Controversy in the Early Elementary Classroom: A Case Study of the 2020 Presidential Election

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Dedications

This dissertation is dedicated to women who have inspired me, mentored me, and helped me to reach the goal of obtaining a Ph.D. Each of them has played a pivotal role in my life before higher education, and they have won my gratitude and admiration. Because of their selflessness, hard-work, and encouragement I want to thank them by name.

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Abstract

This single case study with embedded units of analysis examines how three early elementary teachers in Kentucky public schools taught the 2020 Presidential Election in grades one, two, and three using *Scholastic News* resources as instructional tools. The research questions focused on how teachers used the materials and the pedagogical strengths of the instructional resources. The three research participants were purposefully selected as early-career, mid-career, and late-career teacher leaders in grades one, two, and three. Data collected included semi-structured interviews, qualitative data analysis of the Scholastic News instructional materials, multi-level policies, and news reports concerning the election. The analysis focused first on individual teachers, then on similarities among teachers, and themes were interpreted and triangulated using other data, literature, and documents.

Among the key findings identified in the study are: *Scholastic* News resources served as a touchstone for the participants as they navigated between their professional beliefs and professional realities about how to teach and discuss issues related to the 2020 Presidential Election. *Scholastic* News resources served as a groundwork for building student discussions and instructional units. Modifications to *Scholastic News* resources led to unintended benefits identified by the participant teachers. This research offers insight into how student periodicals and supplemental materials were used to teach a Presidential Elections and understand their usefulness as an instructional tool for educators. Recommendations are offered for approaching controversial issues in early elementary classrooms. Also included in the study are discussions for future research, policy, and practitioner work relating to controversial issues in early elementary education and teaching Presidential Elections in elementary school.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study....1
Introduction....1
Research Problem and Context....5
Research Purpose....13
Research Questions....13
Methods and Frameworks for Research....13
Chapter Summary....18
Definitions....19
Chapter 2: Review of Literature....22
Introduction....22
Literature Review Process....22
Controversial Issues in Education....23
Civic Education....38
Using Student Periodicals to Teach Presidential Elections....46
Chapter Summary....53
Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework and Methodology....54
Introduction....54
Conceptual Framework....55
Research Setting and Participants....65
Research Design....68
Data Collection Methods....71
Data Analysis Plan....80
Chapter Summary....83
Chapter 4. Analysis....87
Introduction....87
Credibility of Analysis....87
Analysis of Ms. Austen's Expert Interview Data....88
Analysis of Ms. Truet's Expert Interview Data....93
Analysis of Ms. Williams's Expert Interview Data....97
Second Stage Analysis of Expert Interview Data....103
Qualitative Media Analysis of *Scholastic News* Materials....118
Chapter Summary....130
Chapter 5. Findings and Discussion....134

Introduction 134
Summary of Research Study 134
Findings 135
Discussion of Findings 146
Limitations 156
Implications to Future Research 157
Implications to Future Policy 160
Discussion for Practitioners 161
Recommendations 162
Conclusion 163
References 169
Appendices 190
Vita 199

Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

> *I simply wish to indicate that there ought to be a free interaction between all the parts of the school system* [university, secondary, and elementary levels]. *There is much of utter triviality of subject-matter in elementary and secondary education. When we investigate it, we find that it is full of facts taught that are not facts, which have to be unlearned later on. Now, this happens because the "lower" parts of our system are not in vital connection with the "higher." The university or college, in its idea, is a place of research, where investigation is going on…It is, however, as true in the school as in the university that the spirit of inquiry can be got only through and with the attitude of inquiry. The pupil must learn what has meaning, what enlarges [their] horizon, instead of mere trivialities.* [The pupil] *must become acquainted with truths, instead of things that were regarded as such fifty years ago, or that are taken as interesting by the misunderstanding of a partially educated teacher. It is difficult to see how these ends can be reached except as the most advanced part of the educational system is in complete interaction with the most rudimentary.*
>
> (John Dewey, *School and Society,* 1900)

Introduction

The above quote by John Dewey served as a guide to this chapter and the entirety of the study. At the core of that statement was a belief that university work should be inextricably linked to work in schools to ensure a spirit of inquiry and life-long learning for students, teachers, and teacher educators. As such, this study involved decision-making and autonomy by both the researcher and the elementary school teacher to better understand how some elementary school teachers approached teaching the 2020 Presidential Election, even when the content and actors became increasingly controversial. Within this study, early elementary referred to grades one, two, and three; the term *teacher* referred to a public-school teacher credentialed by the State of Kentucky (further information provided at the end of this chapter). I secured instructional materials, *Scholastic News* magazines, for the participant teachers to support the research. I made only one stipulation, that the use of materials included teaching the 2020 Presidential Election. My goal was to study the use of the election-based instructional material from Scholastic, Inc.,

how the teachers felt about using the materials and teaching the content. Next, I will offer a vignette of my connection to the research in question. This vignette helps connect my initial quote to my previous work in education and finally aids in establishing the need for this research.

Personal Connection

I began my public-school teaching career during the 2008 Presidential Election. Throughout the Democratic and Republican primary season, I worked as a long-term substitute in a sixth-grade class. During the fall general election, I worked as an AmeriCorps service member assisting a first-grade classroom. In 2012 and 2016, I taught first-grade during the primary and general elections. Throughout each Presidential Election, I relied on materials from Scholastic, Inc., including *Scholastic News,* to incorporate the Presidential Election into the classroom. I specifically chose *Scholastic News* because I volunteered for multiple candidates' campaigns. I believed the *Scholastic News* resources would help me maintain the neutrality that my district policies required (Boyd County Board of Education, 1991). During my tenure as a public-school teacher, I taught in a similarly sized district to Adams County Public Schools. The following paragraphs are an excerpt from a mini-autoethnography project I previously presented at a national conference (Hughes & Pennington, 2016; Stumbo, 2020; Wallace 2002). This vignette illustrated my thoughts and emotions regarding the 2016 Presidential Election.

> During my final year in the classroom, I looked forward to the 2016 election cycle more than anything. I had previously worked in schools during the 2008 and 2012 elections, and I loved incorporating the election into my early-elementary classroom. It was no secret to my fellow teachers that I had a preferred candidate in the race. I worked for the Hillary Clinton campaign on nights and weekends by traveling to nearby Ohio. My car had two pro-Hillary stickers. Inside the classroom, I remained committed to not

disclosing my preference. I wanted to present both candidates with as little bias as possible. I did not find this problematic in the 2008 or 2012 election, but it was decidedly harder with Donald Trump's rhetoric and behavior making daily news.

Like the previous election cycles, I used a combination of read-aloud books focusing on elections and presidents, coupled with our classroom subscription to *Scholastic News*. One month before the election, my class participated in a mock election for *Scholastic News*. I was unsure of how the students would vote. In 2012 they narrowly picked Romney, and I began to prepare myself that they would likely pick Trump. As a matter of integrity, I invited a Republican staff member to help me run the class election. Students would first visit my table to register for their ballot, designed by *Scholastic News.* Next, students would go to one of the mock election booths to mark a choice. The Republican staff member collected the ballots in the ballot box.

I counted the votes with the staff member, and we recorded the data on a pictograph. In the end, my students picked Hillary Clinton with 15 votes, and Donald Trump received eight votes. One week later, *Scholastic News* published results with Hillary Clinton receiving 52% of student votes. Donald Trump received 35% of student votes. I breathed a sigh of relief because the national student poll had been remarkably consistent, only picking the wrong candidate twice since 1940 (Sullivan, 2016).

On November 8, 2016, I was ready to celebrate our nation's first woman president, but all of those dreams ended as Donald Trump won the electoral college and the election. I logged on to my school website and called out sick for the rest of the week. I spent the next three days in bed, unable to come to terms with what had happened. I deactivated my social media, and I considered quitting my job. After the weekend, I

began to pull myself out of the depression. I returned to school and removed all examples of the election from my classroom. I removed the 10x13 portrait of President Obama, and I eliminated all discussion of the election.

Upon reflection, I am deeply dissatisfied with how I reacted to the 2016 election. I avoided the controversy and shut down student inquiry about what happened. I missed an opportunity to show resilience and acceptance of defeat. This lesson would have benefitted most students in my class who did not want to see Donald Trump as president. I also am troubled by my balanced approach. My students sometimes referred to Donald Trump as a bully, and I insisted on giving both candidates neutral discussions. I am not sure how I could have handled that differently with first-grade students; however, I remain displeased with my overall approach and response to the election. (Stumbo, 2020)

The above vignette illustrated my complex connection to teaching Presidential Elections to early elementary students. The reflexive nature allowed me to be vulnerable and identify areas I ought to face to become a better educator. I cannot change my behaviors following the 2016 election, but through this study I can contribute to educational research so that myself and others will be prepared to better serve students. On a personal level, this study helps me resolve disappointment about my shortcomings as a teacher. My work to make amends is inspired by Hillary Clinton's 2008 quote, "…when you stumble, keep faith. And, when you're knocked down, get right back up and never listen to anyone who says you can't or shouldn't go on."

Chapter Roadmap

In this chapter, I introduce the study by describing the research problem and context surrounding teaching Presidential Elections in early elementary classrooms. This section established a foundation of why the problem deserved a thorough investigation using reasons

such as a research gap, missing elements of context in extant research, curricular standards, opinions regarding the appropriateness of the subject matter, and prevalent use of particular instructional materials. After thoroughly describing the problem, I narrowed my focus to present the purpose of the research and research questions to guide the inquiry. After establishing the purpose and questions, I outlined my methodological plan, participants, data to be collected, and review my theoretical framework. Finally, I ended the chapter by defining terms to be used throughout the study.

Research Problem and Context

In this section, I presented multiple domains that set up the context and research problem of this study. Each domain presents a piece of the problem at hand. This section also provided a brief introduction to the elements explored in the literature review of Chapter Two. The order of domains of the research problem allows for the demonstration of the interconnected relationship.

Presidential Elections in Early Elementary Spaces

Researchers have yet to empirically investigate teaching Presidential Elections in early elementary public-school classrooms. National, state, and local guidelines require teachers to integrate Presidential Elections into their curriculum. Historically, scholars have disagreed on the appropriateness of controversial issues, such as Presidential Elections, as subjects for elementary school children. Early elementary refers to public-school classrooms in grades one, two, and three. In the field of political science, seminal research investigated the development of political attitudes of public-school students. Hess and Torney (1967) wrote, "…school is a powerful socializing agent in the area of citizenship and political behavior…[and] much of the basic socialization of political attitudes has taken place by the end of the elementary school years" (p.114). Hess and Torney's (1967) work found that the image of a President laid a foundation of

their earliest connections to government and citizenship. Teachers exist in a position of power on how to include political understanding in their classrooms. The work of Robert Hess (1963) (and later work with Judith Torney) provided a solid basis for this study because it occurred during the highly competitive 1960 election between Kennedy and Nixon. That election year was one of three times when students participating in the *Scholastic News* election incorrectly predicted the Presidential Election winner. Students also incorrectly predicted the 1948 and 2016 elections (Sullivan, 2016). Research is needed that provides a better understanding of how public-school teachers teach Presidential Elections to early elementary students because evidence exists that the children begin understanding civic and democratic societies through first studying a tangible President.

National, State, and Local Frameworks

Teachers interact with a multi-tiered reality of expectations and standards when developing the curriculum and practices for their classrooms. Teachers must navigate national, state, and local frameworks; these frameworks add distinct and complementary components to civic education as a crucial part of early elementary education. While national standards do not exist in the United States, national educational organizations such as the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) set guidelines, best practices, and expectations for their disciplines. The NCSS (2013) encouraged teachers to develop lessons that understand democratic practices and institutions such as voting. One specific benchmark from the NCSS (2013) framework related to civic education and Presidential Elections stated "[elections] [e]xplain how a democracy relies on people's responsible participation, and draw implications for how individuals should participate" (p. 32). This call from the NCSS underscores the importance of early elementary

students' perceptions of a President, particularly during an election year when a transfer of power is possible.

The Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution left public education to the individual states. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2017), the federal government only contributes 8% of school funding. State governments control the curriculum development for their public schools. This study took place in Kentucky public-schools. The Kentucky Department of Education (2019b) outlined specific standards for early elementary grades to develop future citizens' understanding of political institutions, civic roles, democratic principles, and governmental processes. Again, these standards echo prior research on the importance of early elementary students' perceptions of Presidents. My professional familiarity with Kentucky led to its choice as a research context. Additionally, Kentucky offered a unique opportunity to focus on a state that demonstrated differing political support between the 2016 Presidential Election and 2019 Gubernatorial Election.

The Kentucky State Constitution shared educational decisions and funding with locally elected school boards (Kentucky Legislative Research Commission, 2016). At the local level, school boards and district leadership offer additional input about specific expectations. The local school district studied was named Adams County, a pseudonym. I chose this context because it was similar to an area where I previously taught. This county reflected the statewide political shift from the Presidential Election in 2016 to the Gubernatorial Election in 2019. Adams County Public Schools (ACPS) expected teachers to make civic lessons that connect to current events to develop citizenship skills and make decisions founded in information and reason for the common good of their democratic society (2020). The national, state, and local frameworks provide a strong rationale for teaching Presidential Elections in early elementary education. Prior research

from Hess and Torney (1967) illustrated the importance of a President's role in the minds of early elementary students. Participation in mock elections, shared readings, and open discussions connect framework expectations for civic education to Presidential Elections. Finally, teaching a Presidential Election is further underscored by the periodic nature of the event. Depending on their age, students will only experience one or two Presidential Elections in their elementary education time.

Appropriateness of a Controversial Topic

The integration of a Presidential Election into the classroom invited an inherently controversial topic in education. I further expanded upon controversial issues in the definition section of this chapter and Chapter Two. In short, I defined controversial issues as topics deeply important to students and citizens that have varying viewpoints. A Presidential Election holds great significance for students and society and offers at least two partisan choices where one candidate will win an election. Stakeholders such as educational organizations, governing bodies, philosophers, and researchers hold differing views on the appropriateness of including controversial issues in early elementary education. While the views differ, a consensus exists that controversial issues hold the potential to be beneficial to the educative process of early elementary education students. Chapter Two contains a complete discussion of controversial issues in education.

Inclusion of civic and controversial issues are imperatives for early elementary students, the National Council for Social Studies stated:

> Young learners do not become responsible, participating citizens automatically. They need to engage in frequent opportunities to make daily decisions about democratic concepts and principles that are respectful of the dignity and rights of individuals and the

> common good. They need to participate in learning experiences that involve core values of democracy, including freedom of speech and thought, equality of opportunity, justice, and diversity…Thoughtful and deliberate classroom engagement related to controversial or ethical issues provides opportunities for elementary students to practice critical thinking skills while examining multiple perspectives. (2017, Section C)

Controversial issues exist in early elementary education, and national guidelines advocate their inclusion in early elementary classrooms. However, what constitutes a controversial issue is not always clear. In the next chapter, I presented multiple viewpoints of controversial issues, and I synthesized a definition that guides my inquiry into controversial issues.

National, state, and local educational standards include the use of controversial issues in multiple content areas. As mentioned above, standards call for civic-minded education, including electoral topics, within social studies. Additionally, English Language Arts standards also make space for reading, listening, writing, and speaking about controversial issues. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 2012) advocated that "[s]tudents read a wide range of print… to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world…[and] to respond to the needs and demands of society" (p. 3). Additionally, the NCTE (2012) called for students to communicate their ideas through writing, speaking, and visuals to practice persuasive communication and exchange of ideas. At the state level, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE, 2019a) set forth a vision for English language arts that promote "[c]ommunication skills necessary to function in a complex and changing civilization…[and] [k]nowledge to make economic, social and political choices" (p. 6).

Teaching Presidential Elections in Early Elementary School

Traditionally, publications and resources for teaching Presidential Elections in elementary school have focused on contemporary materials, best practices, and strategies (Payne & Journell, 2019). For example, the National Council for Social Studies published a practitioner-oriented piece (Haas et al., 2008) that offered suggestions for picture book texts, activities, and modifications for early elementary education. Haas et al., (2008) warned, "[t]eachers should take care that classroom activities are nonpartisan—and are perceived that way by students, parents, and the principal" (p. 1). Chapter Two included a robust collection of other examples to illustrate existing publications and resources for early elementary teachers who teach Presidential Elections. Discussion in Chapter Two consisted of context with viewpoints and research regarding teaching controversial issues to early elementary students, including scholars who would argue against the quote by Haas et al. (2008) provided above.

Scholastic News as a Pedagogical Tool

Scholastic, Inc (2019), the parent company of Scholastic News, described *Scholastic News* as a resource that supports science and social studies content-based instruction while developing disciplinary literacy skills (e.g., Duke, 2000; Gabriel et al., 2012; Jordan, & Massad, 2014). As a student-centered consumable magazine, *Scholastic News* covered Presidential Elections since 1940 through an activity where students vote; the measure has been remarkably accurate correctly predicting 17 out of the past 20 elections (Toppo, 2016). *Scholastic News* produces magazines, digital materials, lesson plans, activities, and online platforms for teachers to use in their teaching (Scholastic, 2019). Scholastic, Inc. actively planned, developed, and produced materials for the 2020 Presidential Election. Early in 2020, *Scholastic News* covered the road to the White House, including the competitive Democratic Presidential Primary in

grades one, two, and three (Culligan, 2020; Rainsford, 2020; Scholastic, Inc. 2020a). Looking forward to the fall, *Scholastic News* promoted election-themed issues and supplementary materials for grades one, two, and three (Scholastic, Inc., 2020a; Scholastic, Inc., 2020b; Scholastic, Inc., 2020c).

Inadequacy of Research

Two similar gaps existed in academic research concerning teaching Presidential Elections, controversial issues, in early elementary education. The first gap included a lack of research as *Scholastic News* as an instructional tool. Scholastic, Inc. reported usage of their magazines in over 67% of American schools (Scholastic, 2019). Through a critical analysis of a dossier produced to showcase Scholastic, Inc.'s magazines, I discovered mixed results in the credibility of the research cited in the dossier (Scholastic, 2019). The critical analysis revealed the magazines support many best practices in literacy and content instruction. However, the analysis strongly indicated that an independent investigation of Scholastic, Inc. magazines is warranted. Chapter Two included more information about the critical analysis of Scholastic Inc.'s report. The second gap included a lack of empirical research for early elementary school concerning controversial issues, particularly Presidential Elections (Payne & Journell, 2019). These two gaps are related to this study as I investigate studying *Scholastic News* as an instructional tool for teaching the 2020 Presidential Elections.

Importance of the Topic

Presidential Elections in early elementary school are essential because of their rarity and how they capture the nation's attention. Students in early elementary school will be in grades five, six, or seven before they experience another Presidential Election. I was one of the lucky few who experienced two Presidential Elections in elementary school, and I remember how it

captured our attention even if we did understand its complexities. Presidential Elections capture the nation's attention in ways that other local, state, and national elections do not result in more voters participating on Election Day (Fair Vote, 2021). This study offered a look into grade levels that have not traditionally been studied for Presidential Elections. This is important because of the marginalization of social studies content at the elementary school grade level (Fitchett & Heafner, 2010). The increased emphasis on a Presidential Election could also offer opportunities for early elementary teachers to reacquaint themselves with social studies content and build lasting cross-disciplinary connections.

Summarizing the Research Problem

The preceding paragraphs introduced the importance of teaching Presidents, Presidential Elections, the frameworks that form the foundation for their inclusion in a public-school curriculum, the appropriateness of controversial issues in early elementary education, *and Scholastic News* instructional tool, and existing research gaps. These elements showcased essential contextual factors in the research problem, but they only formed segments of why the following research is worthy of investigation currently and in this space. From 2018-2020, Kentucky public-school budgets faced a series of austerity measures implemented from the state level that eliminated already depleted funding for instructional materials, including content-specific textbooks (Beshear & Hicks, 2021). This research was significant because it sought to move beyond existing literature regarding textbook instruction, trade book instruction, and picture book instruction (Barrow, 2016). This research offered insight into how student periodicals are used to teach a specific and highly consequential piece of content and understand their usefulness as an instructional tool for early elementary educators. Student periodicals offer low per-pupil costs, tangible take-home medium, evolving and timeliness of the format, and the

addition of supplemental digital and instructional activities present dimensions not traditionally presented alongside textbooks, trade books, or picture books.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this case study was to understand how three public-school teachers from one district taught the 2020 Presidential Election to early elementary students (grades 1-3) using *Scholastic News* magazines and related resources.

Research Questions

1. How are *Scholastic News* magazines, and resources, used by three public-school teachers to teach the 2020 Presidential Election to early elementary students (grades1-3)?
2. What pedagogical strengths and weaknesses do the three public-school teachers identify in the *Scholastic News* magazines and resources, and in what ways do they (or would they) modify them to fit their contexts?

Methods and Frameworks for Research

A systematic process guided the research to understand how teachers used and what teachers thought about *Scholastic News* as an instructional tool for the 2020 Presidential Election. This section introduced the theories that frame this study, participant selection, case study methodology, and data analysis plan. Chapter Three contained a more detailed description of this process.

Theoretical Framework

I begin here by describing the theoretical work guiding this study, each related to a research question. This discussion reviewed two social constructivist perspectives, one that informs learning at the personal level, and the second that informs learning within a classroom environment. Then, I discussed work by pragmatists that offer tools to understand the possibility

of multiple truths, the expertise of teachers' lived experiences, and the importance of theory concerning education.

Social Constructivist Framework. Social constructivism relates to my first research question regarding the use of instructional materials. I use two iterations of social constructivism using Tellings' (2001) concept of horizontal integration. Tellings (2001) defined integration as, "'…a broad concept referring to any combining, or any combination, of two or more 'things' such that the result is one 'thing'" (p. 278). The horizontal integration of social constructivism forms the foundation for my theoretical work. Theories combined with horizontal integration "are assumed to cover different domains, thus rendering a more complete picture…" (Tellings, 2001, p. 281). Rather than integrating two separate theories through horizontal integration, my theoretical foundation integrates distinct perspectives of theorists within the field, including Berger and Luckman (1966), Vygotsky (1978), and Wood et al. (1976). Lee and Hannifan (2016) supported an integration of social constructivism when they wrote, "[c]onstructivism is not a single, unified theory; rather, constructivism represents an epistemological perspective as to the nature and evolution of individual understanding" (p. 713). Chapter Three further explained each side of the horizontal integration by exploring the theorists and tools that inform my understanding and meaning-making.

Pragmatist Framework. Using pragmatism relates directly to my second research question, where I value each teachers' expertise to support their opinions about the quality of *Scholastic News* materials. Pragmatism in philosophy traces its origin to American theorists, and it is grounded in a relationship between knowing and existing in the world. I chose to focus on selected works by John Dewey and Barbara Thayer-Bacon that showcase pragmatist views that help understand the appropriateness of controversial issues in the classroom. For Dewey,

pragmatism in schools tightly linked to education's real-life impact and development of lifelong learners (1916/2008). Thayer-Bacon explained, "[f]or pragmatists, we determine how clear our concepts are by running them through a functional test, grounding them to experience" (2003, p. 50). These two pragmatist viewpoints supported my understanding of pragmatism as something that ought to be related to a workable solution in a given context. Hence, controversial issues are appropriate if they relate to students' lives and are rooted in their experiences. Chapter Three included a thorough discussion of each pragmatist's work.

Methodology

This study followed a single case study design with embedded units of analysis. In the following sub-sections, I summarized the methodological work, participant and site selection criteria, data and data collection, methods to better understand the case study, and the analysis plan, with a complete discussion in Chapter Three.

Single Case Study with Embedded Units of Analysis. Yin's (2018) and Thomas's (2016) case study methodology informed this study. The case study design here followed Yin's (2018) description of a single case study design with multiple analysis units. Yin (2018) described embedded case studies as different from multiple unique cases because of their sub-unit relationship to the whole. In this case study, the embedded sub-units are teachers in early elementary classrooms in grades one, two, and three; the single case is a public-school district where the teachers are teaching the 2020 Presidential Election using *Scholastic News* materials. Yin (2018) praised the embedded design to preserve the study's aim; however, he warned against an embedded study that "focuses only on the subunit level and fails to return to the larger unit of analysis, or the original case" (p.53). This study also considered Thomas's (2016) description of "nested" case studies to heed Yin's warning. Thomas's (2016) description forefronts the

question, “It is that fitting in that is of interest – how does the subunit connect with other subunits and the whole?” (p. 177). In this case study, the nested areas were the grade levels that structurally fit into the Adams County Public School District.

Participant and Sight Selection Criteria. The site selection context is a public-school district in Kentucky; by student population, Adams County falls within the top one-third of the 171 public school districts with over 3,000 students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Like the state, the area has shown interesting political results when comparing the 2016 Presidential Election and the 2019 Gubernatorial Election. In 2016 citizens of Adams County voted approximately 66% for Republican nominee Donald Trump, 30% for Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, and 4% for third-party candidates (Lundergan-Grimes, 2016). However, in 2019 during the gubernatorial election, citizens of Adams County voted approximately 52% for Democratic candidate Andy Beshear, 46% for incumbent Republican governor Matt Bevin, and 2% for third party candidates (Commonwealth of Kentucky, 2019). Three teacher participants were chosen based upon their grade level taught within the district. The first-grade teacher is an advanced-career teacher (more than 20 years of experience) nearing retirement with a bachelor’s and master’s degree in education. The second-grade teacher is a mid-career teacher (10-20 years of experience) with Rank I teacher certification in Kentucky, a master’s degree, plus an additional 30 graduate hours in a specialty area. The third-grade teacher is an early-career teacher (0-10 years of experience) with a bachelor’s degree and is working toward completing her master’s degree in education. The three participants were selected from a more extensive study based upon their educational credentials, years of experience, and grade taught. The three participants represented a diverse level of professional education, years of classroom experience, and each taught a grade-level targeted by the research questions.

Data and Data Collection. The primary data for this study consisted of one semi-structured interview for each participant; the method included expert interviewing techniques. The interviews focused on how teachers taught the 2020 election, using *Scholastic News*, and teachers' opinions of the quality of *Scholastic News* as an instructional tool. The interview occurred after the Presidential Inauguration in January of 2021. The study used an adaptation of Journell's (2011) teacher interview protocol with permission. Journell's case study involved being in high school classrooms throughout the 2008 election and interviewing teachers and students.

Beyond Triangulation: Creating a Three-Dimensional Picture. Triangulation is a method used in qualitative research to confirm or disconfirm findings through data convergence (Schwandt, 2015). Stake (2003) explained that triangulation is commonly associated with case study research to combat misconceptions. "Triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (Stake, 2003, p. 148). Triangulation can involve the use of various data sources, additional investigators, multiple theories, methodologies, or even interdisciplinary viewpoints (Janesick, 1994). Despite the imagery evoked by the name, triangulation is not dependent on three points; it is a reference to the nautical act of identifying place (Janesick, 1994).

Thomas (2016) encouraged researchers to move beyond traditional notions of triangulation and aim to create a three-dimensional picture of the case study. Thomas (2016) suggested the researcher, "…drill deep, using different methods and drilling from different directions" (p. 16). Thomas's (2016) suggested that "…looking from several directions, a more rounded, richer, more balanced picture of our subject is developed – we get a three-dimensional

view" (p. 5). A three-dimensional understanding was created by completing a separate qualitative media analysis, adding additional data, including student magazines, teacher guides, online teacher supports, and lesson plans, and refencing literature and theories while confirming and disconfirming data from the semi-structured interviews.

Analysis. This study's analysis followed a systematic process—iterative rounds of coding to identify themes in the teacher interviews. Analysis began with the qualitative data analysis of *Scholastic News* editions and resources. Next, guidelines for expert semi-structured interviews informed the analysis of interview transcripts. Finally, Yin's (2018) case study analysis combined the prior methods with triangulation to make a case level analysis. Qualitative data software NVivio was used to collect, code, and analyze interviews and additional data collected. Chapter Three contains a complete description of the analytic process.

Chapter Summary

This chapter began with an extensive quote from John Dewey (1990) about the important and necessary relationship between the university and schoolhouse. In the spirit of Dewey's quote, I offered a vignette about my life as a teacher before pursuing a doctoral degree in teacher education. After establishing my connection to the topic, I made a case for the research problem. In short, research has shown us that early elementary children tend to find an American president as a central figure and entry point into discussions of democracy and civics. National, state, and local policies and frameworks mandate teaching Presidential Elections, and cross-disciplinary standards support the topic as an essential controversial issue for the elementary classroom. Research into Presidential Elections has yet to focus on the early elementary grades of first, second, and third (ages 6-9). Instead, publications focused on best practices and activities. Since 1940, Scholastic, Inc. has been a leader in publishing educational material for students

specializing in Presidential Elections and national classroom mock elections. The research questions addressed the research problem by first seeking to understand Scholastic, Inc. magazines in the classroom; second seeking to understand teachers' opinions of those materials while teaching the 2020 Presidential Election.

In Chapter Two, I expanded upon issues addressed in the research problem. A rich synthesis of the existing work explored controversial issues in education, civic education, prior research into Presidential Elections, a history of Scholastic, Inc., a review of prior Presidential Election issues of *Scholastic News* publications since the year 2000, use of student periodicals and digital content in early elementary grades, and a critical analysis of the research behind *Scholastic News*. The literature review in Chapter Two further demonstrates the context of the research problem and support the direction of the research questions. Chapter Three included a thorough discussion of my conceptual framework, methodology, data collection plan, and data analysis plan. The research problem and research questions directly informed the elements in Chapter Three. Chapter Four focused on the analysis of the data in the case study. Finally, Chapter Five included the findings and a discussion of the findings with implications for future research, policy, and practice.

Definitions

To clarify the meaning of this study, I offer specialized definitions of key terms integral to the study:

- *Adams County Public Schools (ACPS)*—This pseudonym is used to protect the participating school district's identity and teachers. There is no Adams County in Kentucky; its name was chosen because "Adams" is one of the most common county names in other American states (Aubuchon, 2020). ACPS is one of 171 districts in

Kentucky; its student population places it in the top one-third of Kentucky districts by size, with around 3,000 students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

- *Controversial issues*—This definition results from my synthesis of others' work relating to educational research (Dewey 1933, 1935, 1990, 2008; Hess, 2005, 2009; Noddings & Brooks, 2017; Thayer-Bacon 1998, 2000, 2003, 2008. 2013; Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017; Zinn, 1980, 2011; Zinn & Macedo, 2004). A complete discussion can be found in Chapter 2 of this study. I define controversial issues as topics that are deeply important to students and citizens, with varying viewpoints. Controversial classroom issues depend upon teachers' guidance and should be used to further understand equity and social justice issues. Controversial issues are not specific to a particular academic content area or grade; they can be specific to particular subjects and disciplines or interdisciplinary. Controversial issues could be related to themes and topics in literature, theories in science such as evolution and intelligent design, or social studies coverage of current events and politics.
- *Early elementary education* refers to the United States' public elementary school grades first through third. This terminology has been repeatedly used in education research, across domains, to refer to grades one, two, and three when children are typically between ages six through nine (see Collins English Dictionary, n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c.; Englund et al., 2004; Renken et al., 1989; Sibley & Dearing, 2014).
- *Scholastic News*—This term and the abbreviation SN represents weekly periodical student magazines and corresponding instructional resources explicitly designed for grades K-5th. For this study, only first, second, and third-grade periodicals are examined. Scholastic, Inc., the largest producer of children's books and magazines in the nation

(Scholastic, 2019), created the materials used. SN magazines are reported to be used in over two-thirds of American schools (Scholastic, Inc., 2019). Scholastic, Inc. gave in-kind donations of magazines and resources to the teacher-participants and their students in this study. Scholastic relinquished all control over the publication of this study and any right to investigate the data collected.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Introduction

Chapter One established the research purpose to understand how three public-school teachers from one district taught the 2020 Presidential Election to early elementary students (grades 1-3) using *Scholastic News* magazines and related resources. The research questions related to the materials used and what the teachers thought about the materials while teaching. This research problem brings together ideas from controversial issues in education, civic education, educational policies, curricular materials, and current events. This review of literature began with an introduction to the identification of resources. Next, I synthesized information from controversial issues in education by bridging multiple researchers and philosophers while situating controversial issues within the case study's current national, state, and local policies. The second broad topic for the review of literature included a discussion of civic education in regards to the importance of American Presidents in the conceptual understanding of the American system of government, the situated national, state, and local policies influencing civic education for the context of this case study, and social studies research focusing on teaching Presidential Elections. The final broad topic for review of literature focused on the work of Scholastic, Inc.'s student magazines and materials created for Presidential Elections between 2000 and 2016. These topics are instrumental in understanding the controversial issues inherent in teaching a Presidential Election and the materials teachers might employ while navigating a potentially polarizing topic.

Literature Review Process

Construction of this literature review began with developing the research problem and research focus discussed in Chapter One. This study focuses on how early elementary public-

school teachers used *Scholastic News* materials to teach the 2020 United States Presidential Election. Journell (2011) was the first research to focus on Presidential Elections in public schools while also considering research from controversial issues in education. To complete the literature review, I began by investigating resources cited in the Journell article and subsequent articles inspired by Journell's (2011) work. I identified critical resources regarding teaching Presidential Elections, civic education, and controversial issues in education from these works. I supplemented the references from the Journell-related works using the search terms "controversial issues and elementary education," "Presidential Elections and elementary education," and "civic education and elementary education." In addition to those resources, I located and identified guidelines and standards at the national, state, and local levels for civic education and teaching controversial issues in early elementary school. The final source of literature includes history and synthesis of Presidential Election issues of *Scholastic News* using teacher editions available through Ebsco online repositories. The teacher editions of *Scholastic News*, grades one through three, were cataloged as 227 pages of searchable PDF files and analyzed using NVivo qualitative software.

Controversial Issues in Education

The definition of *controversial issues* is controversial. Chapter One provided the working definition of controversial issues in this research study; see defined terms. This section reviewed works from the past ten to fifteen years that advanced the conversation on controversial educational research issues. I summarized relevant features from each contemporary work and connect the work's contribution to the research problem or research questions in the Conceptual Framework within Chapter Three. Aside from contemporary work, I included a discussion from the discipline of Philosophy for Children (P4C) and its relationship to the research problem or

research questions. I synthesized the works in controversial issues and P4C to identify connections and gaps relevant to this study. Following controversial issue research, I focused on pre-service teacher textbooks, content standards, and policies related to controversial issues. Lastly, I transitioned to the next section by narrowing the focus of controversial issues to civic education in social studies.

A Framework for Controversial Issues

Diana Hess is a revered contemporary scholar with numerous publications regarding controversial issues in classrooms. In 2005 Hess articulated a four-part framework to understand how teachers approached controversial issues in the classroom. The first approach was denial, and teachers who represented this approach "deny that an issue is actually controversial" (p. 48). In her example, Hess referred to a teacher who viewed the death penalty as morally wrong and denied that it met the standard of a controversial issue. The second approach was a privilege, and in this approach, teachers "believe a topic is controversial, but want to privilege a particular perspective in their teaching" (p. 48). In her example, Hess described a teacher in conflict over a desire to teach for social justice but feeling guilty of indoctrination. The third approach was avoidance, and teachers who represented avoidance "believe a topic is a controversial issue, [but] they do not…include it in their curricula" (p.48). In her example, Hess described a group of teachers who purposefully avoided Roe v. Wade when discussing landmark Supreme Court cases. Teachers' reasons ranged from fear from community backlash to religious doctrine opposing abortion to staunch political support for abortion rights. Each teacher, regardless of ideology, avoided the topic. The final approach was balanced, and teachers who represented balance applied a standard to assess if an issue is controversial and taught it without favor to either side. Hess warned that this approach could become too comfortable and lead teachers to

choose controversial token issues with little relevance. I used Hess's definitions, terms, and framework to conceptualize my understanding of controversial issues' essential elements. The four-part framework influenced at least one interview protocol question to be discussed in Chapter Three.

Hess's (2009) work focused on controversial political issues, and she defined them as "authentic questions about the kinds of public policies that should be adopted to address public problems" (p. 5). In the 2009 book, Hess discussed four beliefs she held regarding the relevance of controversy in the classroom. First, Hess believed that in a democracy, there was value in discussion between people with contrasting views. Second, Hess described that people in the United States were trending away from participating in political discussions with different views. Third, Hess believed that schools held a strong potential to support students in productive discussions and debates with those who hold separate views. Fourth, Hess acknowledged the barriers but pointed to ways in which teachers could navigate and negotiate barriers to provide rich discussion opportunities for students regarding controversial issues. While the research setting focused on middle and high school contexts, her definition and conceptualization of controversial issues hold relevance for elementary students.

Hess advanced the conversation beyond framing how teachers approach controversial issues (2005) and beyond identified beliefs about the value of integrating controversial issues into classroom discussion (2009). Hess (2018) explicitly warned of students' consequences when schools and teachers preclude controversial issues from being discussed in school. Hess believed that schools that avoided or banned controversial issues in the classroom sent messages that promoted student misconceptions. These misconceptions included messages that controversial issues are either not important for student learning or detrimental to student learning. Hess

clearly stated that controversial issues have a valid place in schools and played a vital role in student development and growth. Hess wrote, "[t]he stakes, after all, are exceptionally high: empowering young Americans to become active participants—and to coexist peacefully—in a pluralistic society brimming with opposing views" (2018, p. 306). The sense of urgency in Hess's warning is related to both the research problem and research questions in Chapter One. This chapter included additional civic works in a later section.

Controversial Issues' Impact on Critical Thinking and Morality

Noddings and Brooks (2017) described teaching controversial issues as inextricably linked to critical thinking, moral commitment, and caring in the classroom. While they did not offer a simplified definition of what constituted a controversial issue, they identified three types of controversial issues: including issues that have more than one morally defendable position, issues that have no morally defendable positions, and issues that hold ambiguity regarding moral defenses. For issues with more than one defendable position, Noddings and Brooks suggested teachers should maintain neutrality and allow students to discuss, think critically, and consider opposing views. For issues with no morally defensible position, such as racism, teachers should never encourage a defense. Regarding the third type of issue, Noddings and Brooks believed issues with ambiguity offered value in some situations, such as breaking the law with civil disobedience. Noddings and Brooks encouraged teachers to let students work through moral concerns, but if students probed a teacher for their opinion, they should qualify it as not the only correct opinion. Lastly, Noddings and Brooks suggested that teachers should ultimately inform students if a public or scientific consensus has emerged, such as evolution or climate change, while teachers may encourage diverse thought and multiple viewpoints. The authors juxtaposed

each type of controversial issue with a recommendation for teacher scaffolding and student growth encouragement.

Noddings and Brooks (2017) identified student choice as a key benefit to teaching controversial issues; they identified choice with developing critical thinking and care for one another in a participatory democratic setting. Noddings and Brooks (2017) described critical thinking as an essential part of using controversial classroom issues by encouraging students to think earnestly about moral and political issues while also underscoring their role as members in a participatory democracy. Noddings and Brooks explained that critical thinking developed through teaching controversial issues; students developed the ability to understand and reason. Noddings and Brooks (2017) explained, "[i]f we are serious about developing reason, feeling, and character we should broaden the curriculum by including…inclusive critical discussion of social, political, and moral life" (p. 159).

Like Noddings and Brooks (2017), American historian Howard Zinn understood controversial issues as a matter of morality. Zinn saw controversial issues as a form of social justice. Zinn is perhaps best remembered for his best-selling book, *A People's History of the United States* (1980). Zinn's work explained historical events from the view of the oppressed. Later in life, Zinn published *A Young People's History of the United States* (2011), and in the introduction, he wrote, "I am not worried about disillusioning young people by pointing to the flaws in the traditional heroes. We should be able to tell the truth about people whom we have been taught to look upon as heroes, but who really do not deserve that admiration" (p. xi). He advocated for instruction that challenged students and teachers to take on controversial issues. Zinn wrote, "… teachers often think they must avoid judgments of right and wrong because…those are matters of subjective opinions…but…questions of right and wrong and

justice are exactly the questions that should be raised… (Zinn & Macedo, 2004, p. 191). Zinn's work characterized controversial issues as a crucial part of the equity in education.

Exploring Alternative Practices for Including Controversial Issues

A key feature in the research problem identified a gap regarding teaching controversial issues to early elementary students in social studies education identified by Bolgartz (2005), Hess (2009), Hess & McAvoy (2015), Noddings and Brooks (2017), and Parker (2012). This research gap suggested that little research attended to debate and discussion of controversial and contentious issues within early elementary classrooms. However, I believe the identified gap is partially the result of siloed academic disciplines lacking discussion between teacher education and educational philosophy. Philosophy for Children (P4C), a program developed at Montclair State University, brought the world of philosophy into elementary classrooms to consider, discuss, and debate such questions since the 1970s (Pritchard, 2018).

The Sprague Library at Montclair State University maintains a P4C collection that includes theoretical work, curricular work, and key authors contributing to the field. These authors include Phil Cam, Matthew Lipman, David Kennedy, Gareth Matthews, and Ann Margaret Sharp; a simple review of the works calling for a gap in elementary education regarding controversial issues failed to cite a single work by these significant authors (Bolgartz, 2005; Hess, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Noddings & Brooks, 2017; Parker, 2012; Payne & Journell, 2019). Sharp and Reed described P4C as "…a way that children can appropriate [philosophy] for themselves so as to reason well in a self-correcting manner…[and] to develop the ability to think well for themselves about matters of importance…" (1992, p. xiii). P4C originated with Matthew Lipman's philosophical novel *Harry Stottlemeir's Discovery* (1969); this work, and a later developed teacher's manual, became the central focus of the P4C teacher

education program. Later works focused more specifically on grades K-2 and 3-4 at the elementary level. The movement eventually led to a graduate program at Montclair State University (then college) in 1980. The program prepared students with undergraduate degrees in philosophy with teaching credentials (Sharp & Reed, 1992). What began in 1980 continued to grow; Montclair State University offers multiple licensure pathways for pre-service teachers and maintains a department of Educational Foundations that includes the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (Montclair State University, 2020).

To conceptualize P4C as a theory, I included exploration of Matthew Lipman's *Harry Stottlemeir's Discovery* (1969). The story focused on a child, Harry, whose name bore an intentional relationship to Aristotle, considered the founder of Western philosophical logic (Lipman, 1969; Lipman, 1992a; Smith, 2019). Lipman (1992a) wrote his book as a way to encourage the development of skillful thinking. Lipman believed, [y]oungsters and philosophy are natural allies, for both begin in wonder" (1992a, p. 5). Lipman recalled having no formal training in writing children's literature or education, but he admitted that what he knew of education was influenced by the work of John Dewey. In addition to Dewey, Lipman cited pragmatist Charles Peirce and social constructivist Lev Vygotsky as integral influences in his notion of a *community of learners* (Lipman, 1996). *Harry Stottlemeir's Discovery* (1969) purposefully avoided naming well-known philosophers and terminology that inspired its creation. Lipman rationalized that decision because he saw such formal tasks as lacking utility and impeding children on their way to thinking for themselves. Lipman believed that integrating content with philosophy held value for teachers. Lipman wrote that teachers "…might seek to show how skills of logic have been employed in any history so as to provide a pivot that will make possible the deployment of energies in a new direction…" (1992b, p. 10). This statement

offered a connection between the research gap regarding controversial issues in social studies education and P4C.

Whereas Matthew Lipman focused on curricular development for P4C, Gareth Matthews' work provided insight into the natural connections between the thoughts of children and philosophy (Pritchard, 1996). Matthews' (1980) work connecting philosophy to children evolved from his desire to make his introductory college philosophy courses more approachable and engaging. Throughout *Philosophy and the Young Child*, Matthews provided examples of dialogues with children that reflected sophisticated philosophical concepts. Matthews connected the philosophical idea of *the problem of induction* to puzzling instances for children, such as children who wonder if they can ever know if they are awake or dreaming. Matthews described the connection of children and philosophy as a powerful way to integrate content areas with an example of his son, who wondered why he saw one image with two eyes. Matthews wrote, "…[he] mixes optics, neurophysiology, psychology, and philosophy" (1980, p. 9). Matthews connected playful dialogues about the nature of objects and their functions to work by Aristotle and Plato. Matthews warned that not playing such games, dismissing children's questions, allowed detriment to the parents' and teachers' lives, the relationship between children and caregivers, and dampened children's further inquiry. Matthews keenly noted that children's literature focused on the connection between children and philosophy. Matthews identified multiple works by L. Frank Baum (1900; 1907), such as *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Ozma of Oz*, as American examples of philosophy woven into literature for children. Finally, Matthews explained that philosophy with young children provided a symbiotic relationship where both the adult and the child learn from their strengths and questions.

Situating Controversial Issues in U.S. Elementary Schools

Zimmerman and Robertson's (2017) work viewed controversial issues in a more essentialized fashion; they explained, "[t]o merit discussion in the classroom, we argue, [a controversial] issue must be the subject of conflict among knowledgeable persons, and it must matter, deeply, to members of the general public" (p. 2). Zimmerman and Robertson (2017) made a clear case for teaching controversial issues to young learners. However, they qualified the definition of controversial issues more explicitly than Noddings and Brooks (2017). Zimmerman and Robertson contended that teachers must avoid phony controversies that argue observable facts in the present era of political commentary, alternative facts, and endless news cycles. Teachers must present scientific facts and not fall into the trap of debating the facts. Zimmerman and Robertson (2017) wrote, "…teachers must model a style of 'debate' different from what their students experience in other parts of our coarse and polarized political culture" (p. 113). Zimmerman and Robertson argued that rhetorical commitments to teaching civics, democratic norms, and controversial issues have not become commonplace in most classrooms.

Hess (2005) referred to the internal conflict teachers face in sharing political beliefs as *a disclosure dilemma,* and she noted that not all teachers experience it in the same way, if at all. This disclosure dilemma influenced Hess's research on understanding teacher behaviors, leading to her four-part framework discussed above. The disclosure dilemma carried the possibility of professional and social sanctions. While not referencing the disclosure dilemma specifically, Zimmerman and Robertson (2017) identified multiple disclosure barriers associated with teaching controversial issues. The first challenge was the professional (or lack of professional) status of American teachers. Zimmerman and Robertson argue that teachers often lack appropriate preparation to facilitate controversial issues in the classroom from their teacher

education program. Zimmerman and Robertson (2017) also noted that teachers often lacked access to legal protections from retaliation for teaching controversial issues in the classroom. Additionally, many teachers simply lack the time in their schedule to meaningfully integrate controversial issues, which remain dominated by high-stakes testing mandates and rigid curricular standards.

Teachers who might wish to engage in controversial issues or disclose their beliefs face possible legal peril. The challenge of teaching controversial issues in the classroom is complicated with school board policies regulating the teaching of controversial issues. Zimmerman and Robertson (2017) surveyed 45 school districts for such policies and believe that such policies "are not atypical" (p. 79). Zimmerman and Robertson make note that while most policies do offer tentative protections for teachers, many of the policies they analyzed varied in who has the authority to decide whether a particularly controversial issue is permissible to teach. This uncertainty became especially challenging in light of 2018 current events in Texas, where an elementary art teacher faced dismissal for including a picture of her same-sex fiancé at the beginning of the year introductory PowerPoint. The teacher's school district claimed the photo violated their controversial issues policy because the teacher did not inform students that some people consider same-sex marriage immoral. The teacher was eventually brought back to work in a high school setting, but recently the school district settled out of court without admitting wrongdoing (Andu, 2020; Napoli, 2018; Playtoff, 2018). The Texas teacher's case illustrated the punitive actions that inhibit the teaching of controversial issues, but the case was equally illustrative of the power of struggle against such a system. The teacher continued to be employed, received a monetary settlement, and the school district enacted a fairness doctrine to prohibit discrimination against LGBT-Q employees and students. The importance of

controversial issues illustrated the role teacher education programs and teacher professional organizations play in raising awareness, defending instructional decisions, and advocating for co-constructed policy that weighs boards of education's interests with teachers' autonomy.

Pre-service teacher textbooks advocated for the inclusion of controversial issues in elementary classrooms. Controversial issues in classrooms allow students to participate productively in disagreements to resolve conflict peacefully and productively. Parker (2012) wrote with emphasis, "[i]t is the clear obligation of schools to promote the full and free study and deliberation of controversial issues and to foster an appreciation of the role of controversy as an instrument of progress in a democracy" (p. 214). The inclusion of controversial issues provided a modeling opportunity for the teacher to promote tolerance to differing opinions, become evaluators of information, and seek to understand multiple viewpoints. As contentious situations arise in the school or class, students benefit from discussing controversial issues by applying what they have learned through the resolution of disagreements.

Policies and Standards Regarding Controversial Issues in Elementary Schools

In Chapter One, I started a conversation that argued part of the appropriateness of teaching controversial issues in early elementary school existed alongside layers of policies and standards that mandated the inclusion of controversial issues across the national, state, and local policies and standards. In the following paragraphs, I presented the policies that influenced this study while linking them to the research problem outlined in Chapter One.

The Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution limited the role the federal government holds in public-education (U. S. Department of Education, 2017). I conducted a web-based search used the U.S. Department of Education’s internal search engine with the terms “controversial issues.” Documents and artifacts identified in the search focused on legal

questions and public remarks by politically appointed Secretaries of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The literature review from the U.S. Department of Education did not find relevant guidance on teaching controversial issues in elementary education.

On the national level, guidance emanated from content-focused organizations across multiple levels of education. The inclusion of these national organizations reflects the sentiment expressed in the John Dewey (1990) quote at the beginning of Chapter One; educational issues require collaboration between the work in schools and the research in universities. An investigation of one national organization from mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies provided an interdisciplinary view of policies and standards related to the definition of controversial issues. The four organizations, chosen based upon their widespread membership of practitioner teachers and educational researchers, included the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), the National Science Teaching Association (NSTA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). The first two organizations minimally addressed controversial issues in their standards. The NCTM did not explicitly address controversial issues in their standards for Pre-K through 12th-grade mathematics instruction (NCTM, 2000). NCTM called for the use of communication, reasoning, proof, and problem-solving by rooting communication in "…reflection, refinement, discussion, and amendment" across fields of study (2020, p. 4). The NSTA Next Generation Science Standards (2013) also emphasized communication and interdisciplinary work to engage in controversial issues. Early elementary standards included expectations for "planning and carrying out investigations, analyzing and interpreting data, constructing explanations and designing solutions, engaging in argument from evidence, and obtaining,

evaluating, and communicating information…to demonstrate understanding of the core ideas" (NSTA, 2013, p. 102).

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 2012) published standards to guide English Language Arts instruction at all schooling levels. NCTE standards expressed a need for students reading and comprehending diverse texts and communication skills to become a strong member of a democratic society. The NCTE (2012) standards described, "[t]he vision guiding these standards is that all students must have the opportunities and resources to develop the language skills they need to pursue life's goals and to participate fully as informed, productive members of society" (p. 3). Students must receive exposure to evolving forms of literacy through a myriad of ideas including text, listening, ideas, and visual media to accomplish this vision. The NCTE identified students' preparation to engage in critical thinking and productive discourse around literacy as essential elements in building an equitable, more inclusive future that also protected and celebrated American society's democratic ideals. The NCTE supported the standards with vignettes describing how they might be incorporated. Elementary Vignette Three presented a scenario for incorporating controversial issues into an elementary classroom through literacy. In the vignette, students use literacy to investigate local water pollution through books, electronic media, and interviewing community stakeholders to create an informative presentation for their class. The National Council for the Social Studies (2013) described open discussion of controversial issues as ethical imperatives for the development of "…equal respect to all [discussion] participants and the possibility of reaching consensus through listening and negotiation" (p. 112). The NCSS recognized the importance of questioning by students as they build an understanding of their world. The NCSS suggested that teachers of all young students support their questions using their framework by leveraging resources focused on "history,

politics, and government" (p.84). An important tool for supporting student questions and inquiry included classroom discussions synthesized with research-based conclusions.

At the state level in Kentucky, standards resemble national guidelines and policies from guiding organizations such as the NCTM, NCSS, NCTE, and the NSTA. Authors of Kentucky's standards created subject-based expectations for specific grade levels. They are collectively known as Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) and are managed and published by the Kentucky Department of Education, a part of Kentucky's executive branch (Kentucky Legislative Research Commission, 2016). While the standards are subject-based, the authors included interdisciplinary relationships that established cross-cutting ideas essential to students' development. Many KAS referenced student development points of view and communication regarding controversial issues and discussions of opinions and ideas. KAS Technology standards required that early elementary students should access "…technology for communicating and collaborating with others and in developing ideas and opinions" (Kentucky Department of Education, 2015, p. 162). KAS for career studies required early elementary students to participate in discussions to develop their conceptualization around ideas and explain their ideas in return (Kentucky Department of Education, 2019a). The KAS social studies standards identified that the standards to support early elementary students to "use the inquiry practices of questioning, investigating, using evidence and communicating conclusions to understand themselves, the cultures around them" (Kentucky Department of Education, 2019c, p. 25). Lastly, the KAS for reading and writing focused on a guiding principle that "[s]tudents will compose arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence" (Kentucky Department of Education, 2019b, p. 37).

The above mentioned national and state guidelines and standards exist within a state and local policy reality governing teaching controversial issues. Earlier in the chapter, such policies were discussed in light of research from Zimmerman and Robertson (2017) concerning a Texas teacher. Within Kentucky, the Educational Professional Standards Board (EPSB) regulated policies at the state level regarding teaching controversial topics. This board has sole authority to issue, revoke, renew, or not renew an educator's professional licensure and ability to teach (Educational Professional Standards Board, 2017). Within the EPSB, the Division of Educator Ethics adjudicated complaints regarding violations of policies and ethics:

> The Division of Educator Ethics works closely with school district administrators, parents, social service agencies, law enforcement agencies, state and federal prosecutors, and the disciplinary units of other states to protect the children in Kentucky public schools and assist in ensuring that educators maintain the dignity and integrity of the profession. (Educational Professional Standards Board, 2017, para. 1)

The EPSB managed around 300 cases of educator misconduct and 250 cases regarding teachers' character and fitness yearly. Complaints regarding a controversial issue would be handled at the district level and referred to the EPSB related to the state's Code of Ethics (Educational Professional Standards Board, 2018). At the local level, the Adams County Board of Education enacted a policy regarding controversial issues that allowed for teachers to use professional judgment "in the selection and use of materials and discussions of issues in their classroom" ("Adams County Public Schools," 1991). The policy required that controversial issues be scholarly, appropriate, and non-disruptive to students. Teachers may confer with a principal if they hold questions about a topic or material. Due to IRB regulations, a link to the policy would

disclose the participants. However, in Appendix A of this study, a de-identified copy of the policy is provided.

Civic Education

Civic education, particularly democratic processes and elections, are a subset of controversial issues. Teaching and studying democracy, civic participation, and elections meet the definition of controversial issues guiding this study, as they are topics that are deeply important to students and citizens, with varying viewpoints. In the following sub-sections, I connect political science research regarding young students, related policies and standards mandating the inclusion of civic education, social studies research regarding teaching the 2008 Presidential Election, subsequent social studies research regarding the 2016 Presidential Election, and finish with a discussion of research and publications targeted to elementary school teachers regarding Presidential Elections. Libresco and Baltanic (2016) advocated for relating all issues to social studies. By refocusing interdisciplinary issues as social studies and civics the authors, "…work toward that goal of fostering citizens of a democracy who will seek out and discuss controversial issues throughout their school careers and beyond" (Libresco & Balantic, 2016, p.14). To accomplish that goal, Libresco and Balantic (2016) worked on ways students could obtain reliable information about discussion-based issues where a teacher facilitates the discussion and contributes to collaboration.

Developing Political Attitudes in Early Elementary Students

The work of Robert Hess and Judith Torney (2006), introduced in Chapter One, provided a foundational understanding of how students developed their political mindsets. Hess and Torney's work focused on elementary school children's political socialization by "understanding how the individual child is inducted and oriented into the complex institutions and systems of a

society" (2006, p. 8). Earlier work by Hess and Easton (1960) established that the President as a figure is an important introduction into political socialization that evolved across years over in elementary school. Hess and Torney described four phases of early political involvement for elementary students: identifying political objects, conceptualizing the political system, subjective involvement with political objects, and overt political activity. Hess and Torney found that for early elementary students, the conceptualization of government and politics focused on concrete people; they wrote, "[i]n short, to the child, the government is a [person] who lives in Washington, while Congress is a lot of [people[1]] who help the President" (2006, p. 32). Student participants overwhelmingly perceived the President as the source of lawmaking (over 66% through third grade) and running the country (85% through third grade).

Hess and Torney (2006) found the public-school to likely be the chief agent of *political socialization* in the United States. Socialization occurred through instructional practices, rituals, and imagery. Their research identified high rates of early elementary classrooms with the United States flag on permanent display, devoted daily instructional time to reciting *The Pledge of Allegiance,* and singing a patriotic song. Research notes also documented a majority of classrooms with pictures of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and national monuments or symbols. Hess and Torney noted that the teacher serves as a prominent socializing agent by the teacher's decision to (or not to) include political topics and imagery in the classroom. Hess and Torney wrote that "…the school is a powerful socializing agent in the area of citizenship and political behavior [and]…that much of the basic socialization of political attitudes has taken

[1] I have replaced the gendered words of man and men in this quote. When Hess and Torney wrote their book 64 women had been elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and ten women to the U.S. Senate since 1917 (United States House of Representatives, 2020; United States Senate 2020).

place before the end of the elementary school years" (2006, p. 114). Hess and Torney's (2006) work influenced research that added more nuance to the socialization process (Abraham, 1982; identified recent changes in elementary students' conceptualization of Presidents and their characteristics (Rivers et al., 2018), and the shifting role the media plays alongside and within schools regarding political socialization (Cole, 1981).

Policies and Standards Regarding Civic Education in Elementary Schools

In addition to the policies and guidelines referenced in the earlier section of this chapter regarding controversial issues, this section focused on national, state, and local standards, policies, and guidelines concerned with civic education, particularly in early elementary grades. These references came from the NCSS, the Kentucky Department of Education, and Adams County Public Schools. Items cited from Adams County Public Schools located in Appendix A are de-identified in a manner are congruent with the confidentiality requirements of the participant school district.

Guidance from the NCSS (2013) illustrated the importance of civic education for all students in developing future citizens who will participate and safeguard American democracy. The NCSS explained, "[c]ivics enables students not only to study how others participate, but also to practice participating and taking informed action themselves" (2013, p. 31). The NCSS C3 Framework described expectations for early elementary students, including describing people's roles in authority, understanding government functions, comparing differing points of view, and describing ways citizens participate in decision-making through voting. At the state level, Kentucky prescribed specific civics standards for each grade level (Kentucky Department of Education, 2019c). First-grade students are expected to understand and describe citizens' rights and responsibilities, democratic principles, and identify leaders and their responsibilities. In

second-grade, Kentucky students must understand connections between government and justice, describe the importance of civic participation, and understand how civic participation changed society. In third-grade, Kentucky students need to make connections between the American government system and other international governments. Additionally, third graders should make connections between government, problem-solving, and law enforcement. At the local level, Adams County Public Schools must enact the KAS for social studies. However, ACPS expressed specific expectations for social studies programs in their district ("Adams County Public Schools," 2020a). ACPS required that the learning climate and instruction foster students' civic engagement, dispositions, and mindfulness. ACPS mandated that instructional practices "…[focus] topics on authentic real world issues and public policy regarding cultures and societies, economics, geography, historical perspective, government & civics" (2020, p. 4).

Teaching Controversial Presidential Elections

The previous sections of this chapter have included work on controversial issues in education, civic education, and the vital role the President plays in the conceptual understanding of government for elementary students. In the following subsections, I described research that investigated two controversial Presidential Elections.

Research into the Presidential Election of 2008. Journell (2011) is a foundational research study for this dissertation. This article established an important link between Presidential Elections and controversial issues in education. Journell (2011) used case study methodology to investigate six high school teachers within three public-schools during the 2008 presidential election. Field notes gathered through participant observation formed the primary data source for the project. Secondary data sources included classroom artifacts and semi-structured interviews of teachers and students. Findings from the study suggested that the 2008

election, notable for Barack Obama's race and misattributed religion, and Sarah Palin's gender, made including the election in class discussions and disclosing their candidate preference more complicated for teachers.

Journell's (2011) work identified teacher identity pieces in the case descriptions, chart, and interview data used to triangulate the field notes. Journell's research took place in high school social studies classrooms with no explicit connections to the ongoing 2008 Presidential Election. Journell wrote, "[i]t is important to note that since the presidential election was not part of the formal curriculum at any of the three schools, the amount of emphasis placed on the election varied considerably from teacher to teacher (Journell, 2011, p. 364). Journell found that Barrack Obama's race and Sarah Palin's gender did not receive formal recognition as controversial issues, but their existence drove teacher and student dialogue regarding the election. Additionally, teachers varied on their perceived understanding and willingness to discuss Barrack Obama's religion and related conspiracy theories. Journell underscored the critical role that teachers hold in facilitating or hindering classroom discussions regarding Presidential Elections. Journell called for further research into ways teachers approach Presidential Elections and the relationship of those elections to issues of race, gender, religion, and other forms of diversity.

Research into the Presidential Election of 2016. Three research studies extended Journell's (2011) work to the Presidential Election in 2016 in different ways (Anderson & Zyhowski, 2018; Dunn et al., 2019; Payne & Journell, 2019). Anderson and Zyhowski (2018) created a study informed by Journell's (2011) work regarding the 2008 election to address a gap in the research regarding middle school students and Presidential Elections. Like Journell (2011), they used a case study design; however, they focused on two midwestern eighth-grade public-

school teachers. Anderson and Zyhowski (2018) worked alongside the teachers before the school year started to plan coverage of the upcoming election, including eight teaching observations. Anderson and Zyhowski (2018) planned analysis using the Hess (2005) controversial issues framework. Like Journell's (2011) work, Anderson and Zyhowski (2018) studied teachers who taught classes that did not have a standards-based reason to cover the 2016 election. The two participants taught a United States history course focused on 1754-1898. The study described emotional and traumatic situations students and teachers faced throughout the Presidential Election of 2016. The study's findings reinforced that teachers are influential for their students' civic awareness and engagement levels. Additionally, the authors concluded by insisting on future research into "[h]ow teachers do and should operate during exigent political events…" (Anderson & Zyhowski, 2018, p. 110).

In a separate article influenced by Journell (2011), Sondel, Dunn, and Baggett (2019) used survey data to understand teachers' experiences during and after the 2016 election. All responses to the survey were open-ended, and participants maintained their confidentiality using Qualtrix for responses. The authors, Dunn et al. (2019), arranged the data into narrative segments and an informational table that described local to national concerns and impacts. The findings identified participants' conflictions around teacher neutrality and the oppressive role of local administration enforcing vague controversial issue policies. The authors argued that teachers should root their work regarding controversial issues in their theoretical understanding and "…capitalize on the agency they *do* have in their pedagogical decision making" (Dunn et al., 2019, p. 467). This article put forth the model of pedagogy of political trauma, a concept that, "…[attends] to students' emotions, [emphasizes] civic knowledge; and [develops] students' critical consciousness and activism" (p. 175).

Like the Journell (2011) piece, Payne and Journell (2019) is a case study, but this time it focused on one female elementary school teacher and her experience navigating before and after the 2016 Presidential Election. The case focused on a white teacher who did not remain neutral to the 2016 election. The teacher committed herself to provide a nurturing environment for the class, predominantly populated by students of color. The study's findings identified three ways that elementary teachers could teach controversial and contentious political matters while limiting inflicted trauma. The research relied heavily on an affiliated university school and focused exclusively on fifth-grade students in conversations. Findings from the study offered a rationale for studying Presidential Elections in elementary school classrooms. The authors shared a concern that pre-service teacher programs did not adequately prepare teacher candidates for politically charged topics like a Presidential Election. Payne and Journell wrote, "[u]nfortunately, research suggests that most pre-service teachers, and elementary pre-service teachers specifically, are not politically aware and lack the dispositions necessary to increase their political knowledge [citations removed]" (Payne & Journell, 2019, p. 81). Additionally, Payne and Journell recognized their research context's uniqueness and identified a future research implication to study teaching Presidential elections in varied political contexts beyond their liberally characterized laboratory school.

Teaching Presidential Elections in Elementary Classrooms

Research into teaching Presidential Elections typically centered on middle and high school contexts; Payne and Journell (2019) noted that their research was unique, focusing on elementary students. Additionally, work focused on early elementary classrooms, and Presidential Elections focused on theoretical arguments and pedagogical suggestions. Haas, Hatcher, and Sundal (1988) suggested that early elementary teachers focus on developing

classroom polls, civic vocabulary, majority rule impacts, collecting quality information about ideas and people, and procedures used for voting. Haas, Hatcher, and Sunal updated their work in 2008 to include opinion surveys, conceptualizing democracy, the role of an American President, ways to learn about candidates, identifying persuasive slogans, Presidential debates, and elements of fair voting and elections. However, the authors warned, "[t]eachers should take care that classroom activities are nonpartisan—and are perceived that way by students, parents, and the principal" (Hass et al., 2008, p. 1).

The theme of classroom mock elections as a best practice for early elementary students appeared in multiple works. Parker (2012) included classroom voting and mock elections as one of his six dimensions of democratic citizenship education. Parker described local, state, and national elections as opportunities for a mock classroom election. Parker recommended that early elementary students construct representative elements of real elections such as polling booths, registration tables, and ballots. Parker explained, "…all of the learning activities that lead up to [the mock election] prepare children for the voting: namely, deliberation, press conferences, speech writing, research on candidate positions, and so forth" (2012, p. 98). Haas et al. (1988) suggested that a mock election occur over two days. The mock election's first day should introduce early elementary students to candidates, elements of a fair election, and a secret ballot concept. Haas et al. recommended that the second day of instruction include ballot inspections, voting procedures, poll watchers, elements of a correctly marked ballot, counting the votes, and verifying the election's accuracy. These elements remained consistent in the updated work of Haas et al. (2008). Scholastic, Inc's student magazine provided student mock election opportunities since the Presidential Election of 1940 (Scholastic, 2016; Toppo, 2016). *Scholastic News* mock elections results mirrored actual Presidential Elections except for Presidential

Elections in 1948 (students selected Dewey over Truman), 1960 (students selected Nixon over Kennedy), and in 2016 (students selected Clinton over Trump).

Using Student Periodicals to Teach Presidential Elections

Throughout this chapter, I included research regarding controversial issues in education, civic education, the importance of a President, and contemporary research into controversial Presidential Elections. This final section introduced *Scholastic News*, a widely used instructional tool with a long history of engaging students with Presidential Elections.

Background and History of Student Periodicals

Magazines produced for children in the United States originated in the late 1700s (Mott, 2002). While many children's magazines existed, *The Youth's Companion* was among the most beloved from the early 19th Century through the early 20th Century. The work of *The Youth's Companion* continues to influence American lives, with the first publication of *The Pledge of Allegiance* in the magazine in 1892 (Bellamy, 1953). Early research into family literacy placed a value on children's magazines as an important and affordable source of literature and text for the home library (Frank, 1954). Frank's work demonstrated that children's magazines allowed the readers to emulate real-world consumption of periodicals by providing stories and articles of high interest that took little time to complete. Frank also described how children anticipating magazines in the mail fostered a love of reading. Frank identified magazines that offered subscription through schools and included *Weekly Reader* for primary school, *Junior Scholastic* for middle school, and *Senior Scholastic* for high school students.

Scholastic, Inc.

Scholastic, Inc. is a publishing business specializing in educational products such as books, children's magazines, and teacher resources. The company claimed to publish one out of

every two children's books bought within the United States (Scholastic, Inc., 2019a). Frank (1954) identified publications from Scholastic, Inc. as valuable subscriptions students could obtain through school. These publications included early versions of Scholastic, Inc. magazines, as well as the elementary-focused *Weekly Reader*, later purchased by Scholastic, Inc. (Smialeck, 2012). In the following sections, I discussed Scholastic, Inc.'s characterization of their current student magazines, including *Scholastic News*. Then I synthesized the *Scholastic News* publications for grades first through third regarding the Presidential Elections of 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016. This synthesis was accomplished by analyzing teacher editions of pre-elections and post-election coverage. These years were chosen because direct comparisons could be made with catalogued teacher editions for each grade-level during each election. Additionally, including the 2000 election was important to understand how *Scholastic News* covered election uncertainty, checks and balances of courts in elections, and the intricacies of the Electoral College. The 2008 election offered an opportunity to examine historic candidacies of Barrack Obama and Sarah Palin. Finally, the 2016 offered an example of the historic candidacy of Hillary Clinton and demonstrated the mechanics of the Electoral College not representing the popular vote in an election.

A Contemporary Description of Scholastic Inc. Magazines. Scholastic, Inc.'s classroom magazine division reports subscriptions to their magazines in over 80,000 U.S. schools (Scholastic, Inc., 2019a; Scholastic, Inc., 2019b). Within the classroom magazine division, Scholastic Inc. produced *Scholastic News*, a student periodical that supports science and social studies content-based instruction while developing content related literacy skills. Scholastic, Inc. (2019b) constructed a research report, *Scholastic Research & Validation: Scholastic Classroom Magazines*, highlighting their classroom magazines' effectiveness. Much

of the research cited focused on general literacy practices. Empirical studies included in the report pointed to *Scholastic News* as a motivating resource with various viewpoints useful for content-based instruction (Morrow & Lesnick, 2001; Olson, Gee, & Forester, 1989). The research report also suggested that *Scholastic News* magazines offered a high-quality blend of print and digital resources and that students who took home magazines tend to spend more time reading with their families (Morrow & Young, 1997; Wertz & Saine, 2014). The report stated, "[t]his report explores educational research that identifies how classroom magazines can support instruction by fostering literacy and learning across disciplines in an engaging way for different reading- and grade-level students" (Scholastic, Inc., 2019b, p. 1). The authors organized the report into multiple topics relating to social studies, science, and literacy instructional practices. The research began focusing on the importance of informational text exposure for students with a focus on science and social studies topics. The remainder of the report focused on best practices in literacy instruction including the importance of background knowledge, home-school literacy connections, digital literacy, and the role of graphics in support of reading comprehension.

2000 Presidential Election. The 2000 Presidential Election was a particularly interesting Presidential Election to cover. Many news organizations declared Al Gore the winner of the election, but they had to retract those calls early the next morning. The nation would not have a definite answer until December 12, 2000 (McKeever, 2020). Since 1848 states have held elections on the same day with media outlets quickly reporting results to the public. As technology advanced from telegraphs to television, broadcast news specials on election night became major events (McKeever, 2020). The 2000 election proved to be the first significant reporting issue since broadcast news began reporting live televised newscasts.

During the 2000 Presidential Election, *Scholastic News* began their yearly publications in grades 1-3 with September pre-election editions (Scholastic, Inc., 2000a; Scholastic, Inc., 2000b; Scholastic, Inc., 2000c). These issues contained content-related information about Presidential Elections, suggested lesson plans, information about how students participated in the 2000 Student Voice activity, where students participated in classroom elections, and teachers sent totals to Scholastic, Inc. for reporting. The first and second-grade editions did not plan a post-election edition until the following Inauguration Day. The editor of the third-grade edition explained, "… we're still a few weeks away from Election Day. However, we're holding our Student Edition until the actual night of the election, so that we can get the final election results and then go to press immediately thereafter" (Scholastic, Inc., 2000d, p. 1). *Scholastic News* went to print with the November 15, 2000, edition unable to declare a winner. January 15, 2001, third-grade edition named George W. Bush as the President-elect (Scholastic, Inc., 2001c). The edition opened with a special note to teachers from the editor saying, "Dear Teacher: Without a doubt, Election 2000 was the strangest, most dramatic presidential election in U.S. history. We may very well never see anything like it again in our lifetimes" (Scholastic, Inc., 2001c, p.1).

Student activities for the 2000 Presidential Election varied greatly across the grade level. First-grade activities included shared reading with discussion and copying and discussing the Presidential Oath of Office (Scholastic, Inc., 2001a). The second-grade editions included shared reading with discussion, using a chart to answer relevant questions, and writing a persuasive letter to the President-elect (Scholastic, Inc., 2001b; Scholastic, Inc., 2001c). The third-grade edition contained shared reading with a discussion using charts with historical data to answer questions, and using a chart to understand the historical impact of the Electoral College in light of Al Gore winning the popular vote but losing the Electoral College and ultimately not

becoming President (Scholastic, Inc., 2001c). Each edition contained suggested digital and non-digital resources for additional consideration by teachers. Each edition also referenced National Social Studies Standards citing areas of "civic ideals and practices; power, authority, and governance; and individuals, groups. and institutions (Scholastic, Inc., 2001a; Scholastic, Inc., 2001b; Scholastic, Inc., 2001c).

2004 and 2008 Presidential Elections. Student editions for the 2004 and 2008 Presidential Elections were remarkably similar. During both elections, the publication of first and second-grade editions occurred in September and January (Scholastic, Inc., 2004a; Scholastic, Inc., 2004b). The publication of third-grade editions came in early September, mid-November, and mid-January (Scholastic, Inc., 2008e; Scholastic, Inc., 2008d). While the 2004 Presidential Election was close and required a recount in Ohio, *Scholastic News* reported on President George W. Bush's reelection without delay in the November student edition (Salvato, 2004; Scholastic, Inc., 2004d). *Scholastic News* editions for first, second, and third grade included summaries of content knowledge to supplement teachers' own familiarity with the candidates' biographies, electoral process, and inauguration day customs (Scholastic, Inc., 2004a; Scholastic, Inc., 2004b; Scholastic, Inc., 2004c; Scholastic, Inc., 2004d; Scholastic, Inc., 2005a; Scholastic, Inc., 2005b; Scholastic, Inc., 2005c; Scholastic, Inc., 2008a; Scholastic, Inc., 2008b; Scholastic, Inc., 2008c; Scholastic, Inc., 2008d; Scholastic, Inc., 2008e; Scholastic, Inc., 2009a; Scholastic, Inc., 2000b; Scholastic, Inc., 2009c). During the 2008 Presidential Election, multiple historical firsts were possible on both major party tickets. *Scholastic News* included content knowledge reminders for teachers about Barrack Obama's possibility of being the first "African-American" President and John McCain's possibility of being (then) the oldest President ever elected. None of the teacher content information mentioned Sarah Palin's possibility of becoming the first woman Vice

President. Journell (2011) explored this historical possibility in research regarding the 2008 election.

During the 2004 and 2008 Presidential Elections, *Scholastic News* increased the availability of digital resources (Scholastic, Inc., 2004a; Scholastic, Inc., 2004b; Scholastic, Inc., 2004c; Scholastic, Inc., 2004d; Scholastic, Inc., 2005a; Scholastic, Inc., 2005b; Scholastic, Inc., 2005c; Scholastic, Inc., 2008a; Scholastic, Inc., 2008b; Scholastic, Inc., 2008c; Scholastic, Inc., 2008d; Scholastic, Inc., 2008e; Scholastic, Inc., 2009a; Scholastic, Inc., 2000b; Scholastic, Inc., 2009c). These resources moved from linking to governmental and candidate websites to online interactive lessons and materials for teachers and students. *Scholastic News* began intentionally referencing teaching standards at all three grade levels in response to the No Child Left Behind Legislation, specifically focusing on reading and writing. Each grade level in 2004 and 2008 included persuasive writing prompts that encouraged students to name priority areas they hoped George W. Bush and Barrack Obama would address.

2012 and 2016 Presidential Elections. The 2012 Presidential Election introduced multiple changes to the formatting of *Scholastic News* editions in grades one through three. Previous years had seen Presidential Election editions published in September at all grade levels; this changed in 2012. First and second-grade editions introduced election-related material in their combined November and December in 2012 and October in 2016 issues with follow-up editions in January of 2013 and 2017 covering the inauguration of the new presidents (Scholastic, Inc., 2012a; Scholastic, Inc., 2012b; Scholastic, Inc., 2013a; Scholastic, Inc., 2013b; Scholastic, Inc., 2016a; Scholastic, Inc., 2016b; Scholastic, Inc., 2017a; Scholastic, Inc., 2017b). Third-grade *Scholastic News* continued to follow the previous years' patterns of publishing *Scholastic News* editions in September before the elections, November summarizing the

elections, and January covering the inaugurations of the Presidents (Scholastic, Inc., 2012c; Scholastic, Inc., 2012d; Scholastic, Inc., 2013c; Scholastic, Inc., 2016c; Scholastic, Inc., 2016d; Scholastic, Inc., 2017c). In addition to the revised editorial timeline, both the 2012 and 2016 elections contained fewer content knowledge resources than the teacher editions in 2000-2008. Analysis using NVivo software indicated that the content knowledge supplements were approximately half as long as earlier editions. In 2016 a new feature was added to content knowledge resources for teachers in an editorial comment. The following is a first-grade example:

> Editor's Note: Every four years, we work really hard to ensure that our election issue is as fair as it can be. We go as far as to measure the photos of the candidates to make sure they are exactly the same size! I hope that you'll find our issues fair, as well as fun and appropriate for first-graders. —Laine [Editor]. (Scholastic, Inc., 2016a, p.7)

Beginning in 2012, *Scholastic News* increased the sophistication of reporting aligned standards to Common Core English Language Arts and Mathematics standards as well as guidelines from the National Council for the Social Studies (Scholastic, Inc., 2012a; Scholastic, Inc., 2012b; Scholastic, Inc., 2012c; Scholastic, Inc., 2012d; Scholastic, Inc., 2013a; Scholastic, Inc., 2013b; Scholastic, Inc., 2013c; Scholastic, Inc., 2016a; Scholastic, Inc., 2016b; Scholastic, Inc., 2016c; Scholastic, Inc., 2016d; Scholastic, Inc., 2017a; Scholastic, Inc., 2017b; Scholastic, Inc., 2017c). This change included adding specific links to standards on lesson plans, teacher guides, student work pages, and digital resources. Student activities in 2012 and 2016 did not include persuasive writing activities from prior elections. Student activities focused on reading comprehension, mathematics, and map skills, focusing on candidates' biographical information. Like other years all three grade levels included information about participating in the *Scholastic*

News Student Voice mock election. However, the 2016 editions included an option for a third-party write-in vote, unlike previous years. The inclusion of a third-party option was notable because it had not occurred in previous Student Voice mock elections dating back to 1940, and 2016 marked the third time that students participating in the activity chose the losing candidate (Toppo, 2016).

Chapter Summary

This chapter began with an overview of the literature review process. The literature review included three broad topics: controversial issues in education, civic education, and instructional materials for teaching Presidential Elections. First, I focused on a multifaceted review of controversial issues in education. This review included research and philosophy regarding controversial issues in education and policies that impacted teaching controversial issues, particularly in early elementary grades. Next, I focused on civic education, emphasizing the importance of Presidential Elections, research regarding Presidential Elections, and mock Presidential Elections. In the final segment, I presented research centered on student periodicals, specifically *Scholastic News*. This research included a review of early elementary Presidential Election editions published for grades one through three between 2000 and 2016. In the next chapter, I explored my methodology for the study. The chapter began with a conceptual framework that links the research questions and research problem to the literature review elements. The conceptual framework was followed by a theoretical framework guiding the research. I described methods, participants, data collection, and data analysis techniques to be used in addition to the conceptual framework.

Chapter Three: Conceptual Framework and Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this case study is to understand how three public-school teachers from one district taught the 2020 Presidential Election to early elementary students (grades 1-3) using *Scholastic News* magazines and related resources. The two research questions formed to address this problem are:

3. How are *Scholastic News* magazines, and resources, used by three public-school teachers to teach the 2020 Presidential Election to early elementary students (grades1-3)?
4. What opinions do these three public-school teachers hold regarding *Scholastic News* magazines, and resources, as instructional tools for teaching the 2020 Presidential Election to early elementary students (grades1-3)?

This chapter focused on the mechanics of the research design and the plan for research analysis to answer the research questions and address the research problem. The first section of this chapter presented and explain the conceptual framework of the study. The conceptual framework was designed from a synthesis of the literature presented in Chapter Two. The second section of this chapter described the study participants and the participants' context. The third section of this chapter explained the research design, a single case study with embedded units of analysis (Yin, 2018). The fourth section of the chapter detailed data collection by explaining what data were collected, how they were collected, and how they were organized. The fifth section of the chapter provided a preliminary data analysis plan by presenting anticipated techniques relevant to the research questions, data, and methodology. The chapter concluded with a summary and introduction to subsequent chapters.

In short, this study was a single case study with embedded units of analysis (Yin, 2018). The single case study is a Kentucky school district, given the pseudonym of Adams County Public Schools (ACPS). Within that case study, the three embedded units of analysis were public-school teachers from grades one, two, and three. Grades one through three were referred to as early elementary school. Data relevant to the 2020 Presidential Election were collected through semi-structured interviews and qualitative media analysis of instructional materials, current events, and historical artifacts. Iterative rounds of inductive coding were used to identify themes within the data.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks are both graphic and narrative descriptions of the essential parts of a research study (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, 2014). Conceptual frameworks function as iterative roadmaps that are refined throughout the study. Miles et al. (2014) advocated for conceptual frameworks that compel the research to identify the most important elements of the study, identify working relationships, and delineate information to exclude from the study. Creating and revising a conceptual framework includes written and visual descriptions of theoretical influences, bodies of existing knowledge, research problems, data collection methods, and analysis (Miles et al., 2014; Ravitch & Carl; 2016). Miles et al. (2014) recommended refining the conceptual framework until it can be graphically seen on one page. Miles et al. explained, "[h]aving to get the entire framework on a single page obliges you to specify the discrete phenomena, map likely relationships, divide variables that are conceptually or functionally distinct, and work with all of the information at once" (2014, p. 25). Figure One, is a visual representation of the conceptual framework of this study, and it is included at the end of this chapter.

Theoretical Framework

Chapter One described this study's theoretical framework as a horizontal integration of theoretical and philosophical work from social constructivism and pragmatism (Tellings, 2001). These theories informed my work as a former early elementary school teacher and a developing educational researcher. The following subsections described the social constructivist work that informed my pedagogical practice and the pragmatist work that informed my educational research. Describing my theoretical background within the conceptual framework provides transparency to my positionality as a researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). In qualitative work, a clear description of the researcher's positionality is vital because the researcher is the primary instrument, and my theoretical background and experience influence my work as a researcher (Lofland et al., 2006).

Social constructivism. At my core, I describe my understanding of the world in terms of social constructivism. For me, social constructivism describes a process where a person interacts with others, the environment, culture, history, and time to produce knowledge. Within social constructivism, I use many of the ideas described by Berger and Luckman in their treatise, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). I focused on their first three chapters and identify their tools informing my theoretical understanding. Among these tools are the ideas of common sense, everyday life, spatial interactions, temporal interactions, and an understanding of the language's role.

In the introduction to their work, Berger and Luckman (1966) carefully framed their intentions and wrote, "[o]ur purpose here is…a theoretical one. But our theorizing refers to the empirical discipline in its concrete problems…In sum, our enterprise is one of sociological theory…" (p. 26). Berger and Luckman described the notion of "everyday life" in spatial

proximity and temporal relational terms. Berger and Luckman (1966) wrote, "…my attention to this world is mainly determined by what I am doing, have done, or plan to do in it" (p. 36). Additionally, they described an "intersubjective world" as a world in common with others shared by interactions and communication shaping reality through "common sense" (p. 37). Berger and Luckman (1966) also described the impact time imparts on reality concerning waiting, mortality, and positionality within history.

Crucial to understanding this view of the social construction of knowledge is working with another in close proximity. Berger and Luckman (1966) wrote, "The most important experience of others takes place in the face-to-face situation…the other is appresented [sic] to me in a vivid present shared by both of us…no other form of social relating can reproduce the plenitude of symptoms of subjectivity present…" (p. 43). As a researcher, I usee proximity during teacher-participant interviews, where I each teacher using Zoom software, I and ask them to share and construct knowledge with me. At this level, knowledge-making included my prior experiences as a teacher, and my content learned as a developing teacher educator.

Additionally, Berger and Luckman (1966) focused on time, noting that not all situations and realities require a present interaction. For example, I can interact with the ideas and people from the past, and my present work will perhaps interact with the future. I can facilitate a social construction of knowledge by reading and contemplating the works produced by others. When I reviewed student materials, lesson plans, and other qualitative media analysis documents, I interacted with people who crafted the resources. Additionally, I believe that my social construction of reality is shaped by prior interactions with people and ideas.

Social constructivism also informed my understanding and beliefs about classroom environments that have been impacted by years as a student, teacher, and teacher educator.

During my teacher training and time as a practitioner, the work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky guided my most fundamental beliefs about how children learn. I realized that my admiration for Vygotsky was problematic. My teacher training introduced the ideas of Vygotsky through lectures and textbook readings. The lecture and textbook offered a diluted introduction, but I returned to direct translations of Vygotsky's works for this study. I had no way to validate the Russian to English translations, and I was aware of extant translations' present criticisms. Van der Veer and Yasnitsky (2011) warned, "[e]xisting translations are marred by mistakes and outright falsifications. Analyses of Vygotsky's work tended to downplay the collaborative and experimental nature of his research" (p. 475). I included this critique because the tool I used from Vygotsky appeared in a 1935/1978 posthumously published English translation, and I have considered and read it as an imperfect piece. Van der Veer and Yasnitsky (2011) commented that the work grew from incomplete larger works constructed near the end of Vygotsky's life. They believed an exhaustive exploration of Vygotsky's works "would partially confirm what we already know about Vygotsky, but would also partially complete and possibly redress our picture of his creative work" (p. 477).

The classroom environment side of my theoretical foundation rested largely on Vygotsky's translated work (1935/1978). Specifically, I have focused on the translation of *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. The primary tool Vygotsky (1935/1978) offered was the "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD) (p. 84). Vygotsky (1935/1978) understood that children learned before formal schooling begins; he wrote, "learning and development are interrelated from the child's very first day of life" (p. 84). With the ZPD, Vygotsky (1935/1978) looked beyond what a child could do independently and began to consider the impact of interactions with others as a way for children to learn. Vygotsky

(1935/1978) wrote, "the [ZPD]…is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). This tool formed the basis of the elementary environment in my theoretical foundation. In summation, I believe that learning is socially constructed in a classroom by teachers, students, and materials that facilitate, model, and challenge students to grow beyond their prior understanding and capabilities.

Vygotsky's ZPD formed the basis of my understanding of classroom environments; however, many other theorists offered tools that refined my teaching beliefs. In this subsection, I described other tools that supported my understanding of Vygotsky's ZPD. One of the most powerful tools to accompany the ZPD was the idea of scaffolding. Wood et al. (1976) worked with young students on a building-block task and refined the idea of modeling and imitation to a "scaffolding process" (p. 98). The Wood et al. (1976) scaffolding process included an eight-part theory suggesting that a teacher (or tutor) "recruit [students'] attention, reduces degrees of freedom in the task to manageable limits, maintains "direction" in the problem solving, marks critical features, controls frustration and demonstrates solutions when the learner can recognize them" (p. 99). I believe that scaffolding is an essential tool for those engaged in the ZPD to enable the social construction of knowledge. However, scaffolding is more complicated than eight discrete steps; I believe scaffolding is a tension that waxes and wanes in the ZPD between those learning and those assisting in learning new knowledge. Pearson and Gallagher (1983) described that tension writing, "[a]ny academic task can be conceptualized as requiring differing proportions of teacher and student responsibility for successful completion" (p. 377). Finally, Lee and Hannifan (2016) extended social constructivism to the concept of student-centered

learning by expanding scaffolding to include interactions with other students, teachers, and media.

Pragmatism. Within the pragmatist tradition, I focused on Dewey and Thayer-Bacon for tools that support my theoretical work. Dewey's *School and Society* (1900) explored the school's social aspects, the relationality of school to its students, and institutional waste within schools. Dewey conceptualized waste not in terms of finances but in terms of wasted opportunities and time for students. Dewey focused on the waste of children's lives as they could not use their lived experiences as expertise in schools, and little of what was taught impacted their day-to-day lives. Dewey (1900) wrote, "[t]he pupil must learn what has meaning…instead of mere trivialities. [They] must become acquainted with truths, instead of things that were regarded as such fifty years ago…" (p. 78). This argument from Dewey fits the definition of controversial issues used throughout the study. Dewey advocated for a meaningful curriculum that exposed multiple viewpoints on important issues.

Dewey (1916/2008) disagreed with the recapitulation theory of education that suggested that children learned in orderly stages, and therefore their curriculum should be devoid of controversial issues. First, Dewey rejected the recapitulation theory by criticizing the overly simplistic view that children progress in rigid biologic stages that correspond with what *should* be taught. Dewey wrote, "[t]he social environment of the young is constituted by the presence and action of the habits of thinking [adults]…it would be foolish if education did not deliberately attempt to facilitate similar efforts…so that they become increasingly successful" (1916/2008, Ch. 6, Para. 10). Dewey believed that the present should be more prescriptive for what children learn. He underscored this idea in 1935 with his essay "The Teacher and His World." In the essay, Dewey argued, "the times are out of joint, and that teachers cannot escape even if they

would, some responsibility for a share in putting them right" (p. 7). Dewey explained that teachers should stay informed about contemporary and controversial issues and identify the side most likely to bring a happy future. With these decisions in mind, Dewey believed teachers would benefit in their ability to enact their decisions.

Dewey (1916/2008) further explained why controversial issues should become part of early elementary education in terms of children's interests. Dewey wrote, "No one has ever explained why children are so full of questions outside of the school (so that they pester grown-up persons if they get any encouragement), and the conspicuous absence of display of curiosity about the subject matter of school lessons" (Ch. 12, Para. 6). Dewey believed that the lack of questioning from children demonstrated two things. First, children were able to engage in deep questions about their lives and actual current events. Second, the key to grasping children's attention is to allow for a meaningful curriculum that integrates real problems and advocates for multiple ways of problem-solving. These beliefs complement my research on controversial issues in early elementary education.

John Dewey advocated for lifelong experiential learning that was relevant to children's lives and contexts (Dewey, 1990/1900). Dewey (1933) believed that such an educative process that involved experience was essential for civilization to maintain great achievements and expose students to new worlds. Dewey (1916/2008) offered the following suggestion for educational topics, "[t]he course of study must then have some civics and history politically and patriotically viewed: some utilitarian studies; some science; some art (mainly literature of course); some provision for recreation; some moral education; and so on" (Ch. 18 Para. 23). While Dewey did not explicitly call for teaching controversial issues, his work demonstrated a devotion to solving real-world problems through experimentation, experience, and language.

Thayer-Bacon offered three useful tools in thinking about controversial issues in early elementary education: relational epistemology, a democratic community always in the making, and lived experience as a Montessori elementary teacher. In her 1998 book *Philosophy Applied to Education,* Thayer-Bacon began a conversation about a pragmatic relational epistemology that was different from other pragmatists' works. Thayer-Bacon summarized her idea by writing, "[a] relational epistemology views knowledge as something that is socially constructed by embedded, embodied people who are in relation with each other" (1998, p. 60). Later, Thayer-Bacon developed the idea of relational epistemology as something that embraced multiple truths but was careful to explain that not everything counted as a truth (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). This tool is invaluable as this study works to understand multiple perspectives on controversial issues, particularly regarding American politics.

The second tool from Thayer-Bacon (2013) was her aim of education to form a continually improved democratic community. The idea of a democratic community was explored in Thayer-Bacon's 1998 book. In the book, she carefully delineated a democratic community classroom from a traditional social constructivist classroom. A democratic community was described as a learning environment that valued members' contributions and mutual interests. Later Thayer-Bacon continued to work on the idea of a democratic classroom community as an on-going goal. Thayer-Bacon (2013) explained, "…the goal of becoming a democracy is something we must always be striving for; it is always-in-the-making, something we must push ourselves to hope to achieve, someday" (p. 138). This tool helped examine how subjects, materials, teachers, and content respond to continually developing democracy and education changes.

The third tool that relates to teaching controversial issues in early elementary school was the Montessori anecdotes and experiences Thayer-Bacon has included across multiple works (Thayer-Bacon, 1998; Thayer-Bacon, 2000; Thayer-Bacon, 2003; Thayer-Bacon, 2008; Thayer-Bacon, 2013). Thayer-Bacon obtained elementary Montessori credentialing in the first cohort certified in the United States. While her experiences did not formally name controversial issues, the stories from her experience as a teacher alluded to topics that would fit the definition of controversial issues in this study. Thayer-Bacon's experiences focused on the relationships built between students and teachers (1998). These relationships made it possible for Thayer-Bacon to explore student tasks involving pluralistic research of diverse religions and faiths (2003). As I investigate controversial issues with early elementary students, Thayer-Bacon's ideas about relationality, democracy, and relationships bring a nuanced view of pragmatism that enhanced my understanding of social constructivism and Dewey's viewpoints on pragmatism and education.

Integrating the Theoretical Framework into a Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework graphic, Figure One, depicted this research study's key concepts hierarchically. Concepts were integrated vertically and horizontally in the graphic. The graphic began by identifying the educational theories and philosophies that informed my current work as a researcher and prior work as a classroom teacher. As a researcher, I identified with pragmatist philosophy that sought to link educational thought to the field of education (Dewey, 1900; Dewey, 1916; Thayer-Bacon, 2003). As a former teacher, I identified with social constructivist theories related to classroom design and practice. The framework continued with state and local educational policies and standards; these standards provided a legal rationale for the entire study inside of Adams County Public Schools. Informed by pragmatist theory, I

believe that a study would not be possible in present-day public schools without a reliable connection to curricular mandates. Therefore, I elevated state and local policies as the initial concept; these policies and standards were horizontally connected to guidelines and standards from national content-focused organizations such as the NCTE, NCTM, NSTA, and NCSS. Such national organizations provide research and guidance to Kentucky and Adams County, but they do not hold the same influence because oversight to education is Constitutionally granted to states and localities.

Next, I have horizontally integrated the concept of teaching controversial issues. Research and philosophical research into teaching controversial issues exist independently from the standards, policies, and guidelines. The concept of teaching controversial issues informed this study, and Chapter Two included explicit connections between research and philosophical research and state and local policies and standards. Moving vertically lower, the graphic focuses on civic education. Chapter Two included a discussion about state and policy requirements for civic education and established research into teaching controversial issues in civic education. Below civic education, the subdomain of Presidential Elections provided one potential controversial issue in civic education directly connected to state and local policies and standards.

Continuing vertically lower, the pentagonal graphic identified the case study researched. This case study involved researching a single case, the 2020 Presidential Election within Adams County Public School, with three embedded units of analysis: one teacher from each early elementary grade 1-3. Below the case study context, I horizontally added *Scholastic News* and its instructional resources. Scholastic, Inc. provided an in-kind gift of 28 classroom *Scholastic News* subscriptions for an on-going research study investigating classroom magazines' use. Chapter Two discussed the long history of Presidential Elections covered in *Scholastic News*. I included

qualitative media analysis in a diamond attached to *Scholastic News;* both a method for data collection and analysis, qualitative media analysis were fully described below. This research study focused on three teachers who received an in-kind subscription to *Scholastic News* and agreed to integrate it into their 2020 Presidential Election instruction. The three teachers also have a diamond-shaped method for data collection and analysis known as semi-structured expert interviews. Notice that this method is bi-directionally linked to qualitative media analysis by triangulation, a technique described below. Finally, the two guiding research questions are presented in triangular graphics. The first question focuses on how teachers taught the 2020 Presidential Election, and the second question focuses on what they thought about *Scholastic News* as an instructional tool for the 2020 Presidential Election.

The study's foundation was to understand how three public-school teachers from one district taught the 2020 Presidential Election to early elementary students (grades 1-3) using *Scholastic News* magazines and related resources. This conceptual framework integrated relevant policies, educational research, philosophic research, and education content with three public-school teachers using *Scholastic News* to teach the 2020 Presidential Election. The literature review in Chapter Two informed the participant selection, data collection, overall methodology, research methods, analytic plans, and research considerations regarding ethics and the ability to trust the results. This conceptual framework served as a reference as I begin to identify research findings, develop a discussion about the findings, and identify implications for further research, policy, and practice.

Research Setting and Participants

Participants for this study were early elementary teachers in the Adams County Public School System (ACPS). ACPS is a pseudonym for one public-school district in Kentucky, and

the names used in this study are also pseudonyms. This school district has around 3,000 students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Kentucky has 171 public-school districts, and like many, ACPS has one high school, one middle school, and a few closely connected elementary schools. The county offered an exciting context for investigation because of the electoral results in the last four years when comparing the 2016 Presidential Election popular vote versus its 2019 gubernatorial vote. In 2016 citizens of the county voted approximately 66% for Republican nominee Donald Trump, 30% for Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, and 4% for third-party candidates (Lundergan-Grimes, 2016). However, in 2019 during the gubernatorial election, citizens of the county voted approximately 52% for Democratic candidate Andy Beshear, 46% for incumbent Republican governor Matt Bevin, and 2% for third party candidates (Commonwealth of Kentucky, 2019). The citizens demonstrated mixed political preferences in electing a Democratic governor despite continued popularity for President Trump, who held a large rally less than two hours from Adams the night before the election (Collins, 2019).

ACPS formed the case study for this research project, but the project's focus included the three teacher participants as embedded units of analysis from first grade, second grade, and third grade. In the next section, I presented the biographies of each participant. Table One at the end of this chapter summarized the three participants. I am limiting the biographical information to highlight their expertise as teachers and teacher leaders, practitioners who share in school decision-making while remaining classroom teachers. Zepeda et al. explained, "[t]eacher leaders have expertise, and they want to further develop this expertise through expanding their involvement beyond the classroom" (2013, p. 4). These biographies are appropriate concerning the semi-structured expert interviews. Each teacher was chosen to represent an expert perspective from a particular grade level.

Ms. Austen is a first-grade teacher within ACPS and a local county resident with 23 years of experience as an educator and teacher-leader. Ms. Austen has taught first grade, third grade, fifth grade, and content-specific interventions. As a teacher leader Ms. Austen mentored multiple student teachers, served as an academic instructional coach, and served on her school's site-based decision-making council. Additionally, Ms. Austen has served the school and district as a teacher leader by serving on curriculum committees, providing professional development, and aiding instructional resource selection. For the 2020-2021 school year, Ms. Austen reported teaching in a self-contained model, where she delivered multiple contents to her 14 students. Ms. Austen reported that she planned to use *Scholastic News* to complement instruction in social studies, including the 2020 Presidential Election. Ms. Austen reported prior experience with student magazines as a student in elementary school and prior years of teaching. For this study, I characterized Ms. Austen as an advanced-career teacher with more than twenty years of expertise. In addition to her years' experience, Ms. Austen's publicly available certification identified that she held both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in education.

Ms. Truet is a second-grade teacher within ACPS and a local county resident with 20 years of experience as an educator and teacher-leader. Ms. Truet has taught second grade, a second and third-grade split level, and K-5 grade special education. As a teacher leader, Ms. Truet mentored multiple student teachers and served on her school's site-based decision-making council. Additionally, Ms. Truet has served the school, district, and state as a teacher leader by mentoring all newly hired elementary teachers, providing professional development, and serving on a state-level content committee. For the 2020-2021 school year, Ms. Truet reported teaching in a self-contained model, where she delivered multiple contents to her 19 students. Ms. Truet reported that she planned to use *Scholastic News* to complement instruction in social studies,

including the 2020 Presidential Election. Ms. Truet reported prior experience with student magazines as a student in elementary school and prior years of teaching. For this study, I characterized Ms. Truet as a mid-career teacher with ten to twenty years of expertise. In addition to her years' experience, Ms. Truet's publicly available certification identified that she holds a bachelor's degree, master's degree in education, and a Rank One certification for continuing 30 graduate hours past her master's degree in an educational area.

Ms. Williams is a third-grade teacher within ACPS and a local county resident with seven years of experience as an educator and teacher-leader. Ms. Williams has taught second grade, third grade, and fifth grade. As a teacher leader, Ms. Williams mentored newly hired teachers in her school, served as a grade-level team lead, and served on her school's site-based decision-making council. Additionally, Ms. Williams has served the school and district as a teacher leader by serving on curriculum committees and providing professional development. For the 2020-2021 school year, Ms. Williams reported teaching departmentalized teaching, where she provided instruction for ELA, science, and social studies for 50 students. Ms. Williams reported that she planned to use *Scholastic News* to complement instruction in social studies, including the 2020 Presidential Election. Ms. Williams reported prior experience with student magazines as a student in elementary school and prior years of teaching. For this study, I characterized Ms. Williams as an early-career teacher between zero and ten years of expertise. In addition to her years' experience, Ms. Williams's publicly available certification identified that she held both a bachelor's degree and is advancing toward finishing a master's degree in education.

Research Design

Qualitative research methodology guided this research study design. Merriam (2009) explained, "[q]ualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their

experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). This study followed a qualitative case study design as its primary methodology, characterized by its "in-depth descriptions and analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). This section described the characteristics of case study research, and then I narrowed down the focus to Yin's (2018) description of single case study methodology with embedded units of analysis. A well-defined subject and justify using case study methodology to answer research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). Yin (2009) described a case study as "[a]n empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon set within its real-life context" (p. 18). A case study is a broad description encompassing many specialized formats; the choice of which case study format to use is mainly dependent on the number of participants, context, and goals of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

Yin (2018) conceptualized case study research as both a linear and iterative process. In his conceptual framework, case study research begins with a plan. The plan for this research study grew out of my prior research work into controversial issues and a pilot study in 2019 into teachers who used *Scholastic News* in their classroom, and preparation for a separate longitudinal case study following 28 teachers using *Scholastic News* in their elementary classrooms during the 2020-2021 school year. Next, Yin (2018) suggested the study design. In this study, single case study research with embedded units of analysis was the methodological choice. I followed his conceptual framework into preparation by selecting methods for data collection, networking, and obtaining resource support from Scholastic, Inc., and developing an IRB approved relationship with the Adams County Public School District. Next, I began data collection in the form of semi-structured interviews and content analysis. Data collection became refined through

iterations of design that allowed me to choose specific data collection methods best suited for the research problem and research questions. The specific data collection methods of expert semi-structured interviews and qualitative media analysis are discussed below. Qualitative media analysis aided in data triangulation, which refined the interview guide and interview techniques. Following data collection, Yin (2018) suggested analyzing the data while also keeping open the possibility of design changes or collecting further data. The final step in Yin's (2018) conceptualization of case study research is sharing results, which wereincluded in Chapters Four and Five of this study.

Single Case Study Design with Embedded Units of Analysis

The case study design here followed Yin's (2018) description of a single case study design with multiple units of analysis. Yin (2018) described embedded case studies as different from multiple single cases because of their sub-unit relationship to the whole. In this case study, the embedded units of analysis are the teacher participants, and the single case is the “Adams County Public School District”, where the teachers are teaching the 2020 Presidential Election with *Scholastic News* materials. Yin (2018) praised the embedded design as a way to preserve the study's aim; however, he warned against an embedded study that "focuses only on the subunit level and fails to return to the larger unit of analysis, or the original case" (p.53). This study also considered Thomas's (2016) description of "nested" case studies to heed Yin's warning. Thomas's (2016) description forefronts the question, "It is that fitting in that is of interest – how does the subunit connect with other subunits and the whole?" (p. 177). In this case study, the nested areas are the grade levels which structurally fit into the Adams County Public School District. Figure Two at the end of this chapter offers a visual description of this research design.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection in case study research should include evidence that confirms the main topics through multiple sources (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) listed six possible sources of case study evidence. In this study, participant interviews constituted the primary source of data collection supported by documentation of instructional resources and physical artifacts in the form of *Scholastic News* resources. Yin (2018) also suggested four principles to follow in data collection; only the first three applied to this case study. I accomplished the principle of using multiple sources of evidence by interviewing expert teachers at multiple grade levels while also collecting data from the instructional materials. A case study database created using NVivo qualitative software to managed transcripts of interviews and PDF files of *Scholastic News* resources. As the sole investigator, I maintained the chain of evidence by completing the qualitative media analysis, interviewing the participants, transcribing the interviews, and completing the analysis using NVivo software.

In Chapter Two, I presented a review of the literature relevant to this study. The literature review informed the study, but the literature was not collected as data. The following subsections described semi-structured expert interviews and qualitative media analysis as formats for data collection. Finally, I introduced data triangulation as a common technique in case study research to present a more robust understanding of the research problem to answer the research questions.

Semi-Structured Expert Interviews

Description. The primary data sources for the case study are semi-structured interviews of experts. Rubin and Rubin (2005) explained, "Qualitative interviews are conversations in which a researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion. The researcher elicits depth and detail about the research topic…" (p. 4). Interviews are a handy tool

to investigate research questions where observation of behavior is unavailable, or if the events have already occurred (Merriam, 2009). An extension of qualitative interviewing, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to investigate the research questions in a spoken manner with the assistance of a variety of questioning strategies (Roulston, 2010b). In a semi-structured interview, the research retains some control through open-ended questions developed into an interview protocol before the actual interview (Ayres, L., 2008). Semi-structured interviews often include an interview guide to help elicit data from the participant with some pre-planning (Merriam, 2009). The semi-structured interview "allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 2009, p. 90).

Steps. Quality question crafting is instrumental in obtaining rich data from interview participants (Merriam, 2009). Interview guides with fewer and more open questions allow the research to become more present in the conversation and are likely to gather better data for the research problem and questions (Merriam, 2009). Open questions in an interview allow participants the opportunity to use their own words when answering a question; the researcher then uses those words to guide the creation of follow-up probes needed for clarification or elaboration (Roulston, 2010b). My interview guide began by adapting, with permission, the interview guide of Journell (2011). I initially sorted Journell's questions into two categories: questions to ask before and after the Presidential Election. The pre-election questions established the participants' demographics, instructional characteristics, and initial areas of concern and interest regarding the 2020 Presidential Election. These questions were sent to all 28 participants of the separate study, from which I intentionally selected my three participants for this study. While this was not a face-to-face interview, Meuser and Nagel (2009) recommended being well

prepared. The pre-election questions allowed me to be more purposeful in crafting my interview guide for the expert semi-structured interviews that constituted the primary data source for this study.

This study used a specific type of semi-structured interview known as an expert interview (Meuser & Nagel, 2009). Meuser and Nagel described an expert interview "as an open method which is not guided by a script or preconceived sequential order but solely by topics to be covered in the course of interviewing" (2009, p. 30). The authors explained that even within a pragmatist theoretical framework naming a participant as an expert should be based upon an analysis of achievements, contexts, and continual engagement with knowledge construction. Expert interviews should include data collection, and they should include evaluative data concerning their field. Likewise, the interviewer must avoid appearing incompetent and command a knowledge base within the expert's field. In this study, participants' demographics, educational history, and career experience justify them as experts in their field. Similarly, as a former teacher and a developing educational researcher, I possessed the knowledge base to interview an elementary education expert. The expert semi-structured interviews addressed both research questions by understanding how the teachers taught the 2020 Presidential Election and what they thought of the *Scholastic News* resources as instructional tools.

To complete my interview guide, I compared Journell's (2011) interview guide with both Patton's (2002) six types of questions and Strauss et al.'s (1981) question categories. These questions were then formed into an interview guide for a 90-120-minute semi-structured interview divided into three acts; see Appendix B for the interview guide. The first act of the interview guide focused on the Presidential Election from campaign to election night. The interview guide included prompting to use *Scholastic News* publications of teacher, student, and

instructional resources as a form of photo-elicitation during the interview. Including the publications and photographs are meant to stimulate the participant to engage in a rich discussion about a past event (Harper, 2002). The second act of the interview guide focused on the day after the Presidential Election until Inauguration Day. *Scholastic News* editions and resources allowed for photo-elicitation of this area.

The third act of the interview guide focused on the participants acting as experts in evaluating and critiquing the materials provided by Scholastic, Inc., to teach the 2020 Presidential Election. The interview designed included using Zoom video conferencing software and recorded as a secondary quality measure; recording allowed the researcher the opportunity to remain actively engaged rather than concentrating on data collection (Roulston, 2010a). Zoom provided a platform that best fit the temporal and spatial realities of the study. Additionally, Zoom did not require participants to download software, open an account, and it allowed for screen sharing by both the researcher and the participant. Zoom interviews can be saved as either audio files or video files to the researcher's computer, increasing research security and confidentiality (Gray et al., 2020). Gray et al. (2020) published the first qualitative methodological work offering ten best practices for Zoom interviews. Following their advice, Zoom was tested with participants as they received their informed consent documents for the study, and technical information was provided. The researcher and participants also used this time to discuss alternatives, ways to minimize distraction, and confirm participant access to necessary hardware. On the day of the interviews, the researcher confirmed storage capabilities on his hardware, participants were provided a direct link to access the interview, informed consent documents were reviewed, and participants were notified when recording began. According to the IRB protocol, the interviews were transcribed by the researcher. Participants

were given access to transcripts to review for member checking and accuracy. Only the written, de-identified transcripts were retained for analysis.

Strengths. Within an expert interview, the participant constructs and evaluates knowledge based upon their skill and knowledge levels (Meuser & Nagel, 2009). In this study, the expert interview collected contextual data by applying instructional resources to offer specific insights. At a more generalized level, semi-structured interviewing offered strength in the open questions allowing a researcher the opportunity to encourage more elaboration and detail, yielding rich data sets.

Weaknesses. Expert interviews are not without weaknesses. Expert interviews narrow the focus of the interview to the participants' fields of expertise. While expert interviews value the expertise in appraisal and judgment, the participant's personal feelings not related to the field are undesirable (Meuser & Nagel, 2009). Keeping the expert interview's focus on the participant's expertise requires a skilled researcher with knowledge of the field. Within generalized semi-structured interviewing, weaknesses arise with the researcher being able to adapt to the issue or the participant. Lastly, this study did not include participant observation; therefore, other forms of data were necessary to confirm or disconfirm findings (Merriam, 2009).

Connection to Conceptual Framework. During the interview, the participant and researcher are co-constructing data; this active role of the researcher requires active listening, analytic, and adaptive skills to ensure quality (Roulston, 2010a, 2010b). Expert interviewing connected with both the pragmatist and social constructivist theories in my conceptual framework. The researcher employed pragmatist theory when selecting expert teachers and treating them based upon their unique professional experiences (Meuser & Nagel, 2009). Lastly, participants in expert interviews produce knowledge in "an open-ended process, moving towards

unknown futures, taking into account unforeseen options and developments" (Meuser & Nagel, 2009, p. 29).

Qualitative Media Analysis

Description. Content analysis is a broad collection of research methodologies originating from quantitative methods informed by positivist theories (Krippendorff, 2013). As a method, qualitative media analysis synthesized conventional positivist forms of content analysis regarding documents with qualitative and interpretive research methods typically used in observation and interview research (Altheide, 1996). David Altheide developed qualitative media analysis to systematically study documents, including periodicals, visual media, and electronic media, via a twelve-step process that helps a researcher move from a broad topic through data collection and analysis. Qualitative media analysis was used as a research method to manage and analyze *Scholastic News* teacher editions, student editions, and instructional materials designed for the 2020 Presidential Election in grades one through three.

Steps. Qualitative media analysis is a twelve-step process developed by Atheide (1996); during the literature review in Chapter Two, I refined steps one through six as I collected *Scholastic News* teacher editions covering Presidential Elections (2000-2016) for grades one through three. The first step required identifying a problem for investigation; the research problem for this study satisfied the step (Atheide & Schnieder, 2017). Next, the method suggested I become familiar with the "process and context of the information source" (p. 38). My lived experience as a former student consumer of *Scholastic News* and public-school teacher who used *Scholastic News* as an instructional resource ensured that I was familiar with the scope and context of Scholastic, Inc. student magazines and instructional supports for teachers. The third step recommended becoming familiar with the formatting of documents and selecting a unit of

analysis. This step took some time because of a lack of ethical and practical access to the prior and contemporary publications of *Scholastic News*. I located *Scholastic News* teacher editions cataloged in the Ebsco database from 1999 until the present. I further refined my analysis unit for the initial literature review to include teacher editions of *Scholastic News* publications created for grades one through three, emphasizing the four Presidential Elections in 2000-2016. Steps four through six were completed using NVivo qualitative software. I used Adobe Acrobat software to download all teacher editions and transform them into searchable PDF files. In step four, I created a draft protocol with concepts and categories to aid in data collection. The categories included temporal categories that organized the data by election year and publications made before and after the Presidential Elections at each grade level. The final initial category included resources within each teacher edition. To complete step five, I moved through each grade level by election year to test the protocols as the database collecting evolved by Ebsco. Step six included revising the categories and adding subcategories to the initial categories. During this step, the resources evolved in an iterative process to include background content knowledge for teachers, digital and non-digital resources to support instruction, references to content standards, student activity pages, and teacher lesson plans.

The qualitative media analysis steps for this study began with the format established during the literature review that covered steps one through six. Refinement during steps seven through twelve focused on materials created for the 2020 Presidential Election in grades one through three. Step seven required setting a sampling rationale and strategy. While Atheide and Schnieder (2017) suggested that theoretical or stratified random sampling was most often used in qualitative media analysis, I opted to use opportunistic sampling. Because of an in-kind gift from Scholastic, Inc. I have the opportunity to collect *Scholastic News* teacher editions, student

editions, and instructional materials for grades one through three. With a finite amount of media fitting the research problem and questions, opportunistic sampling allowed me to collect all applicable data while keeping the sample manageable. During step eight, data was collected before and after the 2020 Presidential Election. I anticipate the data included relevant teacher editions, student editions, and instructional materials for grades one through three. Steps nine through twelve were included later in the chapter as part of the study's research analysis plan. These steps included findings to integrate into the research design through triangulation in case study research.

Strengths. Qualitative media analysis is well suited to address the research problem and research questions as part of the overall case study methodology. The research problem and questions focus on using *Scholastic News* publications and resources for the 2020 Presidential Election. Atheide and Schnieder (2017) described qualitative media analysis as a twelve-step method that occurred in five stages to analyze and report data that include "different document sources, ranging from TV, video, film materials, books and manuscripts, and files and notes to photographs and other visual records" (p. 38). The established routine in qualitative media analysis complemented the case study methodology's bounded characteristics guiding the research design and methodology.

Weaknesses. Access remains a concern in qualitative media analysis (Altheide, 1996). This concern is especially valid for cultural artifacts like *Scholastic News.* In order to perform a qualitative media analysis on *Scholastic News*, access from the publisher was required. Frank (1954), Scholastic, Inc. magazines are only available for purchase through a school. I obtained in-kind access for *Scholastic News* resources from the research and evaluation team at Scholastic, Inc. Access required a unique digital code to see teacher resources, student resources,

and instructional media. I downloaded PDF files of many documents, but others such as videos and interactive games required a qualitative memo format developed during the twelve-step process of qualitative media analysis. Issues regarding access contiues for readers who may wish to examine the primary documents or replicate the process I used. I faced limitations in access during the literature review, where I applied qualitative media analysis methods to *Scholastic News* Presidential Election editions from 2000-2016. For past issues, my access was limited to teacher edition materials that existed in an evolving digital format from text only in 2000 to searchable PDF files by 2016; this access was achieved through the Ebsco database.

Connection to Conceptual Framework. As an interpretive method, qualitative media analysis complemented my social constructivist background regarding instructional materials and classroom work. During the literature review, I used qualitative media analysis to organize, compare, and synthesize *Scholastic News* teacher editions from 2000-2016 regarding Presidential Elections. Likewise, I continued to employ qualitative media analysis to *Scholastic News* teacher editions, student editions, and instructional resources for 2020 Presidential Election to understand the research problem and address the research questions.

Data Triangulation

Triangulation is a method used in qualitative research to add validity through data convergence (Schwandt, 2015). Stake (2003) explained, "[t]riangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (Stake, 2003, p. 148). Triangulation can involve using a variety of data sources, additional investigators, multiple theories, different methodologies, or even interdisciplinary viewpoints (Janesick, 1994). Despite the imagery evoked by the name,

triangulation is not dependent on three points; the name referred to the nautical act of identifying place (Janesick, 1994).

Thomas (2016) encouraged researchers to move beyond traditional notions of triangulation and aim to create a three-dimensional picture of the case study. Thomas (2016) suggested the researcher "…drill deep, using different methods and drilling from different directions" (p. 16). Thomas's (2016) suggested that "…looking from several directions, a more rounded, richer, more balanced picture of our subject is developed – we get a three-dimensional view" (p. 5). To create a three-dimensional picture, semi-structured expert interviews were complimented by qualitative media analysis of *Scholastic News* student editions, teacher editions, instructional materials, and relevant news reports. Additionally, triangualation was completed with apriori frameworks from established literature, and other theoretical works during analysis. Triangulation with media artifacts, literature, and theories allowed the researcher to confirm or disconfirm data collected from the semi-structured interviews.

Data Analysis Plan

Yin (2018) reported that the analysis process of case study research is the least developed part of the methodology. Yin (2018) suggested five possible analytic frameworks, and for this study, I adapted his cross-case synthesis model to the three embedded units of analysis (three teachers) in the study. By synthesizing the embedded units of analysis, I sought to "retain the integrity of the entire case and then to compare or synthesize any within-case patterns…" (Yin, 2018, p. 196). The choice of case study methodology was made because of the desire to present a holistic view of the research problem and using a cross-case synthesis supports this goal (Yin, 2018). Using cross-case analysis depends on the researcher noting differences impact or possibly do not impact the findings and the researcher's ability to form a strong argument for interpretive

findings (Yin, 2018). To complete the holistic analysis, specific steps for both research methods, expert semi-structured interviews, and qualitative media analysis was systematically described, followed, and incorporated using triangulation techniques described above.

Analysis of Expert Semi-structured Interviews

The analysis process for expert semi-structured interviews differs from that of the case study analysis, and it must occur before overall case study analysis can begin (Meuser & Nagel, 2009). When analyzing the interview transcripts, the essential elements are thematic units described as "…passages with similar topics which are scattered about the interviews" (Meuser & Nagel, 2009, p. 35). The case study methodology and the bounded system created a shared context where comparison of thematic units occurred. Meuser and Nagel (2009) recommended using paraphrasing as a first pass coding technique; paraphrasing requires the researcher to interpret the data through reasoning. Paraphrasing and coding are supported by the interview guide structures, ensuring that similar topics are investigated within each expert interview. Next, Meuser and Nagel (2009) suggested ordering the paraphrased data passages thematically, employing terminology used by the expert participants, and using multiple coding categories when relevant. The work of Meuser and Nagel (2009) was supported by Saldana's (2016) description of "theming the data" where the themes should reflect the participants' language in a simple and direct manner (p. 199). First stage coding into included interview transcripts and analytic memos; at the end of this chapter, Table Two demonstrates coding categories for this stage. The first stage took place using NVivo qualitative software by building parent nodes for paraphrasing and child nodes for specific terminology or themes.

The second stage of coding the interviews included thematic comparison where "…thematically comparable passages from different interviews are tied together" (Meuser &

Nagel, 2009, p. 36). This stage of the analysis moves connects the embedded units within the case. This stage used NVivo software to manage and sort the interview data while also providing a way to check combined thematic comparisons with the original raw transcript data for accuracy. In the third stage of data analysis, conceptualization begins when "…specific characteristics of the commonly shared knowledge of experts are condensed and categorizations formulated" (Meuser & Nagel, 2009, p. 36). This stage included connecting the results from the data to literature in the relevant field. The final analytic stage included forming theoretical generalizations with the arrangement of categories "framed by a theoretically inspired perspective" (Meuser & Nagel, 2009, p. 36). Once finalized, triangulation with the qualitative media analysis supported the case study analysis described above.

Qualitative Media Analysis

The analytical work in qualitative media analysis begins with step eight in data collection. During the eighth step, Atheide and Schnieder (2017) recommended a midpoint analysis after at least half of the data is collected to allow an opportunity to "examine the data to permit emergence, refinement, or collapsing of additional categories" (p. 59). The formal process of data analysis begins with a step where the researcher refines concepts through coding, reviewing research notes, and rereading the "…data repeatedly and thoroughly" (Atheide & Schnieder, 2017). This step requires the researcher to frequently interact with the codes developed using NVivo software and returning to the original documents multiple times. Atheide & Schnieder (2017) explained, "[t]he goal is to understand the process, to see the process in the types and meanings of the documents under investigation, and to be able to associate the documents with conceptual and theoretical issues) (p. 60). The tenth step in qualitative media analysis has the researcher compare and contrast substantial differences within categories using

research notes and summaries. After the researcher has identified key differences, the eleventh step is to create summaries that include both conventional and extreme examples with notations about unexpected results and elements that need further investigation (Atheide & Schnieder, 2017). The last step integrates findings, interpretations, and concepts into descriptive paragraphs that include references and examples from the original data. The qualitative media analysis can begin once *Scholastic News* publishes their inauguration editions in January of 2021. The goal is to complete the qualitative media analysis before the expert semi-structured interviews. Finishing the qualitative media analysis prior to interviews increased the researcher's familiarity with the materials and allow for revisions to the interview guide. Findings from the qualitative media analysis were triangulated to confirm or disconfirm the interview process's findings during the overall case study analysis.

Chapter Summary

This chapter began with a conceptual framework linking the research problem, research questions, and literature review to the study's methodology. The conceptual framework included my theoretical framework that influences and informs my work as an educator and researcher. Next, the chapter introduced the case study district and three participant teachers. Biographies of the teachers were included to highlight their expertise in education. Following that, I presented the case study methodology guiding the research study and data collection methods. Lastly, I introduced the plan for analysis, including an overall plan for case study analysis and individual plans for the interview and media data analysis.

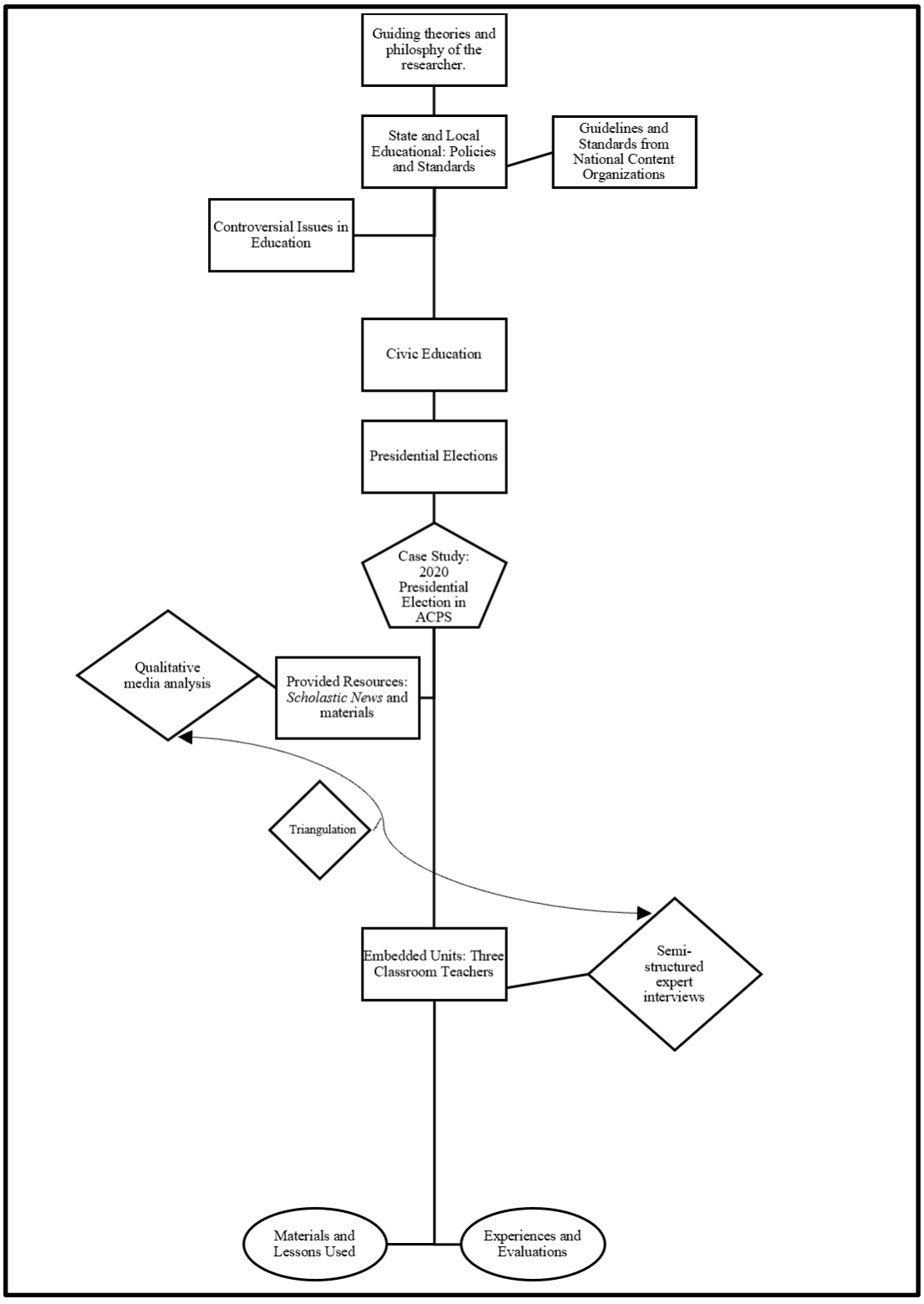

Figure One: Conceptual Framework

Table One: Participant Summaries

Participant	Grade Level	Years of Experience	Educational Attainment	Examples of Teacher Leadership Expertise
Ms. Austen	First Grade	23 years	Master's Degree in Education	Student teacher mentor, instructional coach, district curriculum committee development, resource selection, provided professional development
Ms. Truet	Second Grade	20 years	Rank One (Masters plus 30)	Student teacher mentor, instructional coach, state curriculum committee development, new teacher mentor, provided professional development
Ms. Williams	Third Grade	7 years	Bachelors (Plus 15)	Grade-level instructional lead, district curriculum development, provided professional development

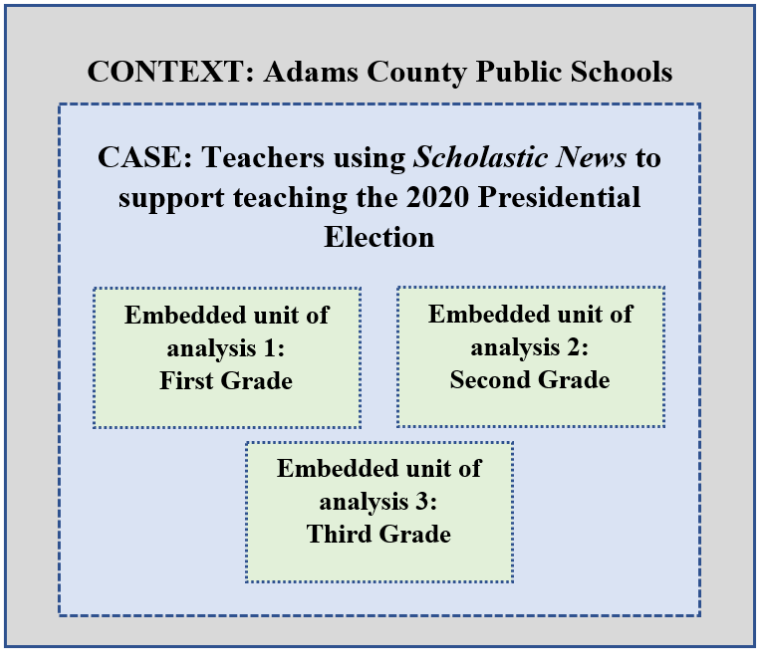

Figure Two: Research Design

Table Two: Example of First Stage Coding and Analysis

Participant and First Stage Code	Transcript Data and Time Stamp	Analytic Memo
First Grade Ms. Austen "Students Reflect Opinions from Home"	00:17:43 Well, um, yeah, I think maybe I would been hesitant at first and I knew I was going to get, here's the thing that what, when you have first graders, you're not getting their opinion, you're getting their parent's opinion because they're just, if they're hearing it at home, that's what they're going to think and know, you know, that's just, they can't watch the news and figure out if they like best and those kinds of things. So I knew I would have, uh, some people who really liked one and some people who really liked the other and, and they were strong. They're just, there will be strong opinions.	17:43 Discussion of worries. She was worried about students mirroring beliefs from home without figuring out for themselves what they might prefer. She worried about strong opinions.
Second Grade Ms. Truet "Kids are Reflecting What they Are Hearing at Home"	00:20:59 Yeah. If I'm there, I can control, you know, where sometimes comments go, we can redirect them a little bit. You know, sometimes kids will say what they've heard from home and I can explain, Oh, I think what you're saying is, you know, is that right? And then we can kind of lead it back to more of a middle of the road, fair thing. But at home I have no control over that.	20:59 She said this is different than a whole group in-person setting where she can facilitate discussion with redirection and explain misconceptions and navigate topics to middle-of-the-road fair thinking. She feels there is no way to manage that with distance learning.
Third Grade Ms. Williams "Students Reflect Opinions and Beliefs from Home"	00:07:52 They would make comments like, well, my dad says this, or my mom says this, and I would always respond with your mom or your dad or whoever they're saying, you know, they are more than entitled to that opinion and they are allowed to have that opinion. Um, and so are you.	7:52 Discussion that even online students shared opinions and reflections of opinions to home, discussion of how she managed opinions from home.

Chapter Four: Analysis

Introduction

This chapter bagan with an analysis of the teacher participant interviews. The first step in this process was establishing credibility in the analytic process. Next, an analysis is reported for each teacher participant within the study. This format matches the embedded case study design (Yin, 2019) described in Chapter Three. The teachers are the embedded units of analysis, and this level of analysis occurred during the first stage of coding, as discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Following the individual analyses, the similar elements from the embedded units of analysis, the teachers, are interpreted to identify similarities across the embedded units of analyses. This section is described in the second stage of coding in Chapter Three. Then, an analysis is provided from the qualitative media analysis described in Chapter Three. This section focuses on my interpretation of the materials and resources produced by Scholastic, Inc. for the 2020 Presidential Election. Finally, the chapter concluded with a preview of the final chapter of the study to identify and discuss the findings of the study.

Analysis

Credibility of Analysis

The credibility of the analysis was established in Chapter Three with a systematic plan using expert interview method (Meuser & Nagel, 2009) to center the voice of the teacher participants as teacher-leaders within the case of their school district. Their credentials as teacher-leaders were established in Chapter Three's participant selection information, identifying each as uniquely qualified to make sound pedagogical judgments and evaluations of instructional materials based upon years of classroom experience, years of advanced education, and experience teacher-leadership for their school, district, and state. Following the expert

interviews, audio data files, varying from 90 to 120 minutes in length, were transcribed. After the initial transcription, I listened to each file four additional times, creating analytic memos. Saldaña (2016) described analytic memos as a data source where the researcher reflects on the data during analysis; he wrote, "…dump your brain about the participants, phenomenon, or process under investigation by thinking and thus writing and thus thinking even more about them…" (p.44). I used the analytic memo process to begin interpreting the interview data, making notes about triangulation elements within the case, and raising questions for further clarification with the participant in a follow-up session. Examples of the analytic memos can be seen at the end of the previous chapter in Table One, where first-stage analysis is demonstrated. Participants received both the interview transcripts and the analytic memos for member checking. During member checking, participants were encouraged to look for accuracy in the transcript and accuracy in my interpretations within the analytic memos. Participants also reviewed the following analytic descriptions of their corresponding interviews to reinforce the accuracy of my interpretations. No participants raised objections or concerns to interview transcriptions, analytic memos, or analyses. During the analysis phase, brief follow-up interviews were conducted with each participant to clarify questions and ensure the accuracy of their expert voice and my interpretation of that voice. Qualitative coding using NVivo software included both the interview transcripts with timestamps. Table Two was included at the end of Chapter Three with an example of the first stage analysis of interview data and analytic memos.

Analysis of Ms. Austen's Expert Interview Data

The following section and sub-sections contain an analysis of Ms. Austen's semi-structured interview. The interview occurred using Zoom video conferencing in early March 2021. Ms. Austen reviewed the transcript data, analytic memos and was contacted for a follow-

up interview to clarify meaning and ensure accuracy. Ms. Austen agreed to the accuracy of the transcripts and supported my interpretations of the interview represented in the analytic memos. As a reminder from Chapter Three, Ms. Austen is a first grade late-career teacher who is completed her master's degree in education.

Differences of 2020-2021 School Year from Previous School Years

Ms. Austen, a first-grade teacher, described the 2020-2021 school year as very different from the others in her career. Distance learning policies from the state and local policy level in response to the COVID-19 pandemic played the primary role in the differences. Ms. Austen was instructed to use the SeeSaw learning management system to share information with her first-grade students. For Ms. Austen, this platform allowed recorded lectures, interactive worksheets, and other visual activities. The students were also able to record videos for her. Unfortunately, Ms. Austen was unable to hold any whole group discussions on the platform. At times the district attempted to return to the classroom, but that schedule was inconsistent due to the uncertainties of COVID-19. Ms. Austen recalled feelings of anxiety after the election as she saw reports of parents criticizing instructional work related to the 2020 Presidential Election once the Associated Press called Joe Biden the projected winner (Crowley, 2020). Referencing a now-viral social media video, Ms. Austen said, "I read a post about a teacher who was going over the results…the mother was furious because she was watching the news that was not reporting that Biden was the winner… I guess I was worried about those kinds of things." Ms. Austen felt torn between her professional need to tell facts and professional expectations to give both sides equal representation.

Confidence in Abilities as a Teacher Leader

Ms. Austen cited three main reasons for her confidence in her abilities as a teacher leader, particularly regarding her teaching the 2020 Presidential Election. As a late-career teacher, Ms. Austen had the experience of teaching Presidential Elections since the 2000 Presidential Election. She recalled the suspense and uncertainty in her early career as the election was ultimately decided by the Supreme Court in December of 2000. Throughout the next twenty years, Ms. Austen had the advantage of teaching multiple grade levels, and she stated that she honed her craft at holding classroom discussions as a fourth-grade teacher during the first year of the Trump presidency. Finally, Ms. Austen stated that she was in a position in her professional life where she felt most educated about civics, elections, and American democracy. She said, "I'm just more politically engaged now than I've ever been in my life. That personal connection made it more exciting to teach with the kids. I felt like I knew more about what was going on." The synthesis of Ms. Austen's professional history with Presidential Elections, experience holding classroom discussions, and increase in content knowledge led to increased confidence in her abilities as a teacher leader.

Creating a Space for Respectful Discussions

Making space in the classroom for respectful discussion was a strong pedagogical commitment for Ms. Austen. She considered it a skill she developed while teaching fourth grade during President Trump's first term. Despite acquiring the skill as a fourth-grade teacher, she believed it translated quickly to first grade with appropriate scaffolding. Ms. Austen stated that she preferred to follow student questions and interests at the first-grade level rather than introduce most discussion topics herself; that was a skill she brought from her fourth-grade classroom. Ms. Austen's class was home on distance learning on January 6, but when shown the

resources for young learners, I asked her if she would discuss the topic if students had brought it up. Ms. Austen said, “[y]es, I think it would teach how important our democracy is and what we need to do as a country to make sure we keep our democracy.” Ms. Austen believed that the topic could be handled with support, and it was appropriate to inform students but not instill fear.

Minimizing my Bias in the Classroom

Ms. Austen made clear distinctions between her personal political beliefs, which were not sought out in the interview, and her professional beliefs. She referred to her professional beliefs as a type of bias, but this should not confuse her identity as either a Republican, Democrat, or Independent. The bias that Ms. Austen spoke about was a professional bias based upon years in the classroom for how things should be run and how public figures should conduct themselves. This bias existed at odds with the state and local guidelines requiring equal representation of both candidates. Ms. Austen was unsure if the realization of her professional bias was from experience, education, or age; she said, “I know there's a lot of disinformation right now…I know in my heart I'm telling something that's true, but they've heard something else at home…and it was just hard.” Ms. Austen remained committed to minimizing her bias by presenting facts and using resources from *Scholastic News*.

Student Reflections of Opinions and Beliefs from Home

Ms. Austen reported that students in first grade often reflected opinions or statements from people at home regarding Presidential Elections. Her experience was limited because of her students’ literacy level with distance learning and the lack of consistent in-person learning. Ms. Austen did have one student speak out favorably about President Trump and then-Vice President Joe Biden. At one point, Ms. Austen shared a video of Joe Biden on the campaign trail speaking with a young boy who stuttered, and Biden gave him tips on how he works to overcome his

stuttering problem. In response, one of her students asked if President Trump liked kids because he had not seen him around children. One student also commented that she feared President Trump. Ms. Austen believed that more examples would have been possible without distance learning.

Student Engagement Regarding the 2020 Presidential Election

The students in Ms. Austen's class were engaged in learning about the 2020 Presidential Election. Ms. Austen said, "[t]hey do like to talk about the election…they wanted to learn more about it and talk about it…we used the *Scholastic News* about Joe Biden….yeah, they're very engaged in those kinds of things." In addition to the Scholastic Student Vote, she set up an anonymous grade level vote, and it had a high completion rate. Students completed the digital *Scholastic News* issues, skill-builders and eventually took home the print editions. Ms. Austen also added read-aloud videos and writing activities to the pre-election unit. During the writing activity, the students were asked to explain a law they would want to sign if they were president. Answers ranged from environmental to more schools.

Scholastic News as an Instructional Tool in the Classroom

Ms. Austen was complimentary of the content-based work from *Scholastic News*, but she was critical of the reading and language arts skill-builder pages from scholastic. For the pre-election issue, Ms. Austen appreciated the focus on sportsmanship and democratic values. She found that this led to a rich and appropriate discussion when the students could return to class. She would have liked some information for the students about the candidates other than pictures. For the inauguration edition, Ms. Auston appreciated the focus on the president's work, and she was impressed with the focus on Vice President Harris. The students were especially interested in her. Regarding the supplements, Ms. Austen liked the digital supplements, including the

videos and games, but she believed the reading work should be reevaluated; she said, “I'm selective. I like some of them very much, and some don't fit in with what we're studying at the time. It's based on whatever that issue is, but it's like nouns and verbs …” Rather than covering arbitrary reading standards, Ms. Austen suggested that *Scholastic News* consider more creative open-ended tasks that would be project-based rather than work sheet based.

Analysis of Ms. Truet’s Expert Interview Data

The following section and sub-sections contain an analysis of Ms. Truet’s semi-structured interview. The interview occurred using Zoom video conferencing in early March 2021. Ms. Truet reviewed the transcript data and analytic memos and was contacted for a follow-up interview to clarify meaning and ensure accuracy. Ms. Truet’s agreed to the accuracy of the transcripts and supported my interpretations of the interview represented in the analytic memos. As a reminder from Chapter Three, Ms. Truet is a second-grade teacher mid-career teacher with a Rank I Kentucky Teaching Certificate with a master’s degree and 30 graduate hours in education.

Characteristics of the 2020-2021 School Year

Ms. Truet, a second-grade teacher, described the 2020-2021 school year as a very distinct year so far in her career. Her year was primarily shaped by the distance learning protocols required because of COVID-19, the heartbreak she felt for her students as they could not be in class, and other oddities from the school year. Ms. Truet used both the SeeSaw learning management system, and Google Meets for Synchronous meetings with her students. SeeSaw was the primary platform for assignments and asynchronous work. Ms. Truet was able to host regular meetings with her students, but access for students was not universally reliable.

Additionally, Ms. Truet noticed a difference in classroom community participation when discussing issues compared to previous years in the physical classroom. Throughout the interview, Ms. Truet lamented the state of the Presidential Election and the rhetorical climate from supporters on both political sides. That feeling grew stronger after the election and stronger after the attacks of January 6, 2021. When I asked her to respond about how distance learning impacted the ability to have student discussions about difficult situations, Ms. Truet was candid when she said, “I'm glad I did not really have to go there with this, and maybe that's wrong of me, but I'm [age removed]. I've never seen an election go like this.” It was clear that the culmination of events had weighed heavily on her mind as a teacher.

Professional Identity, Experience, and Confidence in Instructional Decision Making

Ms. Truet’s interview demonstrated her ability to deeply reflect and analyze situations for ways to improve future instruction. During the interview, she thoroughly knew the *Scholastic News* resources, and she evaluated them with ease. We discussed primary sources that she used to enrich her lesson. Ms. Truet was able to show empathy and vulnerability by discussing how she might have responded in situations if students had been in the classroom asking about sensitive topics. Especially impressive was the candor in which Ms. Truet shared that she sought out content knowledge for an area where she felt under-prepared, the background of then-candidate Kamala Harris. Ms. Truett said, “I had to get educated on Kamala, to be honest. I didn't know anything about her. My husband and I watched the CNN documentary that her sister took part in and wow, what a story with her mother!” The ability to reflect, plan, and acquire new content knowledge strongly demonstrated competent teacher leadership skills.

Importance of Conversations and Dialogue in Teaching Sensitive Issues

Ms. Truet is a strong proponent of conversation and dialogue in the classroom and self-reflection and time for personal growth. Ms. Truet sees the strength in discussing controversial and sensitive issues as an opportunity for students to hear an alternative point of view and to try to step outside of their immediate way of thinking to try on the perspective of others. In the past, Ms. Truet has had heavily lopsided classroom elections, and she felt that with Presidential Elections, it was compelling for students to hear and consider two positions. She said, "[i]t's okay to feel both sides of the of the coin, you know. Then you just have to soul search and find where you stand on that. It doesn't mean you have to stay that way." Ms. Truet strongly advocated for students to listen to their inner voice away from family, peers, and media before speaking on issues.

Separate my Personal Opinions from Professional Work

Ms. Truet stated several times that she was worried she would not separate her personal opinions from her professional work. As a result, Ms. Truet focused on centering the *Scholastic News* resources as a neutral source in her teaching. For example, Ms. Truet said, "I've tried to stay like Scholastic, I try to stay fair and impartial and just encourage the kids to come up with their own ideas and their own beliefs." Despite the worries presented by Ms. Truet, a review of the extended items she added to the *Scholastic News* materials does not reflect any intentional indoctrination of personal political bias. At no time during the interview did she share her personal political opinions in an unsolicited manner. By all accounts, Ms. Truet is expertly acutely aware of her personal political beliefs and takes great care to prioritize her professional beliefs about the civic needs of children.

Students are Reflecting Opinions and Beliefs from Home

Ms. Truet strongly believed that students received political messages at home from peers, family members, and the media. While she was unsure how intentionally the messages were delivered, they were reflected in class discussions about Presidential Elections. Sometimes students would voice opinions about partisan issues such as gun control. More often, students would voice support for the candidate themselves. Ms. Truet considered herself a member of her school community and explained that she was friends with some parents through social media and that most were not happy with the election outcome. Despite that insider knowledge, Ms. Truet said her students did show particular interest in Vice President Harris in the *Scholastic News* article and in a clip from a speech she played.

Student Engagement in the 2020 Presidential Election

Ms. Truet also identified the Scholastic Student Vote activity as an essential element in her students' engagement and interest in the 2020 Presidential Election. Unlike other years, the 2020 Presidential Election Scholastic Student Vote took place entirely online. In prior years, Scholastic, Inc. traditionally sent election materials to teachers who subscribed to *Scholastic News* during the Presidential Election years. Ms. Truet remarked that she liked the move to an online voting format from a mock classroom election. Because of the format change, Ms. Truet was unable to know her students' exact opinions. Ms. Truet felt like the online election format reflected a more authentic voting process and maintained student privacy. In addition, without tallying the classroom results, the classroom remained a more neutral and welcoming space for all viewpoints. This was a change from the 2016 election where her class voted in a mock election with lopsided results favoring President Trump 90% to 10%.

Scholastic News and Resources as an Instructional Tool

Ms. Truet considered herself a strong advocate for *Scholastic News*. She used all of the available resources, and she added several resources to both the pre-election and post-election issues. Ms. Truet found the skill-builders to be high-quality and good fits for her students; she said, “I'm not a huge worksheet person, but these are just right for the kids… I've always been impressed with the skill sheets they include the connections and the lesson plans. It's just right for them developmentally.” Looking forward, Ms. Truet would like to see more democratic norms represented in the Presidential Election editions, perhaps adding a post-election edition. Ms. Truet would like to see the continued development of the digital learning skill-builders for students who prefer to work on computers. She also believed that it would benefit new teachers to include basic information about candidates and the electoral process in the lesson plans. Ms. Truet was very impressed with the discussion supplements that came with the supplemental materials following January 6, 2021, attacks, and she suggested they become integrated into lesson plans for discussion-based activities.

Analysis of Ms. Williams’ Expert Interview Data

The following section and sub-sections contain an analysis of Ms. Williams’ semi-structured interview. The interview occurred using Zoom video conferencing in early March 2021. Ms. Williams reviewed the transcript data, analytic memos and was contacted for a follow-up interview to clarify meaning and ensure accuracy. Ms. Williams agreed to the accuracy of the transcripts and supported my interpretations of the interview represented in the analytic memos. As a reminder from Chapter Three, Ms. Williams is a third-grade teacher early-career teacher who is nearing completion of her master’s degree.

The Uniqueness of the 2020-2021 School Year

Ms. Williams, a third-grade teacher, described the 2020-2021 school year as a school year that was unlike any previous year in her career. One major element novel to the 2020-2021 school year included distance learning resulting from state and local policy guidelines responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The distance learning included using Google Classroom, recorded lectures, and short-term returns to the classroom. Ms. Williams reported frustrations with her preferred teaching styles in 2020-2021 due to distance learning. Instead of her preferred style of classroom dialogue and discussion, Ms. Williams used recorded lessons and asynchronous activities. Additionally, Ms. Williams described feelings of vulnerability in her teaching and lessons as she had no control over who saw or heard recorded lessons or instructional material; she said, "I don't want to offend anyone professionally and personally…Everyone's entitled to their opinion and… that's something that's difficult when you have more than just one of your students watching. Parents are watching. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, who knows?" She described feelings of anxiety regarding teaching the 2020 Presidential Election in this manner that were not present in prior teaching years.

Ms. Williams also recognized that the 2020-2021 school year was different from any other school year regarding the unprecedented events following the 2020 Presidential Election. This included the delayed recognition of an apparent winner by the Associated Press, contested state elections by former President Donald Trump, lack of follow-up *Scholastic News* Presidential Election article in December of 2020, violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, and the Presidential Inauguration of Joseph R. Biden Jr and Vice President Kamal Harris not attended by outgoing President Donald Trump. Ms. Williams believed that the

distance learning format inhibited coverage of these events in class in a way that she would have typically included them. Ms. Williams did not feel comfortable introducing them online through distance learning, but she believed they would have organically been introduced through student questions and conversation. Ms. Williams said, "[t]he fact that we were virtual…hindered a lot of those conversations… So, thinking about what kind of discussions we would have had…had a child brought it up, then I would have discussed it." Ms. Williams also identified a lack of support from *Scholastic News* following the 2020 Presidential Election. While the election was called by the Associated Press (2020) on November 7, *Scholastic News* did not issue a traditional post-election issue for third grade. Instead, *Scholastic News* (2020d) emailed a link to third-grade teachers for an article about the election on November 12. Ms. Williams reported not receiving the email and assumed it was filtered by her district's junk mail. Similarly, Ms. Williams did not receive an email link with resources and an article supporting the January 6, 2021, insurrectionist acts at the U.S. Capitol (Scholastic, Inc. 2021d).

Self-Reflection on Professional Capabilities and Remaining Neutral

Ms. Williams reflected on her professional role as a teacher in two ways, with a feeling of confidence in her abilities and a strong commitment to remaining politically neutral while teaching the 2020 Presidential Election. Ms. Williams' confidence was evidenced in discussions about her ability to supplement *Scholastic News* materials with additional instructional materials, hold off issues of *Scholastic News* to match curricular pacing for her class, evaluate the appropriateness of potential topics for her classroom, offered assessments and critiques for *Scholastic News* as an instructional tool, and reflected on her growth as a teach since teaching the 2016 Presidential Election. Ms. Williams continually referred to remaining politically neutral throughout the interview; it was a clear priority for pedagogical style. Ms. Williams said,

"[h]onestly, the thing that excited me the most was that they were going to get an unbiased opinion from someone that they look up to. This is not my opinion…you know, this is just the facts."

The desire to remain politically neutral impacted Ms. Williams' choice of instructional materials, student feedback, and statements she made about hypothetical scenarios involving how she would have covered unique events related to the 2020 Presidential Election that she found hindered by the COVID-19 distance learning. When hypothesizing about how she would have taught differently in person, Ms. Williams believed she would have likely covered both the post-election transfer of power and the insurrectionist attack at the U.S. Capitol neutrally by waiting on students first to bring the topics up and then relying on well-researched information to guide the discussion.

Student Reflections of Opinions from Home

Ms. Williams described student interactions with *Scholastic News* materials and activities regarding the 2020 Presidential Election that reflected opinions and ideologies from the students' homes. Instruction regarding the 2020 Presidential Election occurred in both in-person and over-distance learning. The in-person learning occurred over one school week before COVID-19 protocols required a return to distance learning. While in-person, Ms. Williams recalled some students stating that their parents would never vote for either President Trump or then-candidate Biden. She recalled that most of the student comments were supportive of President Trump. Once students returned to distance learning, Ms. Williams encountered one student response on a *Scholastic News* instructional resource; she said, "I had a kid type 'Sleepy Joe[2].' I addressed it

[2] "Sleepy Joe" was a political nickname used on social media and in speaking engagements by President Trump during the 2020 Presidential campaign to reference his opponent Joe Biden in an unflattering manner (Johnson, 2021).

virtually… had it been President Trump, I would have said the same thing. We need to address them by their name, not the banter that they hear." After sending feedback to the student, a parent reached out to Ms. Williams and apologized for her son's behavior. The parent confirmed that it was a term her son was familiar hearing at home, and the parent agreed it was not appropriate for him to use in a school assignment. Ms. Williams commented that she believed the students were more politically informed and divided regarding the 2020 Presidential Election than her third-grade students were concerning the 2016 Presidential Election.

Student Engagement and Interest in the 2020 Presidential Election

Ms. Williams reported that her students demonstrated high-interest levels in both the in-person and distance learning elements of the 2020 Presidential Election classroom activities. Ms. Williams attributed engagement to the real-life connection students felt to the material, and this was supported by parents who contacted her by saying that their students enjoyed the timeliness of the material. Ms. Williams said, "[t]hey loved it. I think it was…this was real life. It was current events, and it was something that was happening, and they were hearing. They felt kind of mature that they were allowed to give their opinion." Ms. Williams also identified the Scholastic Student Vote activity as an essential element in her students' engagement and interest in the 2020 Presidential Election. Unlike other years, the 2020 Presidential Election Scholastic Student Vote took place entirely online. In prior years, Scholastic, Inc. traditionally sent election materials to teachers who subscribed to *Scholastic News* during the Presidential Election years. Ms. Williams remarked that she liked moving to an online voting format from a mock classroom election for the distance learning format. One significant change in the format was that class results were not available to the teacher. Ms. Williams responded by providing both the *Scholastic News* link to participate in the national activity and creating an anonymous poll in

Survey Monkey. Ms. Williams remarked that she believed her students would want to know the grade-level results, as she was responsible for all third-grade civics content. Ms. Williams understood the benefit of *Scholastic News* shifting to an online format that provides students more privacy and offers a way for schools and classrooms to participate in the Presidential Elections without declaring a classroom winner. However, for her, she believed that it was also an educable moment on the myriad of ways people vote, and she thought in future elections she would use it alongside a paper ballot if she continued to feel the need to tally a class or grade-level winner.

Scholastic News as an Instructional Tool

Ms. Williams felt that *Scholastic News* was a valuable instructional tool for her classroom. She used it as the bedrock for her instruction concerning the 2020 Presidential Election because she considered it timely, reliable, impartial, connected to standards, and appropriate for her students. Additionally, *Scholastic news* quickly responded to teachers' needs facing distance learning with COVID-19 policies, and she found many of the resources easy to adapt to her Google Classroom platform. Ms. Williams used almost all the ancillary resources, including videos, lesson plans, graphic organizers, interactive games, and vocabulary activities with her students, and she found them high quality in nature. Ms. Williams said, "I definitely felt very comfortable delivering the [Presidential Election] issue. I felt very comfortable teaching it. I felt that it was very to the point and factual." Ms. Williams did make some adjustments to the *Scholastic News* resources provided. This was especially true regarding pacing in terms of matching her curriculum mapping for the year. The Presidential Election issue for third grade was published for September 2020 (Scholastic, Inc., 2020e). Ms. Williams saved this issue until

closer to the election because she found it timelier for her students, and the content was more connected to her English Language Arts standards.

Ms. Williams also offered critiques and suggestions for improvements regarding future editions focused on teaching Presidential Elections. The largest area for improvement was the lack of student editions and concrete materials following the 2020 Presidential Election. Ms. Williams recalled the support of the post-election materials in the 2016 Presidential Election, and she used that to root classroom activities and discussion concerning the transfer of power and time between the election and Inauguration Day. Ms. Williams described missing that resource this year, and she felt vulnerable without the traditional support and ultimately avoided the topic in her distance learning instruction. Ms. Williams said, "[y]es. I definitely would have used a [post-election] issue…. I wasn't able to…I missed this and that's something when discussing a close race, thinking about like how I would have discussed it and taught it." During the interview, Ms. Williams was made aware that *Scholastic News* sent an email resource many days after the election and after the insurrectionist attacks on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. However, Ms. Williams did not receive the emails, and she believed that the junk email district setting likely filtered the emails. Ms. Williams suggested that *Scholastic News* make such email digital resources more readily available as digital issues on the subscription platform. Ms. Williams would like to see *Scholastic News* include more substantial resources and background knowledge in the lesson plans for teachers, continue to keep the Student Vote online, and increase awareness about democratic norms, especially surrounding power transfer.

Second Stage Analysis of Expert Interview Data

In Chapter Three, the second stage of interview coding was described as a comparative process where themes from each participant would be connected. This analytic stage is directly

related to the single case study with embedded units (Yin, 2019) by linking themes of the embedded units, the teachers, and within the case, their public school district while teaching the 2020 Presidential Election. This process combined the existing coding in NVivo into a new hierarchical coding structure based on themes I interpreted. At this point, the analysis was no longer sent to the participants because their data were co-mingled.

The semi-structured interview guide, available in the appendix of this study, ensured that each interview covered the same essential topics. However, each interview yielded unexpected data, contained follow-up questions and prompts unique to that interview, and shared variations on similar themes based upon the teachers' training and professional experiences. In the following sub-sections, I described the five primary themes from the semi-structured expert interview analysis. Woven into each theme are triangulation elements from data, research sources, literature, and the qualitative media analysis of the *Scholastic News* materials created and analyzed later in this chapter. At the end of this chapter Table Three summarized the five primary themes, provide a brief definition for each theme applicable to this study, and identify subthemes written as paraphrases of participants' words.. Table Three at the end of this chapter served as a codebook to illustrate the coding and analysis process.

Pedagogical Usefulness

The theme of "Pedagogical Usefulness" related to participants' statements about *Scholastic News* magazines, instructional activities, teacher supports, online resources, and other materials provided or produced with the *Scholastic News* classroom subscriptions. The materials examined focused on the 2020 Presidential Election, the results of the 2020 Presidential Election, the January 6, 2021, insurrectionist attack on the U.S. Capitol, and the Inauguration of President Biden and Vice President Harris. Data sources for analysis included semi-structured interviews,

analytic memos I created during transcriptions and the analysis process, and documents produced by Scholastic, Inc that were analyzed in the qualitative media analysis above.

Overall, the teachers held the *Scholastic News* student magazines, teacher lesson plans, supplemental videos, and interactive digital materials in high regard. This was true in grades one, two, and three. In first grade, Ms. Austen liked the focus on democratic norms; she said, "I liked starting them off early learning about what it means to vote. to be thoughtful and to think about…what you're going to vote for." In second grade, Ms. Truet was impressed with the opinion writing piece, and she said, "I've always been impressed with the skill sheets; they include and the connections and the lesson plans." In third grade, Ms. Williams appreciated the cross-disciplinary connections with the English Language Arts and Social Studies standards. Ms. Williams believed that allowed for more time to teach about the election; she said, "…if you use the close reading questions, we were still discussing the social studies standards, but at the same time still hit on reading standards."

During the 2020-2021 school year, teachers cycled in and out of distance learning because state and local guidelines because the COVID-19 pandemic. Scholastic, Inc. responded by transitioning some materials to upload to Google Classroom or become PDF files. The teachers found this process met with mixed success with students primarily in early elementary. Loading the documents proved difficult to alternative platforms from Google Classroom, and students struggled to complete the documents independently. Some materials and content from Scholastic News received a positive evaluation, and the teachers offered suggestions for improvement. In first grade, Ms. Austen had the strongest criticisms for the English Language Arts-related skills pages. While Ms. Austen values the content-based pages and activities, she found the ELA work to be arbitrary and rarely matching where a typical first-grade student

works in reading and writing throughout the year. She said, “I would rather their focus be more on the social studies and science standards…and maybe the reading comprehension.” In second grade, Ms. Truet wanted to see more background information on elections for teachers to support student questions and discussions. In third grade, Ms. Williams was disappointed that there was no post-election issue to help navigate the uncertain transition, despite a historical record of one being published in 2000 (Scholastic, Inc., 2000d). Like the other teachers, Ms. Williams reported that the special edition emails were filtered into Spam by their district’s email. They suggested that special edition materials be easily located on the *Scholastic News* subscription portal in addition to email.

Professional Confidence

The theme of “Professional Confidence” included beliefs the participants held about their abilities as teachers, instructional leaders, professional judgment, experience, education, and identity in the school community. Each teacher had varying levels of advanced education and years of experience, but each teacher easily met the definition of a teacher leader established in Chapter Three. The early-career teacher, Ms. Williams, exhibited the most anxiety about teaching the 2020 Presidential Election, mainly through distance learning. She had no control over who might see or hear her lesson or instructional resources and possibly suffer a job repercussion. The mid-career teacher worried less about suffering a job repercussion and more about offending a parent or student in their home during distance learning. Finally, the late-career teacher remarked that she had no reservations about teaching the election in a non-biased way. Ms. Austen said, “I think because I'm older, I have more confidence. I just feel more comfortable in myself and my teaching that I can do it the right way.” With the increased

professional confidence and experience levels, the participants demonstrated more willingness to include additional topics related to the 2020 Presidential Election.

The teachers' professional confidence also impacted their decision-making to modify and supplement the *Scholastic News* materials as part of a larger unit focused on the 2020 Presidential Election. The *Scholastic News* student magazines and teacher lesson plans served as a starting point to build the instructional unit for all three participants. The teachers then selected skills-based activities, videos, and interactive features from the online platform to build out their instructional units. Next, the teachers looked to picture books, videos, news reports, and other instructional resources to realize their instructional units fully. In first grade, Ms. Austen loaded a digital read-aloud video of the book Grace for President by Kelly DiPucchio (2008). In a conversation about the Presidential Inauguration, Ms. Austen said, "…the students connected Grace for President with Kamala Harris being the Vice President." In second grade, Ms. Truet celebrated the historic nature of Vice President Kamala Harris as the first female to hold the office by showing a brief clip from one of her speeches. Ms. Truet believed that it was important for boys and girls alike to see the history-making moment; she said, "I certainly celebrated the fact that we have a female Vice President. What that means for our girls and boys… and I played the quote where she said, 'I may be the first, but I won't be the last.'" In third grade, Ms. Williams found additional vocabulary resources to expand on the vocabulary resources included in the *Scholastic News* materials. Ms. Williams said, "I used Election Words to Know[3] because Tuesday is vocabulary day. Then I found a resource called "The Language of Elections"; it was vocabulary matching with words to add to what Scholastic had used." *Scholastic News* served as a timely starting point for the Presidential Election in each of these instances, and the teachers

[3] *Scholastic News* online digital resource.

used their experience and professional competencies to supplement and build out a more fully realized unit relevant to their students' development, interests, and needs.

The participants also made continual references to their preferred instructional techniques and styles during the interviews, particularly when discussing controversial topics like Presidential Elections. All three participants mentioned that they commonly used whole group discussions and preferred student questions to open discussions for sensitive and controversial issues. In first grade, Ms. Austen said, "[w]e talked about how you don't have to agree with someone. You just have to be respectful…Just because I don't like the same things you do; doesn't mean I don't like you. You have to do that with first graders." In second grade, Ms. Truet enjoyed using the debate segment included with *Scholastic News*; she said, "I just think it opens their horizons and their thinking so much…because they have two kids on opposite sides…and we can change our views no matter how old we are or what our family believes." In third grade, Ms. Williams discussed how she would have used the *Scholastic News* digital resource for the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol had the students been in class and the topic been raised by students; she said:

> It would be more about the strategy of following their lead…I don't want to ensue panic or fear. But, at the same time, it's very evident that it happened, and we shouldn't ignore it…I think that the first mention of it, I would have just stopped what we were doing, and pulled out the article.

The three participants noted that the distance learning requirements from their schools and district coupled with cycling in and out of the classroom impeded this instructional style. However, the conversation allowed for a strengths-based view of their professional confidence and the important role discussions and student questions plays in integrating controversial issues

in early elementary classrooms. In the following sub-section, I discussed the participants' views on the unprecedented events surrounding the 2020-2021 school year.

Irregularities in the 2020-2021 School Year

Like most public schools, the teachers in this study faced distinct challenges in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and required a shift to distance and virtual learning platforms during the 2020-2021 school year ("Adams County Public Schools, 2020b; Beshear, 2020; U.S. Census, 2020). The teachers used either SeeSaw or Google classroom as an online learning platform to deliver distance learning virtual instruction. Guidelines for the distance learning instruction varied for each teacher according to grade level and building administration. As a result, only second-grade teacher Ms. Truet held synchronous online classes. First-grade teacher Ms. Austen and third-grade teacher Ms. Williams were required to limit their instruction to prerecorded videos and asynchronous learning activities. In all cases, even with the synchronous class meetings, the teachers felt that their natural tendency to hold discussions was limited, and the teachers referred to what they would have done instead had it been a typical year. The first-grade teacher explained that the election results never came up through distance learning; she said, "I think if we had been in school, somebody might've mentioned it, especially if we were doing things…with presidents they might've mentioned it, but they didn't come up virtually." In second grade, Ms. Truet brought up the lack of immediate election results in a virtual class discussion, but the students did not comment in a way that typically would in class. Ms. Truet said, "[w]e did talk about it in a Google Meet….We just left it as…sometimes democracy works this way. They didn't have a whole lot of comments…I kind of felt that…their parents weren't discussing…in front of the children." In third grade, Ms. Williams felt that distance learning made it more difficult for students to share knowledge between themselves and allow questions

to originate from them. Ms. Williams said, "[being] virtual…hindered a lot of those conversations, and thinking hypothetically, I would almost bet that one of the kids would have come in and talked about it[4]…Had a child brought it up, then I would have discussed it." The participants each supported their claims by referring to previous Presidential Elections and controversial issues they had taught. They gave supporting accounts of times when students felt more comfortable discussing issues openly in a classroom or brought up questions concerning current events.

In addition to the structural irregularities in the 2020-2021 school year, the content at the center of this study faced many historic irregularities compared to the Presidential Elections taught by the participant teachers, Presidential Election 2000 to 2016. The irregularities began after the election when the Associated Press (2020) could not project a winner in the race until November 7. Both the first and third-grade teachers reported that being out of school for distance learning led them to avoid discussing the topic. This decision was compounded by their requirements only to use prerecorded videos and asynchronous activities. As previously mentions, second-grade teacher Ms. Truet briefly mentioned the lack of a projected winner, but her students did not participate in the discussion as she had expected. A lack of an apparent or projected winner is not a modern anomaly. In Chapter Two, examples from the 2000 and 2012 Presidential Elections cited were delays in election projections, and the 2000 Presidential Election lasted weeks longer than 2020. However, in 2000 *Scholastic News* continued to publish a third-grade post-election student edition (first and second grade traditionally have only had issues for the Presidential Inauguration) and instructional resources despite the uncertainty, and

[4] The "it" referred to in the quotation was the January 6, 2021, insurrectionist attack on the U.S. Capitol building.

the 2012 projection was resolved within 24 hours. For the 2020 Presidential Election, *Scholastic News* broke with tradition and did not publish a post-election edition. Instead of a post-election edition, *Scholastic News* emailed an article to subscribers about Biden's projected to win and President Trump's assertion of voting irregularities (Scholastic, Inc., 2020f). As the resource was only designed for third grade, I discussed it with Ms. Williams. She reported not receiving it and discovered it had been filtered by her district's email into a junk email folder. Ms. Williams reviewed the resource and found it to be somewhat dissimilar to traditional *Scholastic News* articles. Ms. Williams believed that the brief statement about President Trump's allegations of voter fraud was not thoroughly explained at an appropriate level, and she would not have felt comfortable using it in her classroom because it was published on November 12. She felt that it did not clearly explain the allegations being made my President Trump, who had many advocates initiating legal challenges on his behalf in several states at the time (Associated Press, 2020b.) Ms. Williams said:

> I just think that the last sentence '[Trump] believes the vote count is incorrect so far; there is no evidence to support this claim.' I believe would be the most difficult for me to deliver in a lesson because of difference in beliefs at that time.

Ms. Williams was disappointed in not receiving a traditional post-election issue that covered the transition of power. She believed that would have been more useful and appropriate for her students. Additionally, she believed it would have better prepared the students for the events that unfolded in Washington, D.C. on January 6, 2021.

The final irregularities from the 2020-2021 school year related to the study included the insurrectionist attacks on the U.S. Capitol building and the Inauguration of Joseph Biden and Kamala Harris as President and Vice President, respectively. The dramatic and harrowing

domestic terrorist attacks on January 6, 2021, traumatized the nation, including the teachers and children. The classes of "Adams County Public Schools" participated in distance learning the day of the January 6th attacks, and all three teachers believed this contributed to students not discussing the attacks or asking questions about the attacks. Like the post-election third grade article, *Scholastic News* sent out an email with a digital article (Scholastic, Inc, 2021d) and resources on January 8, 2021, focused on third and above. The email mentioned forthcoming resources for grades 1-2, but a follow-up email was never received. I reviewed the email and the supporting resources with all three participants. The first and second-grade teachers agreed that the reading content seemed appropriate for third grade and above, but they expressed interest in the supporting materials focused on facilitating difficult conversations with elementary students and requested I forward the documents. First-grade teacher Ms. Austen said, "I think it's great they came up with that content that soon, because if the kids came back to school, if you were in person and seeing that all day at your house, you might have questions and concerns." Third-grade teacher Ms. Williams felt that this article provided a more balanced approach than the post-election article, and she commented that she would not hesitate to use it to address student questions and concerns. She appreciated the thoughtfulness to present multiple direct quotations and points of view to condemn the attacks; she said, "I feel like very factual they discussed what former Vice President Pence felt about it. I feel that that is different from the last article we discussed because it does have both parties speaking out against what happened." Lastly, the 2020 Presidential Election ended with another broken historical norm; for the first time since Andrew Johnson lost the Presidency to Ulysses S. Grant, a sitting President did not attend the inauguration of his successor (Fortin, 2021). First Grade teacher, Ms. Austen, connected to her pre-election student edition that instructed students that voters should be good sports, and she

hypothesized about how she would explain Trump's absence from the Biden inauguration, should a student ask. In response to the breaking of the inauguration norm, all three participants expressed a desire for more activities or coverage of democratic norms and the process of transitioning power during Presidential Elections. The participants felt like this would better serve students' critical thinking, research, and writing skills.

Professional Beliefs and Professional Realities for Civic Education

The three teacher participants described a distinctive internal tension between their ethical responsibility for teaching civics and their regulated professional responsibility for teaching civics in a public-school setting. This tension was compounded by teaching a controversial issue such as a Presidential Election, described in this study significant to students and citizens, with varying viewpoints. State and local policies governing civic instruction and the instruction of controversial issues, fully discussed in Chapter Two, outline acceptable professional practice for the participants. However, as expertly trained educators, it is impossible to ignore the ethical tensions that co-exist within the policy framework. I interpreted both simultaneously using the Hess (2005) four-part framework for how teachers enact controversial classroom issues, making a note of characteristics that fell within multiple descriptors.

Working within the public-school space means considering layers of policy, context, and expectations. Hess (2005) categorized teachers into four main types when covering controversial issues. First-grade teacher Ms. Austen demonstrated characteristics predominantly of the balanced approach with some privileged approach elements. Like the balanced approached teacher, Ms. Austen believed that Presidential Elections are authentic controversial issues that deserve a fair and balanced representation for both sides. However, Ms. Austen shared that in her professional judgment, a sizeable portion of the issues represented by one campaign ranged from

untruths to lies. In that sense, Ms. Austen represented elements of the privileged approach. However, she fell short of the full definition because she clarified that she would handle specific factual inaccuracies on case-by-case instances to present a preponderance of the evidence, not to persuade students to adopt her personal political point of view. Second-grade teacher Ms. Truet showed traits of both avoidance and balance in her approach to teaching the 2020 Presidential Election, although her avoidance traits presented in a nuanced form from those characterized by Hess (2005). Ms. Truett exhibited avoidance traits by worrying about her ability to present the Presidential Election fairly, and she was relieved that distance learning provided a buffer from difficult conversations around the January 6, 2021, attacks at the U.S. Capitol. Ms. Truet said, "I'm kind of glad that I didn't have to go there[5] just because I might have, I might have upset someone." While Ms. Truet expressed tension and beliefs that resembled avoidance, in practice, her work resembled many of the characteristics of the balanced approach Hess (2005) described. For example, Ms. Truet made repeated statements about presenting information that would allow students the opportunity to make up their minds independent from messages they might receive from peers, media, or family.

Additionally, despite concerns about her personal political views, Ms. Truet incorporated many additional resources beyond those provided by *Scholastic News*, and she was the only participant able to host synchronous discussions during distance learning. She chose to discuss the lack of an apparent or projected winner in the Presidential Race. This action was an act in balance as she reported seeing parents of her students visibly upset through her social media. Third-grade teacher Ms. Williams fully embodied the Hess (2005) description of a balanced

[5] "there" is referencing a classroom discussion about the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

approach to teaching controversial issues. Ms. Williams felt an ethical pull to be balanced, present herself as a neutral facilitator for the lessons, and give equal credence to both viewpoints to the Presidential Election. Ms. Williams said, “I was excited to be a neutral person for them, just a factual source. Like, let's discuss this and talk about this, and let’s have fun with it instead of all the negativity around it.” Each teacher discussed an internal conflict between their ethical beliefs and their professional duties; however, none of the teachers exhibited the denial posture described by Hess (2005). Additionally, it is important to remember that Hess (2005) did not rank or endorse any of the four models in her framework; these models only serve as ways to understand common ways many teachers responded to teaching controversial issues in classrooms.

Student Engagement/Enjoyment

The teacher participants identified meaningful ways that their students demonstrated engagement and enjoyment with the 2020 Presidential Election content through the *Scholastic News* resources. *Scholastic News* had a long history of engaging students through nationwide mock elections. These mock elections traditionally mirrored most Presidential Election results from 1940 to 2020; see Chapter Two for a complete discussion. Due to the nationwide distance learning protocols, *Scholastic News* pivoted from their traditional classroom mock election where teachers tallied results and reported class results to Scholastic, Inc., to a format where students individually voted using a class code. The new format meant that neither the teacher nor the class knew the “popular vote” for their classroom. This marked difference from prior years when *Scholastic News* would send election materials like a ballot box, ballots, and voting stickers to support a mock election. All three teachers identified this change as an unintended strength of the COVID-19 distance learning protocols, with one of the teachers qualifying her

answer. First-grade teacher Ms. Austen appreciated removing the classroom vote to focus on discussion only; she said, "[y]ou're still going to want to have classroom discussion, and let kids give their opinions and things like that…If they think most people believe the other way, they might be less likely to speak up and give their opinion." Second-grade teacher Ms. Truet reflected that the traditional classroom mock elections promote alienating minority political opinions; she believes that regardless of a school's context, the new online student voting platform promoted student individuality and student voice. Ms. Truet said, "I would prefer an online style to where you got your vote, and your vote counted. And overall, this is how the results nationwide came out. That's a lot safer than just the results from our classroom." Third-grade teacher Ms. Williams thought that the online voting system offered positives and negatives. Ms. Williams thought Scholastic should continue with the new national system that offers students privacy as an option for teachers who prefer that option. She commented that she would likely use it as an opportunity to discuss multiple ways to cast ballots and perhaps provide a paper "back-up" ballot for security. Ms. Williams said, "[f]or me, I think my students would like to know the classroom winner. I would just like to have more options, but I like the idea of setting up a *Scholastic News* digital polling booth." For each teacher, the Scholastic Student voice Vote shift meant a more up-to-date and engaging method of voting that promoted student privacy. Like other *Scholastic News* resources, a teacher could modify this activity and linked to project-based learning as suggested by Ms. Williams.

In addition to participating in classroom elections, all three teachers identified times when students wrote or made comments that imparted political opinions about the 2020 Presidential Election. The teachers characterized these comments as both student engagement and enjoyment, and additionally, the teachers independently referred to them as reflections of

opinions that students likely heard at home either through relatives, friends, or the media. The opinions expressed by the students included negative opinions against a Presidential candidate, positive opinions toward a Presidential candidate, feelings of admiration toward a candidate, fears surrounding a Presidential candidate or his platform, statements about a parent's voting plans, and statements about debunked conspiracy theories. Additionally, one teacher received praise from parents about students enjoying the Presidential Election content, and none of the teachers reported parents complaining about the Presidential Election content. In order to further protect the participants and the students in their classrooms, I did not provide the teachers' pseudonyms or grade level with quotes for this section as I offer quotes to illustrate examples.

One teacher reported that a student was very interested in discussing the transition of power between Donald Trump and Joe Biden and that Donald Trump was no longer President. The teacher said, "[t]here was one little girl who told me he was my favorite President. So, we talked about where he was now, and what he was doing." The same teacher encountered a student who commented that his grandfather told him that Joe Biden was not the legitimate President, and the election was fake. The teacher responded by recentering the preponderance facts and stated, "Joe Biden was inaugurated the 46th President on January 20, 2021. He is the real President of the United States of America." Another teacher commented on a discussion she was able to have about the historic nature of the first female Vice President; she said, "[w]e did get to have a rich discussion about how awesome we have our first female vice president. Everybody, even the kids that I know supported [Trump], everybody was very accepting and there were no snarls." That same teacher also shared a comment described as moving from the 2016 election that continued to stay with her as she planned Presidential Election materials and discussion.

During the 2016 Presidential Election, the teacher only had one student vote for Hillary Clinton in her classroom mock election. The teacher said only one student verbally supported Hillary Clinton in a classroom conversation; the teacher said, "…the student's comment was we don't want to lose our cell phones." The teacher assumed the student referred to the Lifeline Program for Low-Income Consumers that provided free or deeply discounted cellphones to Americans qualifying because of various support services, income thresholds, or veteran statuses (Federal Communications Commission, 2021). The program had a history of being politicized by conservative media, and the devices were sometimes nicknamed "Obama-phones;" after Donald's Trumps 2016 election victory, false social media posts circulated that the program would be terminated immediately (Harrington, 2015; LaCapria, 2016). Another teacher recalled students referenced whom their parents would or would not vote for on election day on a *Scholastic News* activity page. That teacher said, "[i]t was 'my dad thinks this about the election.' It was very opinionated; I let them talk. I let them say their opinions, and it was fun to read these based on the sentences that they used." These examples helped to illustrate the engagement and enjoyment that the teachers sensed with the content and the *Scholastic News* materials for the Presidential Elections. The comments also illustrate the complexities of a democratic society where students could find themselves in a minority political opinion among peers.

Qualitative Media Analysis of *Scholastic News* Materials

This section of the chapter is a continuation of the Qualitative Media Analysis described in Chapter Two. It included materials produced by Scholastic, Inc. for the participant teachers. The materials were provided as an in-kind gift by the Research and Validation Department of Scholastic, Inc., with no expectation of oversight of this study. They did not review the study

design, data, analysis, or drafts of the study before public dissemination of this study. I completed the following analysis before the first teacher interview occurred to better familiarize myself with the materials. However, I did not share my professional analysis with the participants. This analysis should be considered my independent work based on my experience with ten years of elementary classroom experience teaching with *Scholastic News* and my experience as a graduate-level researcher completing this analysis as part of a more extensive qualitative study. This analysis is not the primary data source for this study. Instead, it is part of the triangulation to confirm or disconfirm the findings for the study.

First Grade Presidential Election Materials

Scholastic, Inc. continued the tradition of publishing a Presidential Election issue for first-grade students for October for the 2020 Presidential Election (Scholastic, Inc., 2020a). The centerpiece of their work included a student periodical titled Future Voter with a young Black girl holding a sign that explained that while students could not vote yet, they could practice now to become the best voters possible in the future. The periodical included a digital subscription with an audio and Spanish translation. The civics content focused on the democratic virtues of voters' thoughtfulness, patience, and sportsmanship. Student participation in the Scholastic Student Election was solicited at the bottom of pages two and three with an internet link and class code. No information other than candidate pictures and names was given. The back page included math integration with reading a bar graph to interpret data. Only reading standards were mentioned, but this covered core first-grade math skills as well, although the questions were surface level and did not involve social studies content.

Lesson extensions for this issue included a three-minute video about a young girl who accompanied her parents to vote. The video included Presidential Election vocabulary words like

political parties, election day, polling place, voting requirements, secret voting, ways to vote, election results. The video did a strong job summarizing the major points of Presidential Elections relevant to early elementary students. Next, a vocabulary slideshow was included that had three words, practice, candidates, and decide. This slideshow would have been more beneficial if it had reflected words from either the democratic values in the article or the terms in the video. Then students had an opportunity to design a campaign poster digitally or print a graphic organizer and design one by hand. This activity offered many options and student choices with creativity and artistic possibilities. Three skill-building sheets were included that could be printed for paper, used as a PDF, or loaded directly to Google Classroom. The first skill-builder checked for reading comprehension and application of a democratic value (sportsmanship). Overall, it was a quality resource. The second skill-builder involved coloring sight words with specific colors, and I would not describe it as meaningful work. The final skill-builder asked teachers to cut out mock voting stickers for students to color and tape to their shirts. While this adds to the authenticity of a classroom election, I believe students should choose which sticker, and they should have more practice time cutting at the first-grade level. Finally, the teacher lesson plan includes standards, objectives, discussion points, and suggested activities. In addition, the lesson plan suggests a mock classroom election with a ballot box. The lesson plan offers clear objectives for the hands-on poster activity with a suggested example to show students what complete work might look like. The lesson plan is missing any background information for the teacher about the actual 2020 Presidential Election, the candidates, how to hold an appropriate conversation about the election, answer students' questions about the candidates, suggested books, or even support students in the Scholastic Student Vote.

In January of 2021, Scholastic, Inc. did not print a traditional post-election edition of *Scholastic News* as they historically did. Typically, they sent out a post-election edition in January to cover the new President's inauguration. In January of 2021, *Scholastic News* posted a digital edition (Scholastic, Inc. 2021a) without a volume number labeled "Election 2020." The title of this digital edition was Our New President. The cover featured a large picture of the White House in summer and a small picture of President Biden in the right corner. The bottom of the page included a caption that explained he was the new president, and it cued students that the edition would focus on elements of his new job. Inside, the digital edition included four blocks that explained President Biden's job: giving speeches, flying on Air Force One, leading the Armed Forces, and signing new laws. The right column of page three was dedicated to Vice President Harris. This section included practice pronouncing her first name, a brief biography, highlighting her important role in history as the first woman, Black, and Indian American Vice President. I believe this content is strong and appropriate considering the research from political science that demonstrated the role the presidency plays in young minds as understanding government. I especially think the biography of Vice President Harris seemed developmentally appropriate and engaging for a first-grade audience. The back page of the digital edition included a graphic of the White House with interactive features to click. This graphic matched well with the video that accompanied the issue. The video that accompanied the issue was focused on the White House. It appeared to be made with older footage of the White House. It had U.S. Presidents and First Ladies from both political parties, but it did not have footage from either former President Trump or former First Lady Melania Trump. The digital edition did not contain any lesson plans or skill-building activities. While the content was appropriate for the students,

the supports for teachers and students were disappointing and not acceptable for a critical moment in history.

Second Grade Presidential Election Materials

In October of 2020, Scholastic, Inc. published their second-grade materials for the 2020 Presidential Election with the student periodical titled Can a Kid be President as the foundation (Scholastic, Inc, 2020b). Like the first-grade edition, this edition included digital access with a Spanish edition, but this grade level also included a lower reading level edition and a higher reading level edition. The cover featured a young Black male student excitedly raising his arms at a podium labeled as the White House. The caption foreshadowed that inside, students would learn about that question and voting on the issue. The content inside the article focused on the frequency of Presidential Elections, the date of the 2020 Presidential Election, requirements to become President, requirements to vote, brief information about the two major candidates, and brief information about Election Day. On page two, the students received information to participate in the Scholastic Student vote with their class code. The back page of the edition featured a bar graph activity very similar to the first-grade edition with no clear connection to the content.

Lesson extension for the second-grade edition included the same video, vocabulary word slideshow, and campaign poster activity with no modification for the grade level. I do believe that both the video and campaign poster activity remain appropriate for second grade with additional scaffolding, but the slideshow vocabulary words remain disconnected from the video. The second-grade edition contained five skill-builder sheets, and all but one was able to be accessed as printouts, PDF, and loaded to Google Classroom. The first skill-builder focused on recalling key details from the periodical text. The activity accurately measured the skill of

recalling key details, but it did not offer anything in terms of critical thinking or deeper learning. The second skill-builder was a reading comprehension multiple choice activity focusing on multiple domains of comprehension skills. This skill sheet mostly requires surface-level recall, and one question is a non-exemplar question that could be argued as ableist. The question read, "Which of these is NOT a way people can vote?" The answer meant to be marked said, "They can whisper who they want to be president." As a child of a legally blind parent, I frequently assisted my father in the voting booth to make his selection after I turned 18; I can assure Scholastic, Inc. he whispered to me as his legal advocate (State Board of Elections, 2020). The third skill-builder increased the complexity of key details of a text by incorporating "5W's and an H" technique. This is an improvement to low-level recall. The fourth skill-builder focused on vocabulary at a surface level with some room for visual creativity at the bottom. However, the space to visually create was not linked to the purpose of the work which was vocabulary. The final skill-builder focused on opinion writing and asked students to draw themselves as President and imagine one way they would help people and the planet. This is an interesting extension of the Presidential Election because it focuses on the candidates and offers insight into the values the students think are important for others and the world. The lesson plan for this edition included a letter from the editor explaining the Scholastic Student Vote, ways to preview the issue, activities for reading the issue, cross-curricular connections, links to archival editions about citizenship, and links to the differentiated reading level editions of the issue. This lesson plan is very thorough and well thought out. It is still missing some basic background knowledge on Presidential Elections and how to answer questions about the content, but it improves the first-grade example.

Unlike the first-grade edition, the second-grade post-election edition did come out in the paper format. However, it did not have a volume or issue number, and it did not have a special designation above the title. The post-election issue was titled Our Newly Elected President (Scholastic, Inc., 2021b). The cover featured the same summertime picture of the White House and Joe Biden as the first-grade issue, and the caption also referenced looking inside to find out more about the job of a President. Inside the issue, the text was more complex and discussed the inauguration of Joe Biden and his work after that day. Similarly, to the first-grade issue it mentioned that he would sign new laws, work with leaders of other countries, travel in Air Force One, and lead the armed forces. This issue also focused a column on Vice President Harris and her diverse and historical background. The back of the issue features the same graphic of the White House with more text features and labels. As the first-grade issue, the second-grade issue is strong and appropriate for the occasion.

Unlike the first-grade issue, the second-grade issue came with fully realized digital and skill-builder resources. The second-grade issue came with the same White House video that accompanied the first-grade issue. The issue also contained four targeted vocabulary slideshow words that nicely complemented the content. There was an interactive drag and drop digital activity to place text features on a newspaper article. The writing activity for this issue included a graphic organizer for students to explain some of the newly elected president's jobs. There were five skill-builder activities and all but one was available to load on Google Classroom like the pre-election activity. The first two skill-builders mirrored the pre-election surface level recall and multiple choice for reading comprehension. The third activity was a unique vocabulary activity where students examined the President’s Oath of Office, and the students cut out the simplified text to cover the most challenging part to make it easier to read. I found this to be an intriguing

activity. The fourth activity was another surface-level vocabulary activity, and the final question contained a misconception. The question asked students what law they would help make if they were president, and I believe that could confuse the role of the president with that of the legislature. A better alternative would be what law you would like to sign. The final skill-builder was a print version of the writing task graphic organizer. The lesson plan for the issue included standards, lesson previews, pacing, scaffolding ideas, ways to turn the online activity into a game, promote cross-disciplinary connections, and archival issues about Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. Again, the lesson supports and materials appeared well developed and organized. There was no support for the lack of former President Trump attending President Biden's inauguration, but it is not clear that the editor would have known that by publication date.

Third Grade Presidential Election Materials

The third-grade edition for the pre-election was published in late September of 2020. Beginning in third grade, *Scholastic News* issues become longer and focus on multiple content areas, but they have a major focus, present on the cover. This edition included a digital issue, a Spanish issue, and a lower-level reading issue. The title of this issue was Election 2020: Who Will Win? (Scholastic, Inc., 2020c). The cover was decorated in a motif of blue stars, a white midground with a title, and red and white stripes at the bottom. Similar pictures of Donald Trump and Joe Biden were placed in the zeroes of the '2020' of the title. Inside the issue, students were greeted with characters of the candidates and biographical information. The article introduced the upcoming election, background information of each major candidate and focused on the rallies to typically earn voter support. The article mentioned alternatives to rallies in light of COVID-19, including online rallies and debates. Information was available for students to go

online and vote in the Scholastic Student Vote with their classroom code. The right column of the article included the timeline of a generic candidate running for president. The remaining articles were dedicated to other topics, but the graph reading activity included biographical information about presidents born in various states on the back page. This activity also suggested research-based activities to learn where three additional Presidents were born. This activity is a stronger relationship to the same skill present in the first and second-grade issues. A similar research-based activity could be included or designed by a teacher depending on student interests. For example, these teachers and students live in Kentucky. The teachers could have students research what President and which three Vice Presidents were born in Kentucky.

Several resources accompanied the pre-election edition for teachers and students. There was a video for teachers to use that was set up like a game show to increase engagement for students. The skill-builder focusing on close-reading required students to use text-based evidence to recall information from the article, but it did not require them to use the information critically or in a deeper learning way. The vocabulary activity also required surface-level reproduction of words and offered little creativity for students to demonstrate the meanings of words. Some of the other activities co-mingled topics from the entire issue across activities. This seems problematic because the 2020 Election issue was published in late September, but the first and second-grade issues are published in October, closer to the election. Teachers choosing to wait and use this issue closer to the election might not use all of the activities. The teacher lesson plan included learning objectives, standards, ways to prepare for the lesson, techniques for using close-reading questions, and advice for using the other skill-building activities. Another unique feature to the third-grade platform was support and advice for distance learning. Unfortunately,

the teacher supports did not include background information about election specifics or how to handle discussions in classrooms.

The third-grade post-election issue is also atypical considering the past history of Presidential Elections editions. Typically, *Scholastic News* covers the outcome of the election either in November or December. Early in 2019 and into 2020 the scope and sequence for third grade on the *Scholastic News* website included such an article. However, it was never produced. In mid-January, *Scholastic News* produced the regularly planned Inauguration Day issue featuring a picture of the White House with a large overlayed picture of President Joe Biden. Near the bottom of the page, a picture of Vice President Harris is included alongside other featured articles. The lead article is titled The President's First Day (Scholastic Inc., 2021c). This issue included a digital copy, a Spanish copy, and a lower text complexity copy. Inside the issue, President Biden has a large picture and information about the upcoming Inauguration Day celebration. The article focused on the Oath of Office and provided a copy of it for students with highlighted text explained. On the next page, there is a picture of First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, although her honorific does not identify her, and she was described as a "teacher." The article ends with a discussion of how COVID-19 impacted the planning of the Inauguration Day celebration. Vice President Harris received some brief biographical information in the right column, but not as much attention as was paid in either first or second grade. It would be unfair to analyze and critique this for failing to address the January 6, 2021, attacks on the U.S. Capitol because the printing likely happened before the attacks. However, Dr. Biden and Vice President Harries' textual treatment is inadequate compared to the lower grades, which had different editors and authors.

The Inauguration Day issue included a similar video to the pre-election video that was interactive and game show-like. The issue had a brief slideshow deck that reinforced elements of the "Oath of Office" activity. The "What I Learned" skill-builder is low-level surface recall information, and I take issue with question 2 for issues of sexism. The questions read, "Who will be America's Vice President? Jill Biden or Kamala Harris?" Again, the content creators have left off Dr. Jill Biden's honorific, and it has become something of a commonly known issue that she is typically addressed as such. Secondly, it is disrespectful to compare the first woman to be Vice President to the First Lady, likely creating a misconception for elementary students. The close-reading questions for this issue required deeper thinking, but only if the students have access to better quality text about Vice President Harris. The lessons contained similar objectives, standards, and advice for the teachers to the pre-election issue.

Post-Election Update

Historically *Scholastic News* published an issue for third grade following Election Day. This was true even after the 2000 Presidential Election when the election remained contested, and it was ultimately decided narrowly in the Supreme Court in December of 2000. However, in 2020, *Scholastic News* opted to email teachers with a digital article instead. This article was never published on the teachers' dashboard. It was only accessible through the one-time email. The title of the article was *Biden Wins the Presidency* (Scholastic, Inc., 2020d). On November 12, 2020, the article was sent out five days after the Associated Press and most major news outlets projected Joe Biden the next President of the United States. However, then President Donald Trump and many supporters were alleging voter misconduct and introducing court challenges in several states. By November 12, 2020, most cases had yet to be heard by a judge,

including the one that would be ultimately rejected by the Supreme Court of the United States (Associated Press, 2020b).

The article explained that Joe Biden was projected to receive the most votes from the Electoral College, and it contained a link to an older article about the Electoral College. The article mentioned that the race was too close to call on Election Day and that as of publishing Donald Trump had not conceded the election because he planned to ask for recounts in two states. The article said, "[Trump] believes that the vote count is incorrect. So far, there is no evidence to support this claim." While this is a factually true statement, at the time it met this study's definition of a controversial issue established in Chapter One. Now with facts in evidence, those claims no longer meet the definition of a controversial issue as the Trump Campaign and allies lost all but one of the court challenges (Associated Press, 2020b). Therefore, I believe it should have been omitted or rewritten.

The article provided context to Joe Biden's victory speech, the historic nature of Kamala Harris serving as the first woman, Black, and Asian American Vice President, and the timeline for the certification of the Electoral College votes. Graphics in the article illustrated the Electoral College votes by state. No other resources or lesson plans were provided with this article.

January 6, 2021, Materials Regarding the Attack on the U.S. Capitol

After the attacks on the U.S. Capitol by insurrectionists on January 6, 2021, *Scholastic News* sent out a special email to subscribers. The email contained an article designed for grades third through fifth with additional resources (Scholastic, Inc., 2021d). The resources included sharing it to Google Classroom, making a PDF, creating a student view, or reading it as an audio file. The article's content carefully covered the attack by recounting the context of the day and the Constitutional purpose of Congress counting and certifying the Electoral votes. Next, the

article presented President Trump's fraud position and explained that experts had shown there was no proof of the allegations. Then the article appropriately summarized the events of the attack for a third through the fifth-grade audience and included pictures from the day as primary sources. Political figures from both parties, including Vice President Pence, were directly quoted condemning the attacks. The article presented President Trump's response and stated that "many people did not think that response was strong enough." The article ended with three open-ended discussion questions that posed issues about democracy, condemning violence, and finding a compromise.

In addition to the article for students, three teacher resources were provided, including ways to support students through difficult times, strategies for respectful discussions, and talking about the U.S. Capitol Riots with Young Children. While the article would be inappropriate for grades younger than third, the three teacher resources would benefit any elementary age group. The two resources created for difficult times and respectful conversations could be adapted into routine structures and supports for *Scholastic News* activities. They are applicable across content areas and support classroom community building and positive social-emotional well-being. The third resource was written by an expert in child education and behavior, and the advice is well constructed and sound.

Chapter Summary

This chapter began with an analysis process described in Chapter Three that mirrored the methodology outline of the study, a single case study with embedded units of analysis (Yin, 2018). First, I began at the embedded unit of analysis level, the individual teacher, and provided analysis descriptions. Next, I wove the embedded units into a longer description and figure available at the end of this chapter. Then, I provided a separate qualitative media analysis to

finish the work started in Chapter Two; this work was provided to triangulate findings in this study. In the next chapter, I reviewed this study, provide the six findings at the case level, discuss the findings, identify the limitations of the study, then I considered the findings in terms of possible future research, policy, and practice, and I offered recommendations for future teachers considering controversial issues in early elementary education.

Table Three: Codebook (Adapted from Harper et al., in press)

Primary Theme	Definition	Subthemes from First Cycle Analysis Paraphrased Statements
Pedagogical Usefulness	Statements from participants about materials created by *Scholastic News* for the 2020 Presidential Election.	Frist Grade Ms. Austen: *Scholastic News* as a teaching tool in my classroom
		Second Grade Ms. Truet: *Scholastic News* as an instructional tool
		Third Grade Ms. Williams: *Scholastic News* as a teaching tool in my classroom
Professional Confidence	Statements from participants indicating beliefs held about their abilities as teachers, instructional leaders, professional judgment, experience, education, and identity in the school community.	First Grade Ms. Austen: I am confident in my ability as a teacher leader
		Second Grade Ms. Truet: My professional identity, experience, and confidence
		Third Grade Ms. Williams: I am confident in my abilities as a teacher leader and professional
Irregularities in the 2020-2021 School Year	Abnormalities in the school year related to COVID-19 distance learning protocols and other global/current events.	First Grade Ms. Austen: The 2020 school year was different than any other year
		Second Grade Ms. Truet: 2020 was the most different year I've ever experienced
		Third Grade Ms. Williams: 2020 was different than any other school year
Professional Beliefs and Professional Realities for Civic Education	Professional beliefs about Presidential Elections are attitudes held by the teachers about candidates or events that should be facilitated with students appropriately. Professional realities are the interconnected state standards, state laws, and local policies regulating	First Grade Ms. Austen: I want to minimize my bias as much as possible
		Second Grade Ms. Truet: I hold back my opinion, but I reinforce kindness and fairness
		Third Grade Ms. Williams: I desire to stay neutral as a teacher

Table Three Continued

	the teaching of Presidential Elections in public schools.	
Student Engagement Enjoyment	Evidence that students were engaged in the content and enjoyed the topic of the 2020 Presidential Election.	First Grade Ms. Austen: Creating a place for respectful discussions are important for my teaching style
		First Grade Ms. Austen: My students were engaged and enjoyed learning about the 2020 Presidential Election
		First Grade Ms. Austen: Students reflect opinions from home
		Second Grade Ms. Truet: Conversations are important part of how I teach sensitive issues in person
		Second Grade Ms. Truet: Kids are reflecting what they are hearing at home
		Second Grade Ms. Truet: My students were engaged in the 2020 Presidential Election
		Third Grade Ms. Williams: My students were engaged and interested in the Presidential Election
		Third Grade Ms. Williams: Students reflect opinions and beliefs from home

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion

Introduction

The final chapter begins with a summary of the overall study design to bring the reader's scope and context into view. Next, I present the findings from the study from the study directly linked to research questions, elements of triangulation, and literature discussed throughout this study. Then I move beyond the findings to discuss the findings by making new applications to a deeper and richer understanding of the original research questions that initiated this study. Following the discussion section, I examined the study's limitations to present a fair assessment of unintended setbacks in the design that may or may not have impacted data or data collection within the study. Then I moved into a series of applications concerning the findings regarding future research, policy, and practice. After the application section I present a set of recommendations based upon my experience as a researcher and teacher and linked to literature in Chapter Two. The chapter ended with a brief conclusion.

Summary of Research Study

This study began with a simple idea: I had been a former elementary school teacher who loved teaching civics and Presidential Elections, but I left the classroom disillusioned after the 2016 Presidential Election. For nearly two years, I devoted my doctoral studies to learning about controversial issues in education and ultimately back to Presidential Elections in elementary education. To keep the study focused on the professional roles of the teachers and the materials that supported the teachers, I obtained materials for the participant teachers from *Scholastic News,* a student periodical company with a history of supporting schools to engage students in Presidential Elections since 1940. The two research questions for this study were narrowly focused on exploring how early elementary public-school teachers taught the 2020 Presidential

Election using *Scholastic News* and what pedagogical strengths the teachers found in the materials as they taught.

As the study took shape, I purposefully recruited three teacher leaders with various years of experience. The teachers taught first, second, and third grade in a public school district in Kentucky. The research design was a case study with embedded units of analysis, where the case as a whole was the district using the *Scholastic News* materials, and the embedded units were the three individual teachers. I interviewed each teacher using a technique that focused on maximizing their professional voice and avoiding soliciting personal opinions. The teachers received their transcripts, analytical notes, and the first-stage analysis drafts to check for accuracy. During this time, I was interpreting the work they had done, and I checked with them to see that my interpretations were accurate. Next, I began to tie together the embedded units, and I created a more extensive analysis. I did not share this with the teachers, but I sometimes double-checked specific quotes for meaning accuracy. From this point on, the interpretations were all mine. Next, I brought in a qualitative document analysis of the *Scholastic News* materials before interviewing the teachers. This was included to help confirm or disconfirm my findings. In the last part of the study, I brought together coding from the interviews, information from the document analysis, triangulation from literature, news stories, and other data to identify six findings for the original research questions.

Findings

The following findings are labeled with their corresponding research question. When applicable, triangulated data, literature, or additional findings have been cited to confirm these findings. The findings are based upon my interpretation of the data after iterative rounds of analysis. Participants could member-check the data at the transcript stage, the analytic memo

stage, and after the first analysis stage. If an interpretation for a particular quote was in question, I followed up for elaboration on that quote. However, the post-coding stage discussed in Chapter Three to interpret the following findings is the researcher's work. A complete discussion of the findings are included in the next chapter of the study.

Reviewing the Research Questions

1. How are *Scholastic News* magazines, and resources, used by three public-school teachers to teach the 2020 Presidential Election to early elementary students (grades1-3)?
2. What pedagogical strengths and weaknesses do the three public-school teachers identify in the *Scholastic News* magazines and resources, and in what ways do they (or would they) modify them to fit their contexts?

Finding 1—RQ1: *Scholastic News* magazines and resources served as a touchstone for the teachers as they navigated their professional beliefs within their professional realities.

While teaching the 2020 Presidential Election, the teachers described an internal tension between their professional training and the professional realities of the state, local, and community contexts where they taught. During the analysis phase, I used the Hess (2005) framework to understand how they navigated the digital and physical classrooms. All three of the teachers primarily exhibited a commitment to the balanced approach described by Hess (2005), with two of the teachers showing nuanced characteristics of other approaches as well. The balanced approached best aligns with the professional of the state and local policies governing their teaching. For example, Hess (2005) wrote, "…balance typically involves applying a standard for determining whether a topic is an issue and, if it is, teaching about it without favoring a particular perspective" (p. 48). The Kentucky Department of Education's social studies standards for grades one through three said, "[students] explore the interplay between

people…they engage in learning the motivations of diverse groups… students also investigate how cultures work together, while acknowledging the different perspectives of diverse groups." (2019c, p. 25). The "Adams County Public Schools" policy on controversial issues said, "The study of controversial issues shall be objective and scholarly" (p.1). Teachers are required to perform their duties regarding controversial issues, like a Presidential Election, in a balanced manner giving both major candidates equal attention regardless of their other professional beliefs, let alone their personal political beliefs. The two teachers who exhibited both privilege and avoidance did not do so because of their personal political affiliations. Their beliefs grew from years of expertise in the classrooms, having the most experience teaching Presidential Elections, and being highly educated citizens.

Within this tension between their professional belief and the professional reality, all three teachers used *Scholastic News* and its resources as a touchstone for balance while teaching the 2020 Presidential Elections. Oxford dictionary described a touchstone as, "a standard or criterion by which something is judged or recognized." The teachers trusted *Scholastic News* based on their history as a student and as a teacher having previously taught Presidential Elections with *Scholastic News*. They believed that the student issues, resources, and articles brought a balanced approach to instruction. Additionally, they saw value in using materials created by a disinterested source rather than those created by themselves for the Presidential Election. The *Scholastic News* materials allowed a strategy for the teachers to enact if student discussions became inappropriate for their grade level, and they supported the teacher who worried about imparting personal political beliefs in the classroom.

On the individual level, each teacher used *Scholastic News* in a tailored way as a touchstone, that matched their style of teaching controversial issues. First-grade teacher Ms.

Austen used *Scholastic News* as a touchstone for limiting her bias, of which she was self-aware. Ms. Austen was clear that her bias was professional and based upon the social media behavior of a candidate, his treatment of others, and factual demonstration of an unprecedented number of untruths by himself and his campaign reported in multiple credible news sources[6]. Ms. Austen commented that she had experience teaching previous elections and had never held a previous professional opinion of that party's candidate in a similar fashion. She said, "This was unprecedented, and I used *Scholastic News* to help me keep it as middle of the road as possible." Second-grade teacher Ms. Truet used the *Scholastic News* articles as she worried about her ability to contain her personal views. Ms. Truet routinely remarked that she would return to *Scholastic News* with the students for guidance for students to develop their own independent thoughts separate from those of peers, family, or media. For example, Ms. Truet said, "I've tried to stay neutral like Scholastic, I try to stay fair and impartial, and I just encourage the kids to come up with their own ideas and their own beliefs." Third-grade teacher Ms. William most directly resembled the balanced approach and consistently repeated examples of returning to *Scholastic News* for support. When explaining her general process, Ms. Williams said, "I didn't worry about my own biases, and *Scholastic News* absolutely helped me do that. It was just something that I followed very tediously. I just leaned on that resource to guide me through how to do this." The previous examples illustrated the importance of the touchstone feature the *Scholastic News* resources played in different ways for elementary teachers, and how that touchstone could adapt to fit the professional needs of the teacher within the professional reality of the teacher. The qualitative media analysis included in this study confirmed the

[6] No citations or candidate name are provided for these claims. This decision was made by the researcher to protect the privacy of Ms. Austen. Interpretations to the candidate's identity made by readers will not be confirmed or denied by the researcher.

appropriateness of *Scholastic News* at each grade level as an instructional tool for the 2020 Presidential Election.

Finding 2—RQ1: *Scholastic News* magazines and resources served as the groundwork for teachers to build instructional units about the Presidential Election to fit their context students' needs and interests.

All three participant teachers used *Scholastic News* as a starting point for their instructional design; it was not the entirety of their unit. At the center of their unit teachers used the student periodicals that came in the form of consumable print text and digital print texts. The teachers selected from the myriad of print and digital resources provided by *Scholastic News* to create an experience for their students based upon their students' context, needs, and interests. The teachers commented that they began by reviewing the teacher lesson plans, and they selected available experiences in an order they preferred. Next, the teachers selected materials from other sources, media, and from their own professional network to complement the *Scholastic News* materials. This allowed the teachers to integrate more content areas, reach in-content standards more deeply, and follow student questions. In first grade, Ms. Austen drew connections between a non-fiction text Grace for President (2008) and the historic election of Vice President Kamala Harris. In second grade Ms. Truet included historical use of primary source video to complement the *Scholastic News* article quoting Vice President Kamala Harris. In third grade, Ms. Williams extended the richness of the election vocabulary with additional vocabulary activities and discussions. These examples show that *Scholastic News* offers a benefit to teachers of all levels of expertise as foundational element in instructional design tailored to the needs and strengths of individual classrooms and students. The qualitative media analysis included in this study confirmed the appropriateness of *Scholastic News* at each grade level as a foundation for

instructional unit building. Additionally, the instructional materials described in the interview were reviewed and cited when available and confirm these findings as quality instructional supports for an interdisciplinary unit focused on the 2020 Presidential Election.

Finding 3—RQ1: *Scholastic News* magazines and resources provided a foundation for student engagement in Presidential Elections through opportunities for meaningful discussions about controversial issues that were not planned by *Scholastic, Inc.,* but grew from the professional experience of the teachers.

While COVID-19 distance learning protocols interrupted many of the opportunities for traditional student engagement and discussion, *Scholastic News* continued to offer a platform from which teachers could plan and implement ways to continue it or imagine ways they would have carried it out in the classroom based upon previous experience teaching Presidential Elections using *Scholastic News* While *Scholastic News* provided many resources for the 2020 Presidential Election, it also served an unwritten student engagement purpose; *Scholastic News* provided an appropriate foundation on which to hold discussions about Presidential Elections in early elementary classrooms. All three teachers shared a commitment to the importance of discussion as a powerful tool in the classroom, especially when linked to a non-fiction text. This finding is confirmed by literature that supports classroom discussion about controversial issues with informed students (Hess, 2018; Noddings & Brooks, 2017). First-grade teacher Ms. Austen shared a story about teaching before the election and COVID-19 when then-President Donald Trump was holding a rally in the state that a student attended; she said, "I had one boy who went to the rally and he was really excited about it …we discussed President Trump …some of my students felt [words he said] were mean, and then some who supported him." Second-grade teacher Ms. Truet believed having balanced discussions was important to growing and

preserving American democracy; she said, "[h]ow are we going to create an interest in civics and government for teenage voters if we don't like include them from the time when they hit school? I think they deserve to be a part of it!" Third-grade teacher Ms. Austen believed that classroom discussion about controversial issues is an important pedagogical tool that is best brought about by student discussion and interest. *Scholastic News* special resources, like the post-election email and the resources designed after the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, were prime examples of ways *Scholastic News* provided foundations for continued discussion and support for that type of dialogue. When asked if she would point out that former President Trump was the first President since Andrew Johnson not to attend his successor's inauguration Ms. Williams said, "I believe that having that conversation about his absence at the inauguration will be brought up. I think that I'll let the students guide where we go with the conversation, and I'll facilitate….we're also teaching sportsmanship behavior with civics." In the end Ms. Austen believed that a commitment to historical fact maintained her balance in preparation for the conversation she expected to happen, and she planned to address it as a choice former President Trump made while allowing students to lead the conversation and perhaps make their own connections to sportsmanship like behavior, and not from her own direction. The qualitative media analysis included in this study confirmed the appropriateness of *Scholastic News* at each grade level as a foundation for early elementary conversations about the 2020 Presidential Election and events related to it including the inauguration and January 6, 2021 attacks at the U.S. Capitol for all grades and the post-election for third grade only.

Finding 4—RQ2: The participant teachers appreciated the revised Scholastic Student Vote compared to the traditional mock classroom elections; this change was seen as an unintended benefit and should continue to be refined and offered as a choice by Scholastic, Inc.

Historically the largest means of student engagement for *Scholastic News h*as been the Scholastic Student Vote, a tradition since the Presidential Election of 1940. This year the Scholastic Student Vote underwent a transformation with students only voting online using a class code, and results went directly to Scholastic, Inc. Over the last twenty years, *Scholastic News* sent out student ballots and sometimes mock election kits. Teachers would hold elections and report the classroom results to Scholastic, Inc. via mail or their digital account. While students have had the option to vote online since the 2000 Presidential Election using a class code, the qualitative media analysis from Chapter Two found that the Scholastic Student Vote was primarily advertised as a classroom mock election activity. Classrooms traditionally used the mock elections to teach democratic norms of voting, and it was a commonly held best practice in elementary social studies methods to count and graph the results as a class (Haas et al. 1988; Haas et al., 2008; Parker, 2012; Payne & Journell, 2018). Most of the nation enrolls in distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic (U.S. Census, 2020) the traditional model of the Scholastic Student Vote could not be sustained. While *Scholastic News* did not confirm or report on the change, the revised system appeared alongside many of the other distance learning modifications and supports offered by *Scholastic News*.

All three of the teachers appreciated the increased student privacy that the online Scholastic Student Vote Offered. Additionally, the new system mirrored new advances in technology that students used across other *Scholastic News* platforms. All three teachers also recognized the potential benefit to classroom culture offered by the system. The new system sends each vote directly to *Scholastic News,* making the teacher an impartial party in the process. The classroom no longer can announce a certain candidate as a winner or loser, thus risking students to feel their opinion is a majority or a minority opinion in the classroom. First-grade

teacher Ms. Austen worried that mock elections with classroom results could impact students' wanting to discuss issues after the results were tallied; she said, "[i]f they see most people believe the other way, they might be less likely to speak up and give their opinion later on." Second-grade teacher Ms. Truet reflected on her years of experience as a classroom teacher doing mock elections and said, "I could see where we're going over the results and then it can certainly serve as a way to alienate students who voted for the losing candidate." Third-grade teacher Ms. Williams thought it was an important choice to have as a teacher to model ways of voting, and she wanted to spend more time thinking about the impact of classroom mock elections. Ms. Williams said, "I think this new format would make an interesting topic for my students to research and explore how citizens vote. Why is it different in different precincts? Also, talking about issues of election security would be an interesting project." Continuing to offer and revise the new system offers more choices for teachers who want additional privacy for classrooms, wish to be neutral parties in classroom elections, and wish to research ways to wish citizens vote. The qualitative media analysis included in this study confirmed the appropriateness and ease of access of changes to the Scholastic Student Vote format for all grades.

Finding 5—RQ2: *Scholastic News* resources were modified due to distance learning due to COVID-19 protocols; this is another unintended benefit of distance learning due to COVID-19 protocols.

In response to the majority of students spending part of the 2020-2021 school year engaged in some form of distance learning (U.S. Census, 2020), *Scholastic News* expanded their digital presence for students and teachers for each edition, and this included the issues at each grade level corresponding to the 2020 Presidential Election. Previous resources included videos, interactive games for classroom whiteboards, and printable skill-builders for teachers. In

response to the distance learning needs of schools, teachers, and student, *Scholastic News* began transforming many of those resources as discreet materials that could be assigned and posted into Google Classroom, the most popular learning management system in the United States for 2020 (James, 2021). This update by *Scholastic News* meant that teachers could assign digital issues to students, have the issue read to students, usually assign skill-builders, assign videos, and assign games and activities to individual students. Within Google Classroom the teachers could also return feedback to the students.

The teachers appreciated this update and the support that was included, although they stated that not all of the issues had been sorted out. For example, while Google Classroom was used in 54% schools, 46% of schools used other learning management systems including smaller niche platforms like SeeSaw. To help *Scholastic News* also made all skill-builder activities PDF files, but sometimes teachers reported mixed success. Even within Google Classroom teachers stated that students experienced a learning curve when manipulating the features built into graphic organizers and other sheets. Teachers also experienced a learning curve assigning skill builders appropriately. Despite the early missteps, the teachers all believed the new formats help strong educational benefits for reaching students in new ways in and out of the classroom. They were passionate about the continued development of those skill-builders as a way to increase accessibility to materials, increase equity for students, and increase student motivation to engage with content. The qualitative media analysis included in this study confirmed the appropriateness of the adapted distance learning materials created by *Scholastic News* at each grade level as an instructional tool for the 2020 Presidential Election.

Finding 6—RQ2: The participant teachers desired more background knowledge for Presidential Election in lesson plans, support in discussing sensitive topics with elementary students, and they would prefer the information to be easily accessible.

The final finding related to Finding Three. All three teachers used *Scholastic News* as a foundation for classroom discussions regardless of that activity being planned by Scholastic, Inc. All three teachers also felt that the lesson plans were incomplete because they lacked basic support for teachers about the Presidential Election process. Zimmerman and Robertson (2017) identified one reason that teacher might avoid controversial issues in the classroom as a feeling of lack of preparation. The three teachers desired more basic information in the digital lesson plan about the election process, key dates, peaceful transfer of power, and democratic norms. In first grade Ms. Austen said, "I do think they need to include that for teachers… Some teachers might know all of that…but I think more factual knowledge is important right now." In second grade Ms. Truet thought it would be especially important for new teachers; she said, "I just have always had this concern for new teachers because, I didn't know anything about this when I came out of college." In third grade Ms. Austen thought more background knowledge would help her in preparation; she said, "[g]ive us, give teachers a reinforcement. Almost a battery of knowledge, just to guide our direction for the election." The teachers were all very impressed with the materials that accompanied the article on the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. The teachers unanimously agreed they would like to see more direction in how to guide conversations and discussion embedded in lesson plans. They also wanted to make sure that special response articles and resources were easier to find. All of the teachers missed the resources because of district email filters, and all of the teachers suggested posting those resources on their *Scholastic News* dashboard. The qualitative media analysis included in this

study confirmed the lack of discussion support and basic election supports in the teacher lesson plans for *Scholastic News* at each grade level as an instructional tool for the 2020 Presidential Election. Additionally, in Chapter Two, the previous qualitative media analysis identified that prior to 2012 background knowledge and support was a common feature in *Scholastic News* lesson plans for grades one through three for Presidential Elections.

Discussion of Findings

In the following sub-sections, discussions are presented according to corresponding findings from Chapter Four. These discussions began with the research questions formed by the literature review, were investigated by the study design, were analyzed through data analysis, and grew from reflection and thought on the findings. The discussions represent both an ending to this study and my recommendations and ideas for the next steps. The discussions represent the contributions to the field I believe this study offered. Table Four summarized the findings can be found at the end of this chapter.

Discussion of Finding 1

This finding brought about two conclusions related to teaching Presidential Elections. In the first finding, I discussed how the teachers used *Scholastic News* as a touchstone to navigate between their professional beliefs and their professional realities as they taught the 2020 Presidential Election. First, I described a helpful model for understanding the differences between professional beliefs and professional realities for public-school teachers related to teaching Presidential Elections. Second, I discussed why *Scholastic News* was a reasonable choice for the teachers to use as a touchstone as they navigated between their professional beliefs and their professional realities while teaching the 2020 Presidential Election.

The first step in understanding the model of professional beliefs and professional realities about Presidential Elections is to understand what they are not. Figure Three is included at the end of this chapter to illustrate this concept. Professional beliefs about Presidential Elections are not the teachers' personal political opinions on the candidates, issues, or political parties. The study revealed that the teachers were mindful and prioritized not sharing their personal political opinions with their early elementary students. This was a decision they had reached long before the study, and the study did not attempt to understand their personal political opinions. Professional beliefs about Presidential Elections are defined as attitudes held by the teachers about candidates or events that should be facilitated with students appropriately. Those professional beliefs are informed by a teacher's educational training, expertise as a practitioner, and knowledge of their students. Professional realities around Presidential Elections are defined as the interconnected state standards, state laws, and local policies regulating the teaching of Presidential Elections in public schools. Within the study, the tension was present between teachers who felt a duty to their professional beliefs and a constraint to the professional reality.

In order to better explain this tension, I used two examples of behaviors from both major candidates that teacher candidates described as troubling. These examples offer illustrations of the tension present in their professional beliefs. The teachers felt like the behavior, not the candidates' political messages, were unacceptable. However, they felt torn by the professional reality to continue to present both sides without comment. This tension felt inauthentic because similar behavior from a student would result in disciplinary action. One teacher remained conflicted about Joe Biden's tough-guy language against Donald Trump before and early into his campaign. In 2018, before officially announcing his candidacy, Joe Biden publicly stated about then-President Donald Trump, "[t]hey asked me would I like to debate this gentleman, and I said

no. I said, 'If we were in high school, I'd take him behind the gym and beat the hell out of him'" (Stracqualursi, 2018).

Regarding Donald Trump, all three teachers agreed the most relevant example for early elementary students to understand and discuss was his lack of attending Joe Biden's inauguration. The teachers saw it relating to sportsmanship in students' lives and history. Additionally, the teachers had witnessed Former Vice President Al Gore and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton attend the inauguration of their opponents because of their historical roles as acting Vice President and former First Lady, respectively. *Scholastic* News in first grade supported democratic norms and behaviors and can be seen in the example shown in Figure Four at the end of this chapter. The teachers' professional beliefs told them these could and perhaps should be teachable moments with solid applications to students' lives, but the professional realities left them feeling constricted. The teachers reported that the professional realities of state standards, state laws, and local policies left them feeling uncertain if they could address behavior in either candidate that they would address within their classroom. Teachers deserve more autonomy from stakeholders in education to navigate their professional beliefs because of their expertise.

From this tension between the professional beliefs and the professional realities, the teachers turned to *Scholastic News* as a touchstone as they navigated the 2020 Presidential Election. While *Scholastic News* is not the only instructional tool that could be used like this, it appeared to be a successful tool for the teachers' needs. One reason *Scholastic News* worked as a successful touchstone for Presidential Elections could be interpreted in its generational following. *Scholastic News* has engaged American students in Presidential Elections since 1940. Scholastic, Inc. reported that their magazines are used in 67% of American schools (Scholastic,

Inc. 2019). All three participants reported using *Scholastic News* or *Weekly Reader* (purchased by *Scholastic News)* in school as a student and later as a teacher. It is reasonable to believe that many administrators, teachers, and parents are familiar with the brand and may have fond memories of the brand from school. Also, all three participants reported they trusted *Scholastic News* and would recommend it to a colleague. In this sense, *Scholastic News* symbolized a non-threatening disinterested resource that helped the teachers move between their professional beliefs and professional realities.

Discussion of Finding 2

In the previous conclusion regarding the first finding, I discussed the longstanding history of *Scholastic News* in American schools, and that history is mainly linked to teaching Presidential Elections. The second finding identified that the teachers used *Scholastic News* resources as a foundational element for constructing more fully realized units of instruction focused on the 2020 Presidential Elections. In addition to the historical legacy of *Scholastic News* and the reported trust in *Scholastic News* by the participants, there are additional pragmatic reasons why *Scholastic News* magazines and resources are an excellent instructional fit for teachers to use as a foundation for Presidential Election units in early elementary school. The most straightforward reason is the reliability and track record *Scholastic News* has in creating, publishing, and disseminating student magazines and resources between the party nominating conventions held in the late summer before Presidential Elections and the early fall when teachers need to use the content for instruction. The issues are also customizable according to grade level, and within the grade level, scaffolding for Spanish-speaking students and diverse reading ability is presented for the same shared reading text. In addition to a shared reading text in the form of a student periodical, *Scholastic News* includes various supplemental resources and

lesson plans those teachers can adapt as needed. These lesson plans offer cross-curricular connections with standards-based content. The *Scholastic News* materials provide an element of current events that teachers can then supplement with primary source documents, videos, or read-aloud texts. The final important element for *Scholastic News* is the product's affordability coupled with the benefit of the take-home text. The teachers in this study built larger units of study off of the basic elements included with *Scholastic News* for the 2020 Presidential Election. Using *Scholastic News* benefited the instructional units by integrating current events, cross-curricular resources, increased text accessibility, and more affordable curricular materials than student textbooks or trade books.

Discussion of Finding 3

The third finding reported that *Scholastic News* magazines and resources provided an opportunity for classroom discussions about Presidential Elections that teachers facilitated. The teacher interviews established that teachers valued meaningful discussions as a pedagogical tool that the teachers used to teach democratic norms and multiple points of view. The qualitative media analysis confirmed that *Scholastic News* did not suggest, or support teachers' use of the materials for classroom discussions based upon student materials and teacher lesson plans. In Chapter Two, a qualitative media analysis was performed over teacher lesson plans for *Scholastic News* issues covering Presidential Elections from 2000-2016. From 2000-2008, *Scholastic News* included lesson plan supports for discussion in the pre-election and post-election issues for grades one, two, and three. After the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol Building, *Scholastic News* distributed digital resources to teachers through email. These resources were described and analyzed in the qualitative media analysis in Chapter Four. Included in the January 6th resources were teacher resources for classroom discussions

(Scholastic, Inc., 2021e). The document produced to support classroom discussion for the attacks of January 6, 2021, would support teachers in creating respectful classroom discussions about future Presidential Elections and other controversial issues. *Scholastic News* should return to the format used in 2008 or expand on the format developed in response to the January 6th attacks, and continue adapting and refining these materials. Editors should include them with the digital lesson plans as optional resources for teachers because evidence from this study suggests that teachers are using topics from *Scholastic News* to support classroom discussions about topics such as Presidential Elections.

Discussion of Finding 4

The fourth finding identified that teachers appreciated the privacy offered by the COVID-19 modification *Scholastic News* made to their Scholastic Student Vote. In previous years students likely participated in classroom-based mock elections where votes were tallied, counted, and graphed. The Scholastic Student Vote had a historical legacy of engaging students since the Presidential Election of 1940, and the student had been remarkably accurate in predicting the winner of the Presidential Elections (Toppo, 2016). While students have had the choice to vote online since the 2000 Presidential Election individually, the focus of the *Scholastic News* Scholastic Student Vote was on teachers collecting class ballots and reporting data, as evidenced in the qualitative media analysis in Chapter Two. Due to distance learning changes related to COVID-19, the 2020 Presidential Election Scholastic Student Vote allowed students to vote individually via the *Scholastic News* website using a classroom code. An example of a traditional *Scholastic News* classroom mock election is presented with the 2020 mock election in Figure Five at the end of this chapter. The teacher then reported the results either by mail or electronically to Scholastic, Inc. The results were announced nationally, and the vote data was

only disaggregated by grade level. This unintended consequence meant that teachers did not have classroom-level data from the Scholastic Student Vote to name a classroom winner for the 2020 Presidential Election.

The teachers all saw positive reasons for this change relating to improved classroom climate. Upon reflection, the classroom teacher began to wonder what impact classroom mock elections could have on students with minority political opinions. This sentiment was especially true for second-grade teacher Ms. Truet who held a separate online election and reported a landslide 90%-10% vote for President Donald Trump. First-grade teacher Ms. Austen worried that formalizing a classroom vote might lead students in any classroom who voted for the least popular candidate to be less likely to share their opinions in the future. Third-grade teacher Ms. Williams thought the change was a valuable option for teachers who wanted to choose how they wanted to structure units on elections in the future. Making the classrooms mock elections online and more private is a reflection to make the Scholastic Student Vote a more representative process of authentic voting overall. This change removes the teacher as a variable in the equation, something I wrote about feeling in my introduction. The overall classroom election can still be maintained with registration booths and digital voting stations. I believe the change adds an element of suspense that is more authentic to waiting for results on Election Day when students wait for national results to be reported by *Scholastic News* after the votes have been counted. Also, it becomes more authentic for students because the classroom community is nurtured. While students may have discussions about candidates in the election, signaling whom they like or support is different from a concrete number and graph declaring a classroom winner. It is similar to a citizen driving through their neighborhood and seeing political signs or speaking to neighbors. Following the election, they can only see results down to the precinct level; they

cannot know the vote distribution on their street. Such anonymity benefits community cohesion in public life, and applying that to the classroom setting would be beneficial.

This finding was entirely unexpected in terms of it being a novel virus disrupting global education. However, this finding suggests revising accepted best practices from social studies methods textbooks, practitioner journal articles, and years of suggested activities by *Scholastic News*. Since the 2000 Presidential Election, teachers who have subscribed to *Scholastic News* have received student ballots, classroom ballots, and sometimes materials like ballot boxes to hold mock classroom elections for the Scholastic Student Vote. The widely used social studies teacher education textbook by Parker (2012) described mock classroom elections as a formative experience for early elementary school students to build personal connections and understandings to democratic practices and citizenship. Haas et al. (2008) suggested a two-day election simulation ending in two students who counted, tallied, and reported the votes to the students. While this finding was unexpected, the change in student voting was unanticipated; the finding should not be seen as a surprise. Payne and Journell (2019) cautioned, "[a]lthough theoretical arguments about best practices for broaching politics with elementary students exists…virtually no empirical work has been conducted in this area…" (p. 74). Sondel et al., (2018) developed a theory of political trauma called pedagogy of political trauma in response to the classroom events of the 2016 election, and that theory applies to this finding. Revising the traditional classroom mock election to realize more fully a private real-world voting experience will meet the goals of political trauma pedagogy by "…tending to students' socio-emotional well-being [and] cultivating civic knowledge and capabilities…" (p. 179). Student needs can be prioritized, classroom communities can be maintained, and formative civic experiences can

continue with an improved Scholastic Student Vote and altered student mock elections in the future.

Discussion of Finding 5

In the fifth finding, teachers identified that most *Scholastic News* resources were modified and adapted to learning management systems such as Google Classroom or as a PDF file. This finding was confirmed through the qualitative media analysis in Chapter Four. Teachers described this change as an unintended benefit of the COVID-19 distance learning protocol. The modification of materials, videos, resources, skill-builders, and games as digital instructional materials should be continued, refined, and expanded by *Scholastic News.* This addition supports teachers as they integrate instructional technology into their lessons, make curricular choices, differentiate lessons, and build on their familiarity with learning management systems used in distance learning. *Scholastic News* has a wide variety of resources for differentiation, such as varied reading level text and Spanish language texts; continuing access to these texts through PDF formats and loading to platforms like Google Classroom will support teachers' efforts to increase instruction. Additional benefits from the increased options of digital resources include new ways to reach and engage students through student technology use and future possibilities for asynchronous learning as needed.

Discussion of Finding 6

The sixth finding identified areas of improvement within the lesson plans provided by *Scholastic News* for the teachers. As previously discussed, the teachers use the *Scholastic News* magazines and resources as foundations for unit building and guide discussions about Presidential Elections. All three participant teachers suggested that *Scholastic News* provide

background information about the candidates, electoral process, transition of power, and democratic norms as part of the lesson plan. From the 2000 to 2008 Presidential Election, *Scholastic News* included basic information and background resources on major candidates and links for more information in their teacher lesson plans. This was in addition to the information in the student issue, and the discussion supports in the lesson plans. They began in the 2012 election; the background information was removed and replaced with information about voting. By 2016 voting background information had been removed. *Scholastic News* has demonstrated the ability to provide grade-level appropriate background information to teachers in the past, and the participants in this study indicated they want that support to be better prepared for student questions. The support they seek is not information about political positions or highly controversial stances of candidates. The participants were seeking easily accessible facts that would be stimulating and relatable for students. All three participant teachers admitted that they did know the particular dates or procedures that Congress met to count and certify the Electoral College until the attacks on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. However, now the teachers would like to understand better and desired a timeline to reference important transitional dates related to future Presidential Elections. It is impossible to know why *Scholastic News* removed longstanding supports around student discussion and teacher background knowledge, but it is never too late for that course to be corrected. Their quick call to action after the events on January 6th leaves room to believe that the writers and editors have good intentions for students. However, as Sondel et al., (2018) said, "[s]uch educators, policymakers, and the public may indeed be well-intentioned in their desire to "leave politics out" of the classroom. Yet, to ignore the reality of the political moment is problematic at best and harmful at worst" (p. 189). Undoubtedly, even though *Scholastic News* is a resource with a long history of engaging students

in Presidential Elections and one that is pervasively used in American schools, this does not mean the editors should sanitize a Presidential Election to a point where they do more harm than good.

Limitations

A primary limitation and a strength to case study research is the bounded system and in-depth look at one specific case (Yin, 2018). This case study took place during a Presidential Election year, a highly specialized event every four years in the classroom. The case was focused on a specific school district in Kentucky that was purposefully selected and three embedded units of analysis purposefully selected. Furthermore, this study occurred during a global pandemic that led to most American students engaging in distance learning during parts of the 2020-2021 school year. While I do not consider the COVID-19 pandemic a limitation, it impacted the study, school year, and Presidential Election in unique ways. At the end of the case, study generalizations were offered in the form of conclusions based upon findings. The generalizations were analytical and based upon arguments made to answer the original research questions (Yin, 2018).

A second limitation in this study occurred in my initial expectation of where the most exciting data areas would be collected. Based upon my own experience as a teacher, I initially expected the most interesting data to be teaching the election through election day and did not anticipate the events following the election through inauguration day to add compelling data to the case, leading to a longer data collection period than anticipated. Finally, after Inauguration Day, my participants experienced three back-to-back winter storms, including nearly two weeks of distance learning canceled due to a lack of electricity and internet access. The inclement weather led to delays in collecting interviews with participants as quickly as I had initially

planned after the inauguration. The delay may have resulted in a lack of recency to recall all relevant details.

As reported in the irregularities of the 2020-2021 school year, classroom discussions were largely impacted due to distance learning protocols enacted by the state and local policies. All three participant teachers faced the same in-person or distance learning decisions. These decisions were guided by the Governor and other state health decision makers and the "Adams County" superintendent and school board ("Adams County," 2020b; Beshear, 2020). The cycling in and out of school allowed for some in-person discussion related to the 2020 Presidential Election, but distance learning impacted events directly leading up to the election, the post-election, the transition of power, the January 6, 2021, attacks at the U.S. Capitol Building, and the Inauguration of Joe Biden. Two of the participants, first grade teacher Ms. Austen and third grade teacher Ms. Williams, could not use synchronous meetings per building administration decisions. Second grade teacher Ms. Truet could use synchronous meetings using Google Meets, but she reported that students seemed less engaged in discussions about the election than in-person. Ms. Truet sensed that students may have been apprehensive to talk about the issue in front of family members at home. While the format caused a limitation in discussion, the teachers identified strengths in their pedagogical style of holding conversations by not being able to use them to regularly teach the 2020 Presidential Election.

Implications to Future Research

The findings from this study related to classroom discussion and classroom mock election share future research implications regarding the widely applied theory from communications and political science theory known as Spiral of Silence. Spiral of Silence resembles tenents of social constructivism discussed in Chapter Two. Noelle-Neumann (1974) based her theory of the

ability of a person to survey their social environment for political opinions. In theory, should a person perceive their political opinion to be a minority opinion, they often silence their opinion to avoid social sanctions (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). Noelle-Neumann (1974) described the sanctions as tied to isolation should their minority opinion be exposed. Despite being widely applied outside of political science and communications, the theory has received limited attention inside teacher education (Journell, 2017). Journell (2017) focused on pre-service teachers' political identities concerning the Spiral of Silence theory. I would extend the theory into further research investigating best practices for discussions and formative practices like mock elections that do not reinforce a Spiral of Silence within a classroom. In the discussion of classroom practice, considerable attention was devoted to ways to improve mock elections by the teachers interviewed. Ms. Austen, the first-grade participant teacher, worried that any students in a mock election might internalize having voted for a losing candidate and become less willing to participate in future elections. Indeed, this is a clear link to a possible Spiral of Silence scenario. Ms. Truet, the second-grade participant, worried that elections in her classroom were so lopsided for one candidate they were becoming de-facto endorsements, in essence saying this is a "Trump" classroom. Ms. Williams, the third-grade teacher, represented a view many teachers likely hold, that she was still unsure if she would hold a future traditional mock election, and she would like more time to think about it. Such research into a possible Spiral of Silence theoretical connection to classroom discussions and mock elections should occur in various classroom contexts and across political spectrums. It is as easy to imagine a child from a conservative home feeling silenced in a heavily Democratic public-school precinct as it is a child from a liberal-leaning home in a Republican stronghold feeling silenced.

A second implication for future research that appeared in this study was the idea that "this" Presidential Election was the most controversial or divisive in our nation. All three participants in this study referred to a similar statement that the 2020 Presidential Election was the worst political behavior they had known. One participant referred back to 2016 as seemingly happier times. The other two participants conceded that 2016 was nearly as divisive, but not "this" bad. The emphasis on the current election being the worst one to teach also appeared in literature as I prepared for the study. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, the third-grade editor for *Scholastic News* wrote a letter to teachers lamenting how surely the 2000 Presidential Election was the most unusual and hopefully an anomaly. Journell (2011) studied the 2008 Presidential Election focusing on President Obama's race issues and debunked rumors surrounding his birth and religion and Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin and issues of gender. After the 2008 election, the early elementary *Scholastic News* Presidential Election articles, materials, and teacher supports focused less and less on the actual election each year. Perhaps the decreased focus on specific electoral elements after the 2008 Presidential Election by *Scholastic News* could be inferred as a reaction from editors or publishers as a reaction to the increasing perception of controversy in election. In response to the 2016 Presidential Election, a series of peer-reviewed publications for teacher educators and teachers were published focusing on the aftermath of the election; some are cited in this study (Anderson & Zyhowski, 2018; Dunn et al., 2019; Payne& Journell, 2019; Sondel et al., 2018). Future research should document this trend in classrooms across time and how resources, schools, teachers, and students respond to changing candidates, rhetoric, and elections.

This research focused on teachers using *Scholastic News* student periodicals to teach the 2020 Presidential Election in their classroom. *Scholastic News* is not the only student periodical

available to teachers to use in this manner. While not aimed at large inexpensive classroom sets, launched in 2020, *The Week Junior* is a new weekly news magazine aimed at readers between the ages of 8-14 (WNIP, 2020). Subscriptions to *The Week Junior* cost about $2.00 per child, per week, and issues come every week of the year (*The Week Junior*, 2021). Another children's magazine that offers a choice is *Cricket* Media, Inc. They also allow teachers to order a specific election-related issue (Cricket, 2021). The cost of ordering the 6–9-year-old *Ask* magazine is $3.78 per issue for a total of 9 issues, and the *Election* issues are an additional $6.95 each with five topics to choose from (Cricket, 2021). *Time for Kids* is a product that is produced and priced more similarly to *Scholastic News. Time for Kids* offers a classroom discount with either a print and digital or digital-only subscription of $4.95 or $4.50 per student annually for 24-28 issues (Time for Kids, 2021). For comparison, *Scholastic News* is priced at $5.95 per student annually for 32 issues (Scholastic, Inc., 2021f). Future research should investigate the ways other student periodicals cover Presidential Elections in the future and how teachers integrate them into their instruction.

Implications to Future Policy

In Chapter Two, Zimmerman and Robertson (2017) brought forth the idea that controversial policies enacted by local school boards placed teachers in peril who might want to teach controversial issues. Zimmerman and Robertson (2017) called for a solution where teacher leaders, stakeholders, and policymakers drafted new policies regarding controversial issues. This research offers insight into that work. The first finding highlighted that the teachers in this study were adept at controlling their personal political opinions. The teachers in this study had no desire to share political agendas with students. Instead, the teachers felt a tension between their professional beliefs about the conduct of a candidate and their professional realities. Teachers

should be supported to state facts without the fear of retribution. For example, a teacher should be as free to say Joe Biden was morally wrong to say he wanted to hurt President Trump in 2018 (even if he had the First Amendment right to do so), as a teacher should be as free to say that President Trump showed poor sportsmanship by not attending President Biden's inauguration. These are real-life relatable examples to early elementary students of Presidential or candidates for president's office that resemble decisions students make in school. Similar actions are managed and disciplined by teachers daily in schools and supported by administrators and school boards. This is why multiple voices should be at the table when revising policies for controversial issues. In the case of "Adams County," the policy was written in 1991, it is likely long overdue for a conversation with stakeholders from multiple levels.

Discussion For Practitioners

This research study was all about understanding the expertise of practitioner teachers in the hopes that teacher educators, other practitioner teachers, and publishers could improve their craft to improve outcomes for students ultimately. Looking to that related web of practitioners needs to keep in mind the importance of Presidential Elections in the life of an elementary school student. Depending on the age when a child starts school, most children will only remember one Presidential Election in elementary school, and a lucky few will remember two if their teachers choose to make a lasting impact. There are but a short few years before the publishers must decide whether or not to craft new supports for teachers. Will researchers secure new grants or supports to study elections in classrooms? Will teachers have reflected on ways to improve classroom discussion, materials, and culture? Sondel et al. (2018) would tell practitioners at all levels that they must not wait; they must continue to prepare, reflect, and improve their craft. In their work, Sondel et al. (2018) said, "…being prepared and supported in doing so--is one way to

work toward justice within and beyond the classroom in the national context in which we now find ourselves…" (p. 184). Practitioners cannot wait until the next election to act.

Recommendations

One of the central ideas at the heart of this study was whether or not controversial issues, such as a Presidential Election, were appropriate topics for early elementary classrooms. In Chapter Two, I referenced literature that supported the inclusion of controversial issues in early elementary classrooms. This study reinforced the ideas put forth by Noddings and Brooks (2017) that controversial issues were an important part of teaching moral and critical thinking skills, but those controversial issues should involve student choice and voice, especially at the early elementary level. The three participants in this study supported this idea with their interviews. Each participant felt the best way to enter a controversial issue was to follow their students' questions. The most powerful example of this from the 2020 Presidential Election was the Inauguration of Joe Biden. A Presidential Inauguration symbolizes the peaceful transfer of power enshrined in the American Constitution. In 2021, outgoing President Donald Trump became the first President not to attend this ceremony since President Andrew Johnson refused to attend incoming President Ulysses S. Grant's inauguration. In fairness, President Trump was under no legal requirement to attend, and it was his First Amendment right not to attend the event. However, Presidential Inaugurations have historically been attended by political rivals and living Presidents and First Ladies when health permits. The 2021 Presidential Inauguration presented an opportunity for students to see Republican Vice President Mike Pence, former Republican President and First Lady George W. Bush and Laura Bush, former Democratic President, and First Lady Barack and Michelle Obama, and former Democratic President and First Lady Bill

and Hillary Clinton together in one spot. This opportunity allowed students to ask where President Trump and First Lady Melania Trump were, if not at the inauguration. This is the type of conversation that teachers are well-equipped to handle and directly reflects scenarios in students' lives. Students could evaluate issues of sportsmanship, democratic norms, and more. In this scenario, teachers facilitate a conversation rather than introduce a concept to be discussed. Following students' interests and questions seems beneficial to cover controversial issues in early elementary grades.

Within the study, teachers asked for support and guidance in classroom discussions around controversial issues and other sensitive topics. One of the resources identified in Chapter Two would serve teachers in this role, Philosophy for Children, P4C. As discussed in Chapter Two, P4C was designed at Montclair State University for pre-service teachers without formal philosophy training to introduce philosophy to students through literature (Pritchard, 2018). Materials extending P4C continue to be developed and extended to other content areas and specific grade strands (Gaut & Gaut 2011; Lewis & Chandley, 2012). Teachers interested in developing new skills for group discussions, improving students' critical thinking skills, and exploring new ways of integrating curriculum through the discussion should consider P4C materials and other resources to extend the original ideas.

Conclusion

I opened Chapter One of this study with a quote from John Dewey's *School and Society* (1900), where Dewey warned that schools were full of too much trivial material. Dewey knew that students must be taught truths, not misconceptions, from teachers. Dewey was speaking about partially educated teachers, and I have focused on teacher leaders. Therefore, I believe I am extending his quote to teachers bound by a professional reality that does not trust teachers to

teach necessary truths. I believe that quote is at the heart of this study. My purpose was to understand how teachers taught a Presidential Election and what they thought of a resource designed to help them teach that topic. Along the way, several truths were interpreted through interviews, document analysis, and other techniques. I kept Dewey's words in mind that this work was meant to connect university research with engaging work in public schools to better students. I believe that the findings identified in this study have the potential to move that goal forward. This study will begin to help readers understand the internal professional beliefs and professional realities at play while teaching Presidential Election and it should put to rest the idea that the teachers in this study were struggling with personal political beliefs. I believe this study will help publishers of instructional materials understand the needs of teachers who want to improve their craft and planning for teaching Presidential Elections. I also believe this study will begin a meaningful conversation in social studies education about how to plan simulations more responsibly so they do not add trauma like other social studies lessons and techniques of the past. Most importantly, this study has reaffirmed my admiration and gratitude to dedicated teacher leaders in our public schools who have a life-long commitment to learning.

Table Four: Summary of Findings

Finding Number	Research Question	Finding Description
1	1	*Scholastic News* magazines and resources served as a touchstone for the teachers as they navigated their professional beliefs within their professional realities.
2	1	*Scholastic News* magazines and resources served as the groundwork for teachers to build instructional units about the Presidential Election to fit their context students' needs and interests.
3	1	*Scholastic News* magazines and resources provided a foundation for student engagement in Presidential Elections through opportunities for meaningful discussions about controversial issues that were not planned by Scholastic, Inc., but grew from the professional experience of the teachers.
4	2	The participant teachers appreciated the revised Scholastic Student Vote eliminating the traditional mock classroom election; this change was seen as an unintended benefit and should continue to be refined and offered as a choice by Scholastic, Inc.
5	2	*Scholastic News* resources were modified due to distance learning due to COVID-19 protocols; this is another unintended benefit of distance learning due to COVID-19 protocols.
6	2	The participant teachers desired more background knowledge for Presidential Election in lesson plans, support in discussing sensitive topics with elementary students, and they would prefer the information to be easily accessible.

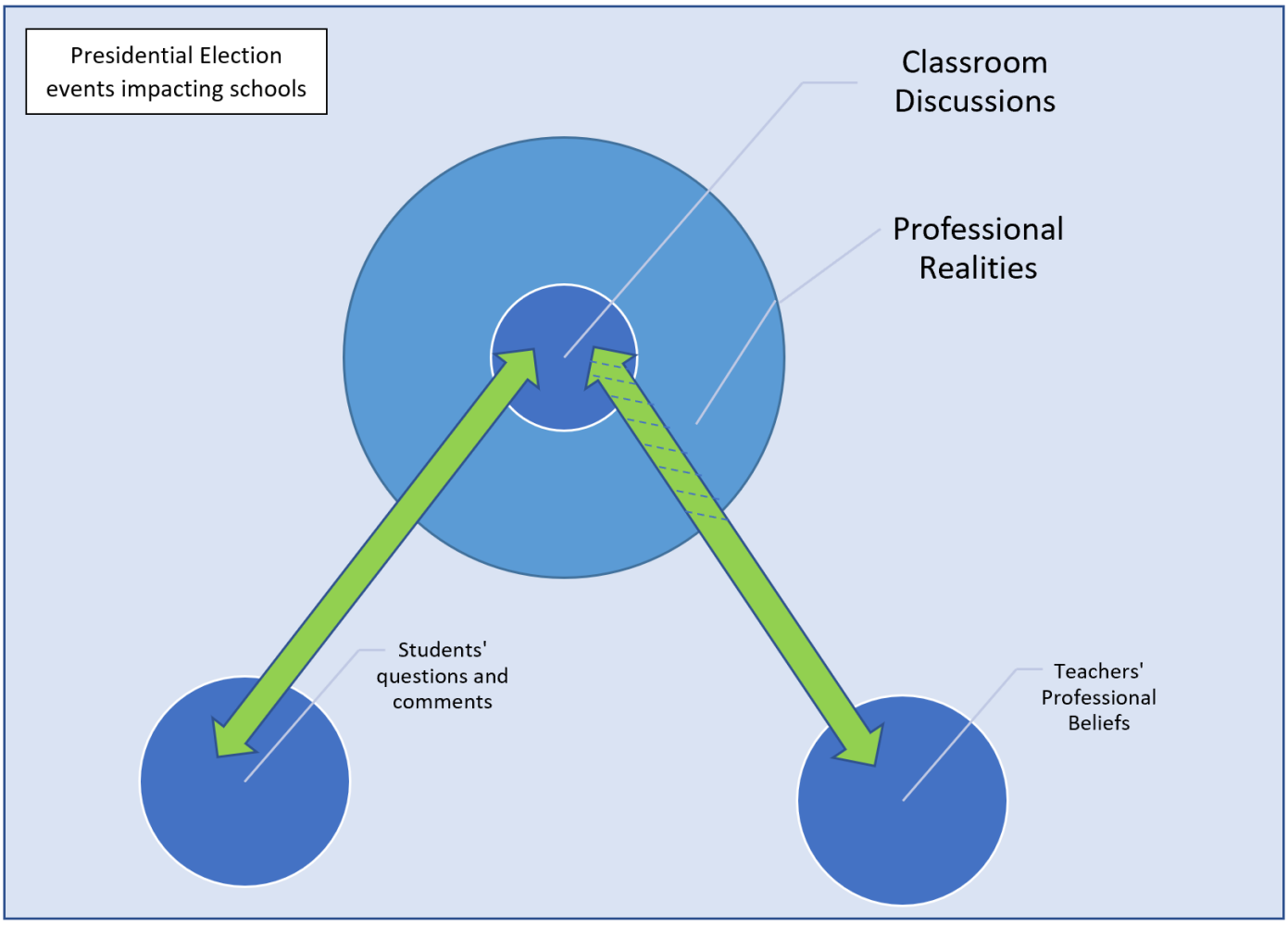

Figure Three: Model of Teachers' Professional Beliefs and Professional Realities



Figure Four: Example of First Grade *Scholastic News* Democratic Norms

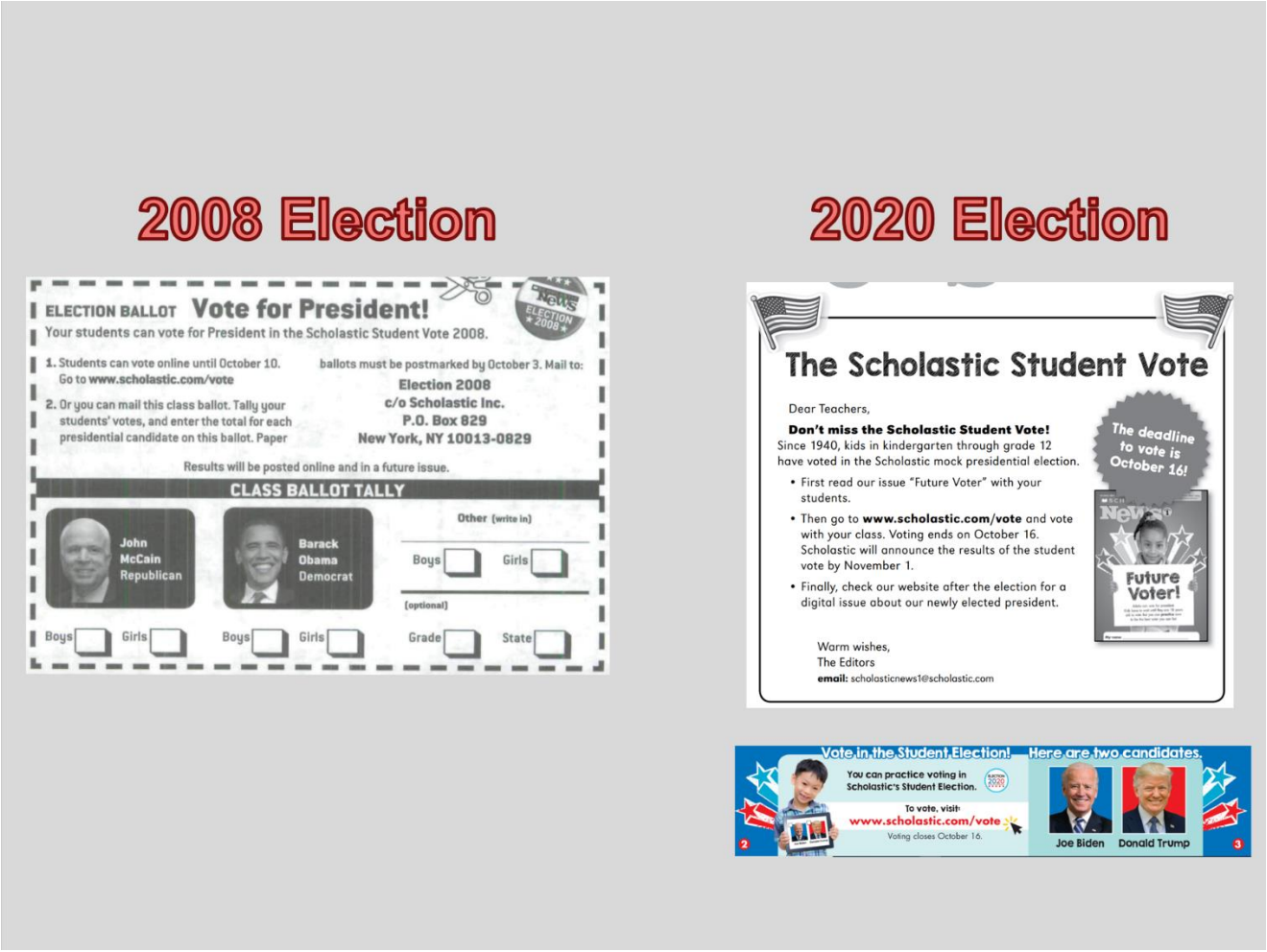

Figure Five: Example of First Grade *Scholastic News* Mock Elections in 2008 and 2020

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Appendices

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION [Policy Number Redacted]

Controversial Issues

JUDGMENT

Teachers are expected to exercise reasonable and prudent judgment in the selection and use of materials and discussion of issues in their classrooms.

ISSUES

The study of controversial issues shall be objective and scholarly. Issues discussed shall be appropriate for and within the range of knowledge, understanding, age, and maturity of students and shall be current, relevant, and significant to the instructional program.

MATERIALS

All classroom materials shall be current, relevant, and significant to the instructional program. Materials shall be appropriate for and within the range of the knowledge, understanding, age and maturity of students.

NOT DISRUPTIVE

Neither issues nor materials that have a potentially disruptive effect on the educational process shall be discussed or chosen.

CONFERENCE WITH PRINCIPAL

Teachers who suspect that materials or a given issue may be inconsistent with this policy shall confer with the Principal prior to the classroom use of the materials or discussion of the issue. If the Principal is in doubt, he shall confer with the Superintendent.

REFERENCES:

KRS 158.183

RELATED POLICIES:

[Policy Number Redacted]
[Policy Number Redacted]

Adopted/Amended: [Month and Day Redacted]1991
Order #: [Number Redacted]

Interview Guide for Expert Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviewer: Zach Stumbo

Interviewee: _____

Expected Time: 90-120 minutes

Conducted and Recorded via Zoom software

Before the interview:

- Test Zoom software within one week of the interview. Email a blank Informed Consent document to the participant. Ask the participant to open the Informed Consent and practice using the screen sharing feature. Review the informed consent elements, ask the participant to consider all parts, ask questions, and remind them they will send a final copy before the interview to the secure UTK Vault Courier at https://vault.utk.edu/ .
- Review best practices for confidentiality during the practice session. Ask the participant to find a dedicated space with an appropriate internet connection to provide privacy for their answers. I will demonstrate my home office privacy and ensure that no one will be in the room.
- Before the interview, I will collect PDF copies of *Scholastic News* from that participant's grade level. These will be used to make notes and accompany the transcripts for analysis.

The day of the interview:

- I will confirm the storage capabilities of my hardware. Next, I will email a Zoom link, with a password, to the participant. Once connected, I will review the Informed Consent features, remind the participant that each step is voluntary. I will explain that the interview will take between 90 and 120 minutes. Approximately one-third of the interview will focus on how they taught the 2020 Presidential Election from campaign to Election Day. Next, one-third of the interview will focus on how they taught the 2020

Presidential Election from November 4, 2020, through Inauguration Day. The last one-third of the interview will focus on evaluating the *Scholastic News* resources for the entirety of the election; finally, with permission, I will begin to record.

Interview Questions:

Part One: Campaign to Election Day, November 3, 2020.

1. Tell me about your classroom structure from the beginning of school through Election Day.
    a. How was instruction delivered
    b. Differences from previous years due to COVID-19
2. Tell me about how you taught prior Presidential Elections.
    a. What years, resources, and experiences
3. How did you feel about teaching the 2020 Presidential Election from the beginning of school until just before the election?
    a. What excited you about teaching the material?
    b. What worried you about teaching the material?
4. Tell me about how you taught the 2020 Presidential Election?
    a. Resources including *Scholastic News* or additional resources
    b. What activities did students complete?
    c. What discussion did you have with students about the election?
    d. What surprises did you find teaching about the election?
5. Tell me about how students responded to learning about the 2020 Presidential Election?
    a. Did they seem engaged?
    b. Did students participate?

   c. Did you encounter any interest from students' homes about the election?

6. Tell me about how students participated in the *Scholastic News* Student Voice Activity.
   a. Did you review the results in class? https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/election/vote/student-vote-results.html
   b. What discussions did you have about voting in the mock election?
7. I will share my screen with copies of the teacher and student *Scholastic News* editions and resources for your grade level that were provided before the election. Tell me how they were used for instruction.

Part Two: November 4, 2020, to Inauguration Day.

1. Tell me about returning to school on November 5, 2020, with no decisive winner in the 2020 Presidential Election?
   a. What questions did students have?
   b. What conversations did you have as a class?
   c. How did you feel? If you taught in 2000, what similarities could you recall?
2. On November 7, 2020, the Associated Press and many news outlets projected Joe Biden as the winner of the 2020 Presidential Election, and they began referring to him as the President-Elect. Tell me about how this development was covered I your classroom?
   a. What questions did students pose?
   b. How did you feel about discussing this in class?
   c. If you did not discuss it, what factored into your decision?
3. On November 12, 2020, *Scholastic News* issued a post-election digital resource. I will share my screen to show it to you now. Tell me about how you used it or did not use it as

a teacher. https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/election/civics-in-action/biden-wins-the-presidency.html

4. After Election Day, President Trump made claims about the election's fairness and refused to concede to Joe Biden. *Scholastic News* wrote, "Trump's campaign has also filed lawsuits in several states. He believes that the vote count is incorrect. So far, there is no evidence to support this claim." Tell me about how you navigated the multiple lawsuits, protests, and current events related to this?
    a. How did this uncertainty make you feel?
    b. Did you alter your instruction in any way to focus on technical elements like the Electoral College?
    c. Did you avoid discussing these issues?
    d. What questions did students present about the unfolding of events?
    e. Did you receive any support or guidance about how to address the fallout of the 2020 Presidential Election?
5. On December 14, 2020, the Electoral College members met in their state capitals to formally vote for the President and Vice President. Tell me about how you discussed this with students?
    a. How did you discuss the historic nature of Joe Biden as the oldest elected President in American history?
    b. How did you discuss the historic nature of Kamala Harris as the first woman, first Black, and first Asian descendant to be elected Vice President of the United States?

   c. Did you mention Major, Joe Biden's German Sheppard as the first rescue dog to become a Presidential pet?

6. On January 6, 2021, the newly elected Congress met to formalize the 2020 Presidential Election results, with Vice President Mike Pence duty-bound to report the final result. Tell me about how you discussed this with students?
7. On January 20, 2021, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris were sworn into office. Tell me about how you discussed this with students?
   a. How did you discuss the transfer of power in the United States?
   b. If President Trump did not attend, how did you discuss breaking a norm in American history?
8. I will share my screen with copies of the teacher and student *Scholastic News* editions and resources for your grade level that were provided after the election. Tell me how they were used for instruction.

Part Three: Evaluating *Scholastic News* as an Instructional Tool for the 2020 Presidential Election

1. I will share my screen with copies of the teacher and student *Scholastic News* editions and resources for your grade level that were provided before the election.
   a. Identify the strengths of this edition for teaching the 2020 Presidential Election to students in your grade.
   b. Identify the weaknesses of this edition for teaching the 2020 Presidential Election in your grade.
   c. What would you like to see included in editions that are sent before a Presidential Election?

   d. How do you evaluate the usefulness of *Scholastic News* as an instructional tool for teaching Presidential Elections?
   e. Would you use *Scholastic News* in the future to teach Presidential Elections? Would you recommend *Scholastic News* to a colleague as an instructional tool for teaching Presidential Elections?

2. I will share my screen with copies of the teacher and student *Scholastic News* editions and resources for your grade level that were provided after the election.
   a. Identify the strengths of this edition for teaching the 2020 Presidential Election to students in your grade.
   b. Identify the weaknesses of this edition for teaching the 2020 Presidential Election in your grade.
   c. What would you like to see included in editions that are sent before a Presidential Election?
   d. How do you evaluate the usefulness of *Scholastic News* as an instructional tool for teaching Presidential Elections?
   e. Would you use *Scholastic News* in the future to teach Presidential Elections? Would you recommend *Scholastic News* to a colleague as an instructional tool for teaching Presidential Elections?

3. I will share my screen with *Scholastic News* digital activities for your grade level that were provided before the election.
   a. Identify the strengths of this edition for teaching the 2020 Presidential Election to students in your grade.

   b. Identify the weaknesses of this edition for teaching the 2020 Presidential Election in your grade.
   c. What would you like to see included in editions that are sent before a Presidential Election?
   d. How do you evaluate the usefulness of *Scholastic News* as an instructional tool for teaching Presidential Elections?
   e. Would you use *Scholastic News* in the future to teach Presidential Elections? Would you recommend *Scholastic News* to a colleague as an instructional tool for teaching Presidential Elections?

4. Tell me about how *Scholastic News* was used to teach about the 2020 Presidential Election, given the instructional format changes during the COVID-19 pandemic.
   a. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the instructional tool for your particular situation.
   b. What changes would have been helpful to your situation while integrating *Scholastic News* throughout instructional format changes?

End of the interview:

1. Thank the participant for offering their expertise in the interviews.
2. Explain that after the recording, I will transcribe the interview's audio portions by hand. I will download the transcription immediately and remove it from their service. I will review the transcription and de-identify the names of people and places to ensure confidentiality. Next, I will review the transcript with the recorded interview for accuracy. Notations will be made on PDF copies of *Scholastic News* for analysis.

3. Once transcription and de-identification are complete, I will securely deliver a copy of the transcript to the participant for member checking accuracy. The participant will have three days to review the transcript for accuracy. If no questions are presented within three days, the research will assume the participant has reviewed the transcript and supports its accuracy.
4. Before analysis begins, the video of the interview will be permanently deleted. The audio of the interview will be permanently deleted after the analysis of the data is complete. Only the transcript and annotated PDF files will be used for analysis.
5. End recording.

Vita

Zachary is originally from Ashland, Kentucky in the eastern part of his beloved state. He always wanted to become a teacher, and after high school he attended Morehead State University and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education. Zachary returned to his hometown where he taught in public schools where he worked for ten years. During that time, he received a Master of Arts in Teacher Leadership from Morehead State University. While finishing his master's degree, Zachary decided to further his education. He chose to attend the University of Tennessee, Knoxville to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education with a concentration in Teacher Education and Cultural Studies of Education. His research interests include controversial issues in elementary education, teacher identity, and teacher allyship.