices took the center stage such as teacher-centered teaching methods, causing a number of students to become passive learners, and further perpetuating the societal myth that children are to be seen and not to be heard.

However, just as in Kenya, similar discrepancies between the imagined and the actual pedagogical practices arose. One teacher in an interview said that when teaching about controversial issues in the world she gave multiple perspectives of the controversial
issue discussed. An example used was her teaching of Rwandan genocide, the teacher used multiple sources with multiple perspectives such as films and handouts from the internet. Even though the resources used were multiple, my analysis unveiled that the resources were basically from the same Western perspective. The films had been developed in the West and the handouts were from Western sources thus promoting a Western perspective of genocide in Rwanda. In actuality, the students were fed to the same imperial perspective of Rwanda which left students with a distorted image of Rwanda and signified Africa as a war tone continent. No materials used presented a picture of present Rwanda with its promising developments even when the curriculum was open to such discussions. Lack of resources from Africa on the issue was cited as the limitation to giving a holistic picture of Rwandan genocide to the present. Therefore, depicting a disconnect between the imagined and the actual pedagogical practices in the classroom as a result of limited resources or knowledge on best teaching practices.

Some of the limitations in the US were access to resources which seemed to impinge on the teaching of controversial issues. In the US, teachers of elective courses stated a lack of resources especially on teaching some hard core, more established issues in the society such as race and racism, gay rights and reproductive rights which hampered teachers’ effectiveness in teaching controversial issues. In addition to lack of resources, the teachers stated time constraints and their accountability to the high-stakes standards in the state as limitations. As a result, in core courses like US-history, teachers did not have
the freedom to go beyond curriculum content to deeply consider controversial issues locally and globally. Similarly those who teach elective courses such as world history and social issues courses lamented about time constraints even though they have a better opportunity to engage controversial issues.

In sum, this study seems to suggest a disjuncture between imagined and actual practices of controversial issues pedagogy. Nonetheless, the teachers did their best to train and encourage students to be active democratic citizens of the nation and the world in the US, while in Kenya teachers seek to empower and train students to be first citizens of the indigenous communities, the national and then finally of the world. This study affirmed what researchers had earlier stated that controversial issues discussion within democratic citizenship education develops healthy democracies as it engages students in healthy conversations, encourages participation in humane civic action, enables youths solve problems of the future, promotes understanding of people in the world as well as commitment to the global village and contribute to social justice efforts, peace and political stability (Banks, 2001; Gaudelli, 2003; Hess and Posselt, 2002; Waghid, 2004). However, the study indicated insufficient training in participatory activities in citizenship education. Much activity in the classrooms was to promote awareness of issues and the development of a passion for transformative activities in the local and global society rather than actual practices in the society. Thus, some core questions emerged for rethinking active citizenship education in social studies classrooms in both countries.
These are: How to does citizenship education in indigenous settings look like, and what can we learn from its participatory learning activities that can be meaningful to citizenship education today in Kenya? How can we rethink transformative citizenship education in the indigenous, national and global contexts? What decolonizing practices should be employed in classroom practices to resist and then expose imperializing educational discourses for social change?

D) The Framing of Teachers Epistemologies

The exploration of teacher epistemologies was based on the premise that teacher attitudes, personal politics, and worldview influences their teaching/teaching methods and becomes a powerful screen or lens with which their students will perceive the world (Hess, 2010; Parker, et al., 1997). This argument was validated and extended in the study. Teachers’ epistemologies were founded through their attitudes, passions, educational and familial background, politics, culture, religious, societal views influenced greatly their thinking and practice in many ways. An examination of Hess’s (2010) work on controversial issues teaching in US social studies classrooms, depicted an analysis of political views of teachers’ and how these political positions affect their teaching of public controversial issues. This study however, looked at the overall influences to teaching controversial issues as opposed to looking at one perspective such as the political views and its influence in teaching and learning. Limiting the study to one
influential aspect seemed to deny this study a holistic experience of teachers who revealed their worldviews without focusing on any specific category.

As noted above several influences framed the teachers’ epistemology. These teacher influences heavily impacted and complicated the teachers decisions, either to teach or not to teach or how they taught the controversial issues and how or what controversial topic they chose to engage as well as what eventually the students learned. Most unanimous from the teachers of both regions was how extra educational experiences through in-service teacher education programs or graduate degree programs were most useful and favorably impacted their confidence in teaching controversial issues. In the US several teachers explicated how their educational experiences had a great impact on how they understood and taught different controversial issues. Apart from educational influences, cultural influence was another biggest influence. One teacher in Kenya stated that her personal cultural beliefs on female genital cutting did not allow her to teach about the topic. Other teachers indicated that topics like ethnicity which was hot-button issues in the society leading the teacher to decide not to touch on ethnicity for personal and security reasons. In the US, a teacher stated that a more established issue in the society such as racism could cause anarchy in the classroom and therefore made a personal decision not to teach about it. Hence, with such influences, the bigger question then is, how can teachers ideology be transformed to transcend the problematic and complex influences so as to successfully teach controversial issues?
Summary of Other Findings in the regions

In this section, I present a summary of other significant findings in the study. I engage a comparative analysis of findings from the two regions that is Kenya and the US. I will speak to avoidance and ambivalence of controversial issues, disclosure of opinions, classroom pedagogy and the framing of teachers’ epistemologies through multiple influences that impinges on the teaching of controversial issues.

a) Avoidance and ambivalence in using controversial issues

In avoidance and ambivalence this study established that in both the US and Kenya, teachers avoided teaching some contentious issues. Avoidance and ambivalence is said to emerge when teachers feel that there is a possibility of an uproar from the students or from the outside community or when the teacher feels that the issue at hand has one single and perspective (Hess, 2005). Some of the most controversial issues that were evaded in Kenya and US were the gay rights issue, ethnicity and race issues. In Kenya, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of the ministers in the government was asked to resign from her position for stating that Kenyans should embrace gay people. The mention of the name gay was in itself a taboo word and could not be mentioned in public and more so in the classrooms. So teachers in the classrooms avoided gay rights topic because of the society’s view in silencing anything to do with sexuality and especially sexual orientation that is different from the norm, even when there is a credible reason for discussion. When asked about their avoidance of the gay rights issue, Kenyan
teachers said they avoided it because of the accepted society’s perception on the issue as conclusive, implying that gay sexual orientation was inappropriate and sinful life style. In engaging in gay rights discussion the teachers themselves risked being scorned by the society or putting their jobs at risk. In the US gay rights issues were avoided not because of the society’s perspective on it but because of lack of materials. While on the one hand a teacher avoided gay rights topic because of lack of teaching resources, on the other hand another teacher has abundant resources and is optimistic in engaging the gay rights subject. The issue of resources seems complex especially in the availability and access to resources for teaching. But these teachers’ experience cannot be generalized to represent all teachers in the regions studied. However, their sentiments of lack of materials and fear of society’s reception need to be acted upon in ways that will support the teaching of gay rights.

Other issues avoided were race and ethnicity issues. In the US one teacher during my observation totally ignored the topic on racism when it emerged in the class. Another teacher in a different class said that racism was a topic they are not comfortable teaching therefore did not want to engage it especially because of lack of confidence and materials to teach the issue. While another teacher mentioned that when he taught it a parent reported him to the school’s principal and was asked to teach it differently. In Kenya the topic of race did not emerge; but the issue of ‘tribalism’ raised chills among teachers because of their past experiences with ethnic violence. Therefore, some teachers made an
emphatic decision not to engage the topic while others touched on the topic but did not delve deep into any relevant arguments on the issue.

It appears then, from this discussion, that besides fear and societies perceptions on an issue, lack of relevant knowledge and materials limited an effective controversial issues discussion. These teachers’ experiences implied that avoidance and ambivalence of teaching controversial issues are likely due to the play of knowledge, teachers’ confidence and availability of resources. Thus, there seems to be a need to rethink teacher training programs which will facilitate knowledge and training in ways of engaging controversial issues in the society.

b) Disclosure of opinion on Controversial Issues

On disclosure, teachers’ made decisions to disclose or withhold their opinion on controversial issues. Hess (2009) has reiterated that disclosure is a complex issue which has no agreed position therefore whether to disclose opinion or not is a decision that remains with each individual teacher and the issue at hand. In analyzing teacher disclosure, I used Carrington and Troyna’s (1988) ideas who present the different roles the teacher takes up in the classroom, such as “the objective role,” “the devil’s advocate role,” “the impartial role,” and “the advocate role”(p.3). Teachers in Kenya revealed that they would reveal their positions depending on the situation and the issue through an “objective role” where they present both arguments of the issue or through “an advocate role” where they promoted a certain position. If it was a critical societal and political issue
such as ethnicity and gay rights, Kenyan teachers chose not to disclose their opinions and positions, which was what I referred to as a “no comment role.” But if the issue was less established, and with an almost conclusive opinion in the society, such as abortion, the teachers chose to disclose their opinion in support for the socially favored position. Most often the findings established that, teachers in Kenya stood to their grounds about disclosing or withholding opinions about controversial issues in their classrooms.

Unlike in Kenya, in the US teachers expressed that they disclosed opinions if students ask them, but only after a successful discussion and completion of topic. It appears that even when teachers chose not to disclose, their arguments and the materials used in the class revealed their positions or were biased and thus leaned towards their opinions. For example, a teacher whose philosophy was not to disclose ended up using more materials favoring the same sex-marriages, and used less on the traditional marriages. As a result of favoring one marriage against the other, the teacher took a non-impartial role as opposed to an impartial role where teacher does not in any way disclose their opinion (Carrington & Troyna, 1988). Therefore, from this discussion there seemed to be a discrepancy between the teachers non-disclosure position and their classroom practices. This complexity on disclosure was not determined in this study as influencing students’ opinions on the controversial issues.
Addressing Emerging Issues in the Study

In the following sections, I address some of the emerging issues in the study. I discuss how this study adds or extends conversations on the teaching of controversial issues. The issues addressed are: teachers’ epistemological beliefs, postcolonial studies, pedagogical practices, critical theory/pedagogy, and indigenous/local and global education.

a) Rethinking Teachers’ Epistemological Beliefs

This study revealed that teachers’ epistemologies are the frame within which they see, understand and approach controversial issues in their classrooms. The study found that epistemologies molded by personal interest, issues of race, ethnicity, gender, culture, knowledge and power, social cultural and political issues as well as time, events and space that constructed the teachers’ knowing and practices about controversial issues pedagogy. As discussed in chapter four, a teacher may chose to teach reproductive rights or sexuality education because of the feminist influences and knowledge while one may chose to eschew the teaching of race and ethnicity because of lack of knowledge or because of social cultural stances.

Consequently as Hess (2010) states that teacher’ beliefs inform their teaching and classroom practices. This study however, found out that teacher’s beliefs, visions and philosophies of the best controversial issues teaching practices do not always translate to practice. In other words their views of how to teach controversial issues are not realized
in their social studies classrooms. Several limitations took precedence of their visions and pedagogies. Some of the limitations were time constraints, lack of knowledge about the issues and lack of confidence in approaching sensitive issues.

But what amounted to effective teaching practices was the confidence and knowledge in controversial issues under discussion as well as knowledge of a transformative and oppositional CIs pedagogy. The more informed and confident the teachers were, the better they were in tackling the touchy issues with a transformative lens. Further, it was clear from the teachers that knowledge of how to best teach controversial issues surpassed any number of years of teaching experience. Also, teachers’ knowledge of controversial issues and controversial issues pedagogy greatly added to the effective controversial issues teaching. Part of the knowledge that was lacking was how to teach the more established hard-core issues in the society such as race and racism, ethnicity, gay/lesbian rights or abortion.

Giroux (1996) promotes a critical “oppositional pedagogy” that not only resists hegemonic knowledge but also encourages the decentering of established cannons of knowledge. In this study, teachers’ use of critical oppositional pedagogy was seen to promote a decentering of popular societal views or the officially authorized knowledge and a centralizing of peripheral arguments such as those on reproductive women’s rights as opposed to the popular views of the illegality of abortion. Utilization of the oppositional pedagogy in the classroom contributed to democratic learning.
Therefore, there are possibilities for best practices in controversial issues teaching and learning. To achieve the goal for effective teaching there is need to rethink teacher beliefs and how they can be fully realized in the classrooms. There is need to prepare teachers to teach for transformative and oppositional democratic teaching, in both regions. More specifically, attention should be geared towards incorporating in-service teacher education programs for teachers that will focus on democratic learning through controversial issues teaching.

b) Rethinking Post-colonial Studies

Findings in this research revealed that the perpetuation of imperial knowledge was still forwarded in some cases. In the second chapter postcolonial scholars such as Said (1979), Spivak (1988), and Willinsky (1998) had explicated how knowledges of the metropole have decentered all other knowledges specifically those from the periphery while perpetuating the imperial legacy and stereotypes of the Other. Findings have shown that social studies classrooms still continue to perpetuate knowledges of the metropole be it in the US or in Kenya. An analysis of curriculum content and classroom texts revealed that most of the content had a Eurocentric focus and less local knowledge. For instance, some particular classroom practices in the schools revealed a high esteem of the curriculum content on the Western countries more so the US and Britain. One example was during the lesson on civilizations in the West. The teachers’ and the curriculum promoted civilizations of the West as superior and admirable while there was no mention
of the indigenous African civilizations such as the Ancient Egyptian or Great Zimbabwe civilizations. This tends to advance the same anthropological view of Kenya and Africa sometimes inadvertently.

In the US some classroom practices, revealed a tendency to gloss over the narratives and imperial content of the Other or hot button sensitive controversial issues. The teaching of Rwandan genocide affirmed Willinsky’s (1998) idea of legacy of the imperialism. Rwandan’s image that was discussed and that remained in the students minds was an image of war and incivility. Further, the same image became essentialized to portray Rwanda as stand in for Africa. Yet the images of Rwanda after the genocide reveal a developing commercial hub. Such an indistinct image of the non-West calls for one, an investigation on ways in which to support teachers to find materials; secondly, knowledge on teaching approaches that challenge the imperial ideology and encourage what Merryfield and Subedi (2006) suggest the moving of the center from Eurocentric thinking to looking at content from the lens of the marginalized and the people in under discussion. In seeing things from the perspective of the Other the teachers will be avoiding a damaging-centered perspective that destroys the Other’s image (Tuck, 2009).

From these classroom experiences it is therefore critical to reconsider post-colonial studies. First, it is critical to examine the narratives of the Other that are perpetuated in US classrooms and narrative of the metropole that are advanced in Kenyan classrooms. By rethinking postcolonial studies, attention will be given to the narratives
that have for centuries decentered marginalized knowledge’s and those that perpetuate the imperial legacy (Said, 1979; Spivak, 1988; Willinsky 1998). Secondly, there is need to train teachers both in Kenya and the US to look beyond the Other and to critically analyze the Western cannon and the officially authorized curriculum for knowledge that inferiorizes or decenters the Other.

c) Rethinking Pedagogical Practices

This study demonstrated how classroom pedagogy and practices in both research contexts differed considerably especially in teaching approaches, and access to teaching resources. In teaching methods, Kenyan teachers mostly used lecture methods, note taking and question and answer methods. The above teaching methods, mostly surround the belief that the teacher is the knower and do not favor students’ inquiry and democratic learning methods. It only perpetuated and encouraged what Freire (2000) portrayed as “narration sickness,” a practice that is teacher-centered and does not encourage inquiry and experiential learning. On the other hand, the teacher’s role presumes the cultural role of adults as knower’s and young ones as attentive learners, where their silence may not necessarily imply passivity, thus the multiple meanings of these students silences needs investigation. Nonetheless, the major rationale cited by the teachers for such a teacher-centered approach to teaching was the exam-mandated curriculum and overwhelming curriculum that demanded timely completion.
Similarly, in the US, teachers also cited the State’s standards and curriculum content demanded completion and therefore impacting their teaching. Even though teachers in the US cited curriculum mandates, their pedagogical strategies were a little more diverse. It is important to note that these were general strategies in some classrooms. Some of the strategies included discussions, deliberations, multimedia resources and questions and answers with at least a half of the class participating. In utilizing resources, US teachers used handouts from online resources, videos, films and the internet. In contrast Kenyan teachers relied heavily on the textbook and occasionally made use of charts. It is not my intention to dispute the fact that Kenyan teachers made the best to use whatever available resources in the light of meager government funding. However, what was most intriguing in both research regions, was that there were teachers who were passionate and more inclined to search for resources in whatever means available because they were not satisfied with using one single resource.

d) Rethinking Critical Theory and pedagogy

This study was, in part, based on the premise that for controversial issues pedagogy to be fully realized there is need to interrogate the center versus periphery power relations as they are performed in the world. Some of the issues that emerged in this study for example, was the teacher-centered method of teaching in Kenya. This method did not encourage critical thinking skills but rather advanced what Freire (1970) called banking education. To illustrate Freire’s viewpoint, controversial issues teaching
was approached from the perspective of imparting factual knowledge and not from a controversy perspective. In teaching about abortion for instance, teachers gave facts about it, such statistics, reasons, dangers and impact on the mother and the unborn child. There was no mention about reproductive rights because the practice of abortion is considered against the societal norms and it was unthinkable to discuss women’s reproductive rights. Therefore facts about controversial issues are advanced as opposed to deliberations of the controversial issues. Clearly, lack of training in critical pedagogy, exam and curriculum mandates hindered critical pedagogical practices.

In the US, the study revealed a more pronounced practice of critical pedagogy. Teachers used deliberations, discussions, inquiry, oppositional and political teaching methods. These practices were common in classes where teachers made their own curriculum units on controversial issues such as world history courses and social issues courses. But the US history courses had limited use of critical pedagogical strategies. These limitations were due to the pressure to complete the curriculum content on time. Thus there was lack of sufficient time to engage critical skills even though the teachers showed a familiarity with critical pedagogy.

These experiences demand a reconsideration of critical pedagogy. As Denzin, et.al (2008) opine, teachers should engage in “empowering values of critical pedagogy” which focuses on preparing students to question discourses and narratives and disrupt hegemonic relationships and participate in activities for social change. Subsequently,
there is need in Kenya to include in-service teacher education programs that promote critical pedagogical skills. Moreover, there is need for reforms in the curriculum that will allow space for a theme driven for of curriculum that will focus on social change (Jarammilo and McLaren, 2008). In making the curriculum to be theme driven it means incorporation of issues that open critical discussions in the classroom as well as student centered learning. Similarly in the US, the history curriculum needs to incorporate more controversial issues or themes to avoid teacher-centered instruction that only intend to cover required content. Also including transformative, participatory activities in the classrooms will indeed move towards education that makes a difference in the society. These issues will be the path towards empowering learners to actively engage in the world and question injustices.

e) Rethinking Indigenous/local/global education

In Kenya the study revealed that indigenous knowledge (IK) was a reference point from which students and teachers explained their knowledge’s. Teachers and students were passionate about speaking of their cultures. For example, when Ms. Linda was teaching about the Bantu migration of the peoples of Kenya, she passionately spoke about the Kikuyu group, including giving oral tales about the group and stories about its origins. Her passion was reflected also in her students. They were also enthusiastic about speaking of their ethnic groups. That enthusiasm was derived from their knowledge of indigenous cultures and traditions. In speaking about citizenship education they would
first speak of themselves as members of their individual cultural groups and then as citizens of the country and lastly of the world. They understood and related to affiliations with their cultural groups before they spoke of the national. The findings of this study noted that indigenous local cultures and experiences were readily understood and appreciated. As Smith (1999) noted it was because the IK spoke to their individual experiences, thoughts, perceptions, the spiritual and the personal among other things. Therefore there is need to rethink cultural linkages and experiences that are meaningful to students, and those that students can appreciate. More importantly, it is pertinent to focus on knowledge’s that desists from driving students away from their cultures but rather direct them back to their cultural roots and knowledge.

Billings (1994) also asserts the need to incorporate culturally relevant content that speaks to individual students. Ladson-Billings speaks mostly about the US context, it therefore implies that US teachers’ have to rethink their teaching strategies to incorporate content that is relevant and meaningful to culturally diverse and minority students. This study found that teachers in the US avoided race issues in most cases even when it emerged in the classroom. For example in an interview with Mr. Emanuel, he asserted that he avoided race issues because he did not know how to approach the subject. Therefore should be a reconsideration of meaningful ways to incorporate issues of race that will enhance knowledge about issues of social justice and equity. In the Kenyan
curriculum reforms are long overdue to incorporate more of the Kenyan local cultural knowledge’s rather than an overwhelming imposition of content from the West.

The overwhelming Western content in the Kenyan curriculum brings to question the nature of global education in Kenya. Global perspectives advanced in the history classrooms were about the West generally, from industrialization in Europe, democracy in the US, to Urbanization in Europe. The moment one opens the history textbook one cannot help but realize how the West is the focal point of discussion from which local knowledge is examined. In other words student learn about the West to understand the local. As such therefore, focus needs to be on how to fully infuse indigenous knowledge in Kenya’s education, and on how goals of democratic and citizenship can be structured to include indigenous precepts instead of exporting democratic and citizenship ideals from Western discourses.

Experiences in the US classrooms take the opposite direction. The teachers in the US examined the world from their own Western perspective first, before examining the Other. For example looking at Rwandan genocide, the teacher examines the event from films or texts written in the West. Thus providing a negative reading of Rwanda as disabled and disfigured in War. The same became a stand in for Africa, crushing the image of the continent. In rethinking global perspectives, Subedi (2009) states that educators and the curriculum need analysis. He presents four critical points that when considered will positively enhance the teaching of global issues in both regions. These
are, first, the need for educators to reconsider how their history influences their perceptions of contemporary issues of “unequal global formations” (p. 2). Secondly, educators will need to go beyond the local to the global to show the interconnections between the two. Thirdly, there is need for a curriculum that centers on “critical perspectives” and to have educators who are critical and reflective of their own individual biases. Lastly, there is need to see the world from a subaltern perspective and to acquire knowledge that goes beyond superficial views of the Other. In other words, there is need to decolonize inquiry, in order to do justice to local and global content and to protect indigenous and marginalized knowledge’s (Batiste, 2008). By recovering, reclaiming and foregrounding, indigenous local knowledge as well as critically reflecting, and seeing the world from the indigenous/subaltern perspective will add to the teaching of global perspectives.

**Challenges to controversial issues teaching**

Classroom pedagogy was fraught with stumbling blocks faced by teachers in the two regions. In Kenya, as explained earlier in this chapter, democracy was not a familiar concept in its nature and practice. Teachers’ in Kenya therefore needed to re-learn democracy and its character. In 2007 democracy and citizenship began to be taught as topics in the social studies curriculum by teachers who had no prior training on democratic education nor citizenship education. The problem was further compounded by lack of support from the ministry in offering in-service courses to prepare them to teach
the new topics. In the US, the major challenge as expressed by the teachers was lack of
time to engage in controversial issues as well as lack of materials with balanced
perspectives, where “balanced” in this case implied objective resources that presented
both sides of the issue fairly. Another challenge was inadequate training in teaching
controversial issues locally and globally. These challenges reveal that while teachers in
Kenya were more concerned first with the understanding of the concepts of democracy,
and citizenship, teachers in the US were more focused on finding resources and materials
to teach different controversial issues.

However, Kenya’s experience does not mean that Kenyan teachers had abundant
materials, rather at the moment teaching resources were not a priority because they are
restricted to rigidly follow the recommended texts by Kenya Institute of Education(KIE)
and want to understand what democratic citizenship education entails. In both regions
however, there was need for teacher training programs on how to incorporate
controversial issues in the classrooms and moving away from teacher centered
instruction. Kenya’s biggest problem was insufficient resources such as technological and
multimedia resources because of insufficient funds, Further aggravating the challenges,
was the overwhelming number of students in a classroom due to free secondary
education.
Toward a critical democratic citizenship education through controversial issues pedagogy

From the results of this study, I scrutinize some of the practices that the teachers perceived as a path towards critical democratic and participatory citizenship education through the teaching of controversial issues. Three findings arose as effective means for developing controversial issues learning and pedagogical skills. First, it appears that a curriculum geared towards a more critical democratic and active local and global citizenship education is more likely to develop active citizens of the society, nation and the world. Secondly, there is need for more in-service teacher courses on how to democratically engage controversial issues, and collaborations and associations with other teachers to exchange ideas and materials for teaching controversial issues. To expound, teachers in Kenya revealed that, by ignoring the collective and pursuing the individual means to achieve effective teaching practices, hampered their work. These collaborations are the core structures on which the Kenyan society built on the collective or communal spirit and action which teachers transmit to students as an aspect of citizenship education (Mbiti, 1969). Consequently, in the US some teachers revealed the need for collaboration because on the one hand one teacher had an abundance of information on gay rights issues, while on the other, teachers in the same district lamented for lack of materials. Therefore, collaboration among teachers would definitely offset the deficiency of the other.
Thirdly, the study revealed that the curriculum needs to incorporate more content on controversial issues. The teachers’ experiences noted that in both regions controversial issues did not stand out especially in history courses. In the US, teachers who were concerned and interested in teaching for democratic citizenship were motivated to take up current events and courses that opened a world of local and global issues. In Kenya teachers expressed concern on the limited content on controversial issues in the syllabi because of the exam-oriented focus of the curriculum. Therefore more needs to be done to look beyond standards and testing or awarding of certificates but rather look at issues that make students useful democratic citizens. Sifuna (2000) fittingly posits that for a democracy to be a democracy it must develop “politically literate and active citizenry, who take a direct, personal responsibility in the workings of society including government” (p.215). In other words, a dysfunctional or decadent society is a result of a democratically mis-educated, and a democratically illiterate citizenry.

Implications for the Study

a) Implications for Kenya

In this section I provide implications for each of the research regions discussed. Kenya being one of the so called ‘developing countries,’ has a great deal of work to do in order to achieve its best teaching practices on controversial issues within citizenship
education. The implications of the study have been grouped into three categories, first, the curricular, secondly teacher preparation and thirdly, educational policies.

**Educational curricular reforms**

This study suggested the need to reform education curriculum to respond to the goals of social studies, citizenship and global education. Also the study demonstrated the need to rethink the place of indigenous cultures of the people of Kenya in the curriculum. This study recommended curriculum content that is centered on local knowledge that is more relevant to the cultural experience and knowledge to the peoples of Kenya which examines continental and global perspective of issues that do not marginalize local knowledge. Similarly, since the mid 1990s when Merryfield & Tlou (1995) aptly asserted the need for Africanizing the curriculum in Africa, Kenya has still a long way to achieve the goal, unless Africanizing curriculum has taken on new meanings. There is urgent need for the curriculum developers to look for ways to shift from an overwhelmingly Western content, and an exam-oriented focus to more locally derived content and more transformative and participatory education.

**Teacher preparation**

The social studies teachers in this study indicated the need for in-service training in democratic teaching and learning experiences as well as training in new knowledge on global and participatory citizenship for them to be effective social studies teachers. More importantly on the one hand, there is need to train teachers to critically analyze Western
content, as well as encourage a decolonizing of teachers and students minds from the persisting colonial frames of thinking (Ngugi, 1986; Merryfield, 2001). On the other hand there is need for a shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered learning experiences and praxis that incorporates critical thinking and action (Freire, 2000). Efforts must be made to reform teacher education curriculum to facilitate culturally and globally relevant knowledge to encourage development of citizens who are grounded in their cultural groups before they are initiated into the global world. Furthermore, there is need to re-evaluate professional development programs for pre-service education programs to continuously equip teachers with the 21st century skills in technology or in global perspectives.

**Educational Policies**

First, policy makers need to revisit the issue of school funding for social studies departments in schools to provide resources needed for comprehensive learning such as guest speakers, field trips, teaching resources, and technology. Moreover, funding should also be channeled towards the high student/teacher ratio and the provision of learning equipment and resources, building of more classrooms, employment and training pre-service and in-service teachers for effective social studies teaching. Secondly, it is worth rethinking indigenous knowledges.’ Dei (2008) asserts, that “policy makers and educational development leaders must deconstruct the myth of development as
progressive and indigenous as stagnant to further understand the value of indigenous knowledge systems” because indigenous knowledge systems are "a means of gaining power and resisting dominant discursive practices" (p.229, 231). Rethinking African knowledges source appears to be the foundation from which Kenyan teachers can begin to re-conceptualize and construct their models of democratic and citizenship teaching and learning. Developing policies on democratic citizenship education will mean training students to resolving societal and ethnic conflicts; a major distraction to the issue of building democratic and peaceful governments. Additionally, these reform policies should utilize all development partners such as the financers of education, policy makers, government institutions related to education and so on. Lastly there is need to rethink the exam oriented education, that applauds awards rather than skills so that education becomes meaningful for the development of active democratic citizens.

**B) Implications for the US**

In the US I discuss three categories of implications, these are the social studies teachers, educational curricula reforms and teacher education programs.

**Social Studies Teachers**

This study found that teachers benefit from collaborations with other teachers of social studies. A significant problem that emerged in teachers experiences was the possibility of one teacher to have abundance of resources while another laments about
lack of materials. Mr. Dan had demonstrated that he had plenty of resources on teaching about same-sex marriages and gay rights issues while Ms. Elizabeth could not teach about gay rights issues because of insufficient resources. Teacher collaborations inside schools and within school districts would definitely cover up for the claim of lacking teaching resources. Therefore there is need to reconsider ways of enhancing and opening channels through which social studies teachers can collaborate either through workshops, seminars or professional development sessions. Such collaborations will be useful for social studies teachers to discuss and share materials on controversial issues to better hone their teaching skills. Collaborations will also enhance confidence in teaching controversial issues without shying away from them.

**Educational Curriculum Reforms**

The study suggested the need for more content on controversial issues especially in history courses as well on infusing global perspectives so as to train students to be actively engaged in their local and global community. In the same vein, rethinking the content of social studies education is long overdue, considering the many calls by social studies scholars to move the center of social studies from the dominant knowledge (Merryfield, 2001), to decolonizing the academy and rethinking the canons of knowledge and imperial content (Willinsky, 1998). Similarly, educational curricular reforms should focus on preparing more supportive teaching materials and resources on teaching controversial issues in the society.
Teacher Education Programs

My findings confirmed that controversial issues are the means to advance critical democratic and global citizenship. This implies that there is need to rethink teacher education programs to concentrate on equipping teachers with skills and abilities to prepare future democratic citizens. The teachers need to be prepared to critically analyze curricula content and make it meaningful to students. This study found that teacher education programs did not infuse more content on teaching hot-button issues making teachers ill prepared to engage controversial issues in the classroom. Therefore there is need for reforms in teacher education programs require reform to include more controversial issues content to give the teacher the confidence and knowledge to engage in issues discussions in their classrooms. Lastly, teacher education programs need to include more global perspectives and culturally relevant content to meet the needs of diverse student population as well as the needs of the global age.

Future Research

This study revealed findings that may push for further research considerations on the issue of teacher construction of ideas about controversial issues and its relations to social studies and citizenship education in the two regions. There are several areas that may need further investigation in order to progress towards utilizing controversial local and global democratic and citizenship skills. In Kenya there needs to be first, a study to
investigate the exam-oriented social studies education curriculum and its impact on equipping students with democratic and citizenship skills. Secondly, a study to look into teacher education programs to see if they understand the idea of democratic and citizenship skills necessary for fulfilling the goals of education in Kenya. Thirdly, an investigation of how citizenship education can be constructed to include conceptions of citizenship from the indigenous precepts. In the US, the following issues need consideration; First, a study on the content of teacher education programs to examine how they impact democratic teaching and learning and controversial issues teaching. Secondly, investigate how teacher disclosure impacts the teaching of controversial issues. Thirdly, an investigation on the incorporation of participatory and transformative learning activities in social studies classrooms for social change.

I began this dissertation journey to explore how teachers construct and interpret ideas about controversial issues and how their ideas impact their practice. However, to continue this journey further research is needed. I first plan to extend this study to explore teachers’ construction of ideas on controversial issues and follow up with their teaching practices especially after going through classes on democratic learning and pedagogy. I will investigate the level at which education programs in democratic teaching impact their practice as well as how different their practice is from those of teachers who do not go through the program. Secondly I plan to extend the study further to include a comparative study of students’ perception and ideas on controversial issues in both
Kenya and the US. Due to the wide scope of this future study, I plan to narrow down the research to examine in-service teachers of social studies who went through democratic teacher education programs and their perceptions about controversial issues within democratic citizenship education and follow-up with the teachers over a period of time to observe their practice and the level at which they transfer their pedagogical knowledge to practice as they engage controversial issues in their classrooms.

Conclusion

As stated on the onset, this study was a complex one as Mbembe and Nutall (2006) observe, because writing Africa to the world is an intricate exercise as it is writing about the West from a non-Western perspective. However, despite the intricacies of the study the findings presented a possibility in the teaching of controversial issues from a critical oppositional pedagogical and transformative perspective. This study’s contribution in explaining teachers’ experiences informs greatly the social studies and global citizenship education field. Also this study is a foundational research especially in Kenya where not any known study has been done in examining controversial issues teaching within social studies education and in the US where not any known comparative study of controversial issues pedagogy in Kenya and US has been done. I hope that the findings discussed here will be useful in implementing reforms in education and in teacher education programs which were found wanting if these two countries are to realize the goals of a democratic and citizenship education. Finally, this study serves first,
as an intervention into re-thinking ways of first engaging social studies research within international/transnational contexts, and secondly in re-thinking, and re-imagining controversial issues pedagogy as a critical venture in democratic, active local and global citizenship education.
REFERENCES


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http://www.elimuyetu.net/index.php?option=com_phocadownload&view=category&id=1


Appendices

Appendix A: Teacher Portraits

Portrait of Kenyan Teachers

The following are portraits of teachers in both Kenya and the US. I speak of the teachers in the context of their teaching background, and within teaching and life experiences. I also tell of their beliefs and philosophies essential in making their teaching a success. Their experiences were gathered from the initial interviews and conversations with the teachers all throughout the study.

Town High school: Kelly and Kate

Ms. Kelly

Ms. Kelly was a charismatic and opinionated female teacher in Town High school. She had been a teacher in the school since 1987. She had taught for 23 years. She came to Town High school immediately after completing her Bachelors of Education degree. Since then she had been teaching history and Christian Religious Education (CRE). She taught history from form one to form four (similar to US ninth to twelfth grade). Her favorite subject to teach was history, but whenever there was need for a CRE teacher, she would assist by teaching the subject. Ms. Kelly liked teaching form one and two history because she had taught it for many years, so she felt confident and knowledgeable teaching the course. She currently is doing her post-graduate studies in Sexuality Education. She hoped that she would be able to teach sex education one day in high
school, but at the moment she concentrated on acquiring knowledge and pedagogical skills on teaching the sex education. When asked why she chose to study sexuality education, she emphatically stated that sex education was a controversial topic that needed examination because of the different attitudes towards the topic in the society. Her belief in teaching history is “in teaching for understanding and teaching skills that would be useful to the students in the future such as skills in making good decisions and in using their democratic rights as citizens of Kenya.

Ms. Kate

Ms. Kate is a humble, soft spoken, and a passionate teacher. She had been teaching in Town High school for 11 years. She came to Town high school after graduating from college with an honors degree in Education. She taught history and literature. She is also doing her post-graduate degree in literature. Her background in literature has influenced her use of fictional literature in her history classes. She found literary texts as a way to capture the interests and participation in class. She taught classes from form one to four. She liked using the term “emerging issues” rather than controversial issues which she sees as a big word that only elicits controversy. Her teaching philosophy was based on the use of literature in teaching of history. She noted that literature took students away of the exam oriented learning to reflect on real life issues that are important in their lives presently. She believed that learning history through literature makes students “human” and part of the society.
Ms. Kendra

Ms. Kendra was an assertive, strong and courageous teacher. She was also known as a disciplinarian in the school. She moved to City high school from a different school in a different district in 1988 where she taught for two years. She had taught in City high school for the past 23 years. She taught history and geography. She was the head of the social studies department in the school. Her work as the head of social studies department in the school included teaching history classes, organizing and preparing for examinations done in the school, allocating teachers for the different classes and monitoring the progress of different history classes after examinations. Her work also entailed securing funds from the school and ensures that teachers have resources needed for successful teaching whenever the funds are available. She believed in working closely with the administration and the history teachers. In teaching history she commanded students’ attention in her classroom by involving them in questions and answers and makes them to speak. She believes that “children have a right to see and air their views, talk about what they feel is right, and that is what I respect.”

Ms. Linda

Linda is an enthusiastic, passionate and outspoken teacher in City high. She was one of the youngest teachers in the school. She had been teaching City high school for five years since she was posted in the school after bachelors of education degree. She taught history
in the school. She taught form one history. Linda was a self-motivated teacher and liked to introduce new ways of teaching such as teaching history using videos and the internet. Linda kept up with her knowledge of history through reading and pursuing a post graduate career. She was very assertive in her beliefs about what is right or wrong especially concerning the debate about Kenya’s new constitution. Linda believed in telling students her opinion about controversial issues particularly those she felt strongly about such as ethnicity. Her goal in teaching history was “to go away from having students memorize the material, but teach topics in an interesting way for them to understand information and act on what they understand.”

**Mid-Western US Teacher Portraits**

**Lincoln High**

*Mr. Bryant*

Mr. Bryant was a high school social studies teacher in Lincoln high school. He taught ninth grade history course. He had taught the current school for five years and taught social studies for about eight years. He had a degree in education, specifically in social studies education. He was the department chair of social studies in the school. He liked working with the social studies teachers in preparing the social studies curriculum and organizing teaching of social studies courses. He also taught Ethnic studies, History of Justice and Law courses for ninth to tenth grades. He was a passionate teacher and leader. He fashioned his teaching to alongside his father’s who was a great teacher according to
him and continuously gave him ideas on how to improve his teaching. Mr. Bryant had lived and studied in the same mid-Western state and was a former student in this same school his father taught. During his free time he liked reading and updating his knowledge through constant reading and discussing with other teachers in the school or in the school district for the sake of improving his teaching skills. His teaching philosophy was, “teaching for social change.”

**Ms. Elizabeth**

Ms. Elizabeth was an enthusiastic zealous and knowledgeable social studies teacher at Lincoln high school. She taught tenth grade world history course with a passion. Ms. Elizabeth taught in the Lincoln high school for eight years. Before coming to the present school, Ms. Elizabeth taught in a “third world” country for two years, and the after that taught for one year in another school district neighboring the present school. She also taught a course on Women in American history. She had a degree in education and had been keeping up with her professional development by taking several university courses. She taught ninth to tenth grade classes. Her passion was to make her classroom a learning environment. Ms. Elizabeth, utilized schools funding to update her classroom with new materials and learning aids from the world. Her teaching philosophy was “never shy away from teaching controversial issues.”

**Kennedy High**

**Mr. Emanuel**
Mr. Emanuel was a confident and knowledgeable high school social studies teacher. He had taught in Kennedy high school for thirteen years. He taught a world history course for ninth and tenth grades. His seemed to have good rapport with his students. He liked engaging new ideas, and adding to his knowledge base by keeping up to date with current events. Mr. Emanuel felt comfortable using controversial issues in the classroom, because his minor degree in college was in political science. He said that taking political sciences courses introduced him to many global issues. In his class he liked using technology in teaching global issues. Most of the materials he had collected over the years and kept adding and updating them. He attributed his enthusiasm in teaching controversial issues to his former high school teacher, who taught him how to challenge issues instead of taking it as it is. That is the same philosophy he had in his world history classroom. He challenged students, piqued their interest and played the devil’s advocate to make students critically think about controversial issues in particular and history in general.

Mr. Dan

Mr. Dan was a teacher at Kennedy high school. He taught eleventh and twelfth grades social studies. He taught Philosophy, Social Issues, and US-history courses. He has taught for a total of nineteen years. He indicated that he had not trained to be a social issues teacher but trained as a philosophy and history teacher. However, when the opportunity came up for teaching social issues in his school, he grabbed the opportunity because he believed that the social issues course would open avenues for more
controversial issues discussions which interested him. Furthermore to build on his knowledge, Mr. Dan was pursuing a degree from a teacher education program at a local university. He acknowledged that he had benefited much from taking a number of political, psychology and democratic education courses in the education programs. These classes framed his idea and interpretation of democratic teaching and learning. One of his effective classroom practices was preparing students to deliberate and “figure out” issues, write policies and take actions on social issues discussions.
Appendix B: Research Study timeline

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>April to June, October to</td>
<td>Data Collection/analysis</td>
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<td>December, 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>July to September, 2010</td>
<td>Data collection/analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>October to March 2011</td>
<td>Final data analysis</td>
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<td>Presentation of the study</td>
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Appendix C: Interview Protocol

First Interview

Personal teaching experiences
1. How many years have you taught social studies education?
2. What do you consider to be a controversial topic? How do you perceive the idea of controversial issues (CI) in teaching? Have you incorporated controversial issues in your classrooms?
3. Can social studies be learned using contentious, delicate topics? What about democratic citizenship?
4. How or what strategies would you use in teaching delicate issues?
5. What debatable topics might/have your students be interested in? Why?
6. What controversial issues do your students bring up?
7. How have you embedded this issue/these issues in your pedagogy?
8. What is considered controversial in the school or society?

Students Perspectives
1. Do you think students learn from discussions on hot-topic discussions in your classrooms?
2. Do you think controversial hot-topics train students on democratic citizenship skills?

Concerns
1. Who or what guides your choice of what contentious to teach in your classrooms?
2. Are you able to discuss all kinds of “touchy” issues in your classrooms?

3. Might there be any hindrance from teaching these “touchy” issues in your classrooms?

**Probes:**

Do you like teaching using controversial issues?

Can controversial issues prepare students to be good decision makers as citizens?

Can you prioritize these controversial issues starting with the most common topics they like to engage in?

Who dictates whether or not to use controversial issues in your classrooms? Is it: The school board? The curriculum? Parents? The teacher?

Do you disclose your opinions to students? If Yes, when and how? If No, why?

**Follow-Up Interview.**

**Personal teaching perspectives and experiences**

1. Might there be any controversial issues you think you engaged well/or not in the classrooms?

2. Might there be any personal concerns that made you engage students the way you did?

3. What strategies/resources do you think effectively assist you in the teaching of controversial issues?

**Concerns**

1. Were there any concerns or problems that came up during or after your teaching lessons?
Probes

Why do you think you did well/or not in discussing the particular issue? Can you elaborate?

Do you have any difficult or complex topics that hinder students understanding? What problems do you have when discussing such complex concerns?

How did you handle the concerns?
Appendix D: Consent letter

The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: Teaching local and global controversial Issues in the Social Studies Education: A Comparative study of Kenya and the US High Schools

Researcher: Anne Waliaula

Sponsor: N/A

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. You have a period of one week to think about it before you decide. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine social studies teachers’ perception of ideas about teaching controversial issues in their classrooms and how their perceptions affect their choice of teaching methods and resources. The study will be conducted in two world regions, in the US and in Kenya, a country in East Africa.

Procedures/Tasks

I will begin the study with a personal interview of about one hour with each participant. I will audio tape the interview with your permission. These interviews will be followed towards the end of the study with another in-depth interview of about 45-60 minutes as a follow-up. I will need to observe your social studies classes, at least once a week to see how you engage students in conversations on controversial issues, observe your approaches and instructional decisions toward engaging the issues. Documents will also be collected from you, with your permission, such as the syllabus, and any teaching materials. Throughout the study, I will communicate with you via email or in person to confirm findings and answer any of your questions or concerns.

Yes _____ No _____ I consent to the use of audiotapes. I understand how the tapes will be used for the study and research purposes (Current or future research). The tapes will be located in a secure, locked are only accessible only to the researchers.
Yes____ I give the researcher permission to use my real name and quotations.

No____ I do not give the researcher permission to use my real name. The researcher can use my quotations and a pseudonym.

**Duration**

This study will be conducted in the US between March and December 2010, and in Kenya between July to August 2010. I will conduct a total of two hours of personal interviews and at least one day each week in eight weeks of observation of your social studies class.

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with the Ohio State University.

**Risks/ Benefits**

Risks are likely minimal. If they are recognized they will be minimized. If there is any interview questions you feel uncomfortable to answer, you have the right to refuse. This study will enable curriculum developers, Educators and researchers in getting to understand teachers’ experiences in teaching controversial issues. Also they will be able to use these experiences to formulate, reform curriculum accordingly.

**Confidentiality:**

Your participation in this research is confidential. Only the research team will have access to your name and to information that can be associated with you. In the event of publication of this research or presentation of it at a conference or in any educational setting, personal identifying information will be disclosed based on your permission. Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential.

However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups:

- Office for Human Research protections or federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices

**Participant Rights**
You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:
For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact: Dr. Binaya Subedi at subedi.1@osu.edu Or the Anne Waliaula at (US Phone no. 614-688-0955 or Kenya Cell Phone 0722319369), Waliaula.2@osu.edu

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Signing the consent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

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**Investigator/Research Staff**

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

| Printed name of person obtaining consent | Signature of person obtaining consent |
| AM/PM |
| Date and time |
Appendix E: Recruitment Letter For Teachers

The Ohio State University

Principle Investigator: Binaya Subedi
Co-Investigator: Anne Waliaula

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am planning on conducting a research study in your school about the ways in which social studies teachers interpret controversial local and global issues in their classrooms. I would like to ask if you would participate in my study. If you agree to participate, I will visit your classroom at least three times to better understand how you construct ideas on sensitive topics that arise in your classrooms. I will observe classroom activities that focus on citizenship education. I will also need to conduct two hour interviews with you in two sessions of forty-five minutes to an hour in the course of the study. Hours will be flexible based upon your schedule and you will be provided compensation for your time. As a research observer, I will not interfere with classroom instruction. Besides collecting data through observation and two interviews, I will also ask that you allow me to make copies of relevant documents; curriculum materials, unit plans, lesson plans, copies of textbooks, or student work. Agreeing to participate in my study does not obligate you to complete the study. You can withdraw from the study at any time or choose not to answer questions. If you agree to participate, I am required to gain your signed informed consent.

At the end of the study, I am planning to write a dissertation and publish the findings from the study. However, the information you share with me will be strictly confidential. I will not use any identifiers or makers that link the information to you, your school, or students. If at any time the findings from this study are to be published, I will use pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. As federal regulations require, study records will be retained from at least three years after the close of the study.

Your support with this study would be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions related to this study, please feel free to contact me at waliaula.2@osu.edu or the Principal Investigator: Dr. Binaya Subedi at subedi.1@osu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant contact The Ohio State University Office of Responsible Research Practices (ORRP) at 1-800-678-6251.

Sincerely,

Anne Waliaula (Co-Investigator)
Appendix F
IRB Permission Letter

March 15, 2010
Protocol Title:
TEACHING LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN THE SOCIAL
STUDIES EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF KENYA AND THE US
HIGH SCHOOLS, Binaya Subedi, Anne Waliaula, Teaching and Learning
Type of Review:
Initial Review—Expedited
IRB Staff Contact:
Jacob R. Stoddard
Phone: 614-292-0526
Email: stoddard.13@osu.edu
The Behavioral and Social Sciences IRB APPROVED BY EXPEDITED REVIEW the above referenced
research. The
Board was able to provide expedited approval under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) because the research presents
minimal risk to subjects and qualifies under the expedited review category(s) listed below.
Date of IRB Approval:
March 15, 2010
Date of IRB Approval Expiration: February 19, 2011
Expedited Review Category: 7
If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA research authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their
legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. The IRB-approved
consent form and process must be used. Changes in the research (e.g., recruitment procedures,
advertisements, enrollment numbers, etc.) or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before
they are implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects).

This approval is valid for one year from the date of IRB review when approval is granted or modifications
are required. The approval will no longer be in effect on the date listed above as the IRB expiration date. A
Continuing Review application must be approved within this interval to avoid expiration of IRB approval
and cessation of all research activities. A final report must be provided to the IRB and all records relating to
the research (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for at least 3 years
after the research has ended.
It is the responsibility of all investigators and research staff to promptly report to the IRB any serious,
unexpected and related adverse events and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or
others. This approval is issued under The Ohio State University’s OHRP Federal wide Assurance
#00006378.
All forms and procedures can be found on the ORRP website – www.orrp.osu.edu. Please feel free to
contact the IRB staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.

Jeanne A. Clement, EdD, Chair
Behavioral and Social Sciences Institutional Review Board
Office of Responsible Research practices
300 Research Foundation, 1960 Kenny road
Columbus, Oh 43210-1063
Phone(614)688-8457