“It’s a Fine Line to Walk:” Rural Identity and Global Citizenship Education Gatekeeping

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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Dylan Tyler Edmondson entitled ""It’s a Fine Line to Walk:” Rural Identity and Global Citizenship Education Gatekeeping." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

Joshua Kenna, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

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Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)
“It’s a Fine Line to Walk:”
Rural Identity and Global Citizenship Education Gatekeeping

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Now having completed a project of such length that required several years to produce, I wonder at what stage of their projects authors typically plan for and write their acknowledgements. I imagine acknowledgements, like anything else, evolve over time and are contextual to season of life in which the author finds themselves doing the work. It is difficult to account for the many factors and people that, either incidentally or directly, have helped me complete such a protracted project, but I will try.

I would neither have been able to start or complete this project without the love and support of my family. Thank you to my lovely wife for always supporting, and sometimes challenging, me in my life and work. You were an invaluable thought partner and advocate throughout this project. I am sorry I did not finish this sooner. Thank you, mom and dad, for always pushing me to pursue my education and inquiring about my progress, even when I did not have much to report. Thank you to my grandparents living and passed who helped my parents raise me. Thank you to my brother for your questions and ideas.

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Selfishly, I would also like to acknowledge myself. At no point in my life did I think I would have the drive or competence to achieve a project like this. In my personal and professional relationships, I encourage my peers, coworkers, and loved ones to reflect on their
successes. I am going to take some of my own advice and, though I would consider this project far from perfect, take space to acknowledge my own hard work and dedication.

Finally, thank you to innumerable and nameless who have worked to create the conditions of prosperity and liberty in which I and others have the privilege of pursuing questions and conducting research. I choose to believe the long arc of history has bent toward progress. I hope my choices and our priorities and decisions as a nation and species continue to shape that bend upward, for all.
ABSTRACT

Despite growing calls for global education in the United States (NCSS, 2016b) and the popularity of global citizenship education (GCE) programs internationally, education for global citizenship has not caught on in the United States (Rapoport, 2020). In this context, teachers wield considerable influence as curricular instructional gatekeepers. They may promote or resist GCE in individual ways in relation to the context in which they teach. Little is currently understood about the curricular gatekeeping practices of rural teachers regarding GCE (Moffa, 2020). Research that does examine rural GCE gatekeeping situates analysis in terms of the rural as a place but not necessarily the rural teaching identities of rural teachers. This study aims to develop an understanding of rural teaching identities and the extent to which those identities affect how rural teachers conceptualize and implement GCE as curricular instructional gatekeepers.

In this qualitative study, I employ instrumental case study design to answer my research questions. I bounded by case to secondary social studies teachers in one rural public school district in east Tennessee. Ultimately, my sample included three teachers. I collected response data through two sets of interviews with these teachers in which I asked about their identities, conceptualizations of GCE, and gatekeeping practices. I further asked teachers to submit an informal global citizenship lesson plan, which we discussed in interview two. I conducted analysis via provisional coding before organizing response data into themes. My analysis of findings suggests both alignment and misalignment between teacher GCE gatekeeping practices and self-reported aspects of their internal and external identities. Teachers recognize unique aspects of rural teaching; however, paradoxically, they both relate how they gatekeep for their rural students and how they reject gatekeeping for their rural context. My analysis suggests
politics and race were divisive topics that teachers avoid or mediate, while teachers prioritize transmission of content knowledge and a neutral “just the facts” approach to teaching. I conclude by discussing implications pre-service and in-service teacher preparation as well as future research into rural gatekeeping for global citizenship.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Personal Research

For five years, I taught social studies at the high school level. In that time, my course load was mostly college prep world history and advanced placement world history, with the odd U.S. history mixed in. In these five years teaching, I became intimately familiar with my state’s world history content standards and our district’s textbook of choice. While some might not consider five years a long tenor it was long enough for me to see two iterations of state standards on the state level as well as two textbook adoptions in my district. It was also long enough for me to begin internalizing the standards, to be able to mentally map out what content goes where: where the story starts and ends, where in the semester standards fall, what content is emphasized, and perhaps as importantly, what is left out. Like many teachers, my university training instilled in me the importance of backwards design when planning—starting with the end goal in mind and reverse engineering a curriculum plan or lesson plan based on the identified goal. When planning our curriculum, my fellow teachers and I used the standards as our guide. We had so many days to cover so many topics, topics which students would be tested on at the end of the year.

State standards were the first thing and, at least in my context, the most important consideration when planning for content. Our content roughly began during the European Enlightenment, referred to as “The Enlightenment,” and ended roughly around September 11th, 2001. The modern world history standards bounded the modern world around these dates. There was nothing officially stopping us from discussing events not in that binding, nor were there legal prohibitions on teaching content that discussed race or alluded to LGBTQ+ topics (Cruz &
Bailey, 2017; Jones & Franklin, 2022), but we understood our goal to be preparing students to master the standards and, not incidentally, preparing them for their end of course test as well. The standards thus framed the way we approached our teaching world history, but at times we were able to slightly change the way which we went about helping students master the standards. For example, I might show parts of a film and discuss geographic reasoning or art as an allusion for history while another teacher might read selections of a novel or have students listen to a podcast. Generally, we aligned ourselves to be teaching roughly the same topic in the same way on the same day, but at times we altered our curriculum when we thought something was personally meaningful or there was an activity we excelled at teaching that aligned well with the standard. Our lessons were not scripted, but they were aligned.

I share my experience to make two important points for the study that follows. First, history curriculum is not neutral or natural. Though there are many ways to approach writing history, narrative is perhaps the most popular and influential. Historians construct narratives, stories of the past that seek to produce coherence out disorder through emphasizing some element, be it a bounded time period like the post-classical era, geography like southeast Asia, event like the Cold War, or concept like decolonization. There are many other narratives one could write, but these illustrate the point narratives are constructs--the post-classical “era” is made up of many overlapping stories and geographies while southeast Asia is compromised or ever-shifting bounded places with peoples who have differing degrees of cultural similarities and differences. These narratives, because they are told repeatedly in popular culture and in education systems seem natural, but they are not. The state standards, likewise, are not natural. Groups of experienced educators and policy makers work together to modify, realign, and create new standards for all teachers in the state. For modern world history, these standards are
necessarily bounded by chronology and conceptualizations of the modern world. Educators create the standards, and they do not do it in a vacuum.

Nor are the standards neutral. Research on world history standards shows that they are Eurocentric in content and narrative focus, especially in the modern era (Dozono, 2020; Marino & Bolgatz, 2012). Even before beginning my journey as PhD student and researcher, this narrative focus was something I felt acutely as a teacher. I did not need an extensive qualitative content analysis to tell me my standards were all about Europe, western Europe particularly. Scanning through the modern world history standards as a novice teacher I noticed the content was all European. There were cursory mentions of Latin America and Haiti in relation to the French Revolution, but whole continents did not even make an appearance until a third of the way through the standards, precisely when European states intensified their colonial conquests. I want to say I was incredulous, and part of me was, but the greater part of me knew that this was the content I grew up on and that gets emphasized in popular culture. European Enlightenment and rationalism spontaneously manifested one century, never mind any philosophy that came before, which led to industrialization in Europe, which led to imperialism by Europe, which led to world wars fought mostly by Europeans (soldiers from abroad and early decolonial movements are ignored), which led to the Cold War (where the Vietnam war and similar fighting is either ignored or conceptualized as a proxy war and not a decolonial struggle), which led to…well not much because nobody seems to have time to teach about anything after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

The second point I hope to emphasize is that, while standards place restrictions on what teachers should teach and embody specific narratives of the past, teachers themselves make decisions about how they will, or will not, teach specific standards. Teachers are not scripts. For
better or worse, they make choices that they think will benefit their students in some way or another. Briefly, I will share what influenced my decision making to foreshadow a late discussion of gatekeeping.

Much of my decision making and interests as a teacher and research had roots in my experience growing up. I spent my entire childhood and adolescence in a rural community in southeast United States, a little under an hours-drive to the nearest urbanized area. I am grateful for all the experience and wonderful teachers I had growing up, but with the benefit of my own life and teaching experience and reflection, I know that my childhood lacked diversity of people and ideas. From kindergarten to twelfth grade, nearly all my teachers and peers were White. While I was privileged enough to modestly travel with my family, most of my time was spent in my small town, where race, sexuality, theology, and ideology were mostly homogenous. It was not until college that I began to truly realize and appreciate how much diversity there is even in the United States and, consequently, how homogenous my upbringing was.

When I became a teacher, my students were also more diverse than my peers growing up. I began to realize how my curriculum did not reflect the diversity of my school and my students. I will not belabor the point, but our first module in modern world history was illustrative of my concerns with the curriculum. Per the standards and our county curriculum guide, the first unit of modern world history covered the Enlightenment and the French and American (United States) revolutions. During my first year, the standards did include some non-White, non-European, and/or non-male historical actors. Toussaint L’Ouverture and Simón Bolívar were present, and the standards mentioned Olympe de Gouges’ Declaration of the Rights of Woman as a footnote of sources the teacher may want to consider. However, the standards packaged these diverse mentions as a part of the wider focus of European Enlightenment, and there was no mention of
any events or people in Africa or Asia. Whole continents were suspiciously absent for centuries until Europeans reinvigorated colonial efforts. Incidentally, in the recent standards, Olympe de Gouges, Toussaint L’Ouverture, and Simón Bolívar are no longer present. Unsurprisingly, Peter the Great, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Thomas Jefferson, and Napoleon remain.

It is not so much of an insight anymore to say that the study of history is usually the history of dead, White guys, but in the past decade, there has been an increasing corpus of research that illuminates how White the curriculum is and its deleterious effects on students (Abdou, 2017; Cruz & Bailey, 2017; Dozono, 2020). I did not know about this research as a teacher, but I felt it. I decided to attempt to make my curriculum more diverse. In module one, I emphasized revolutions throughout the Atlantic, diverse actors, and the inequitable applications of revolutionary principles and ideology, and perhaps sacrilegiously, I decided not to spend an entire week on Napoleon. I did not have the vocabulary at the time to articulate what I was doing, but I was being a gatekeeper. I had consciously decided what curriculum I valued and did not value and implemented what I thought was best for my students, all based on my personal and professional identities. What I had not considered, however, was how civics/citizenship fit into my curriculum.

**Background and Rationale**

Schools in the United States have long been understood to function as sites of civic production, and the social studies has been a discipline centered on citizenship (Castro & Knowles, 2017; Labaree, 1997; Thornton, 2017;). In addition to covering content and developing literacy and mathematical skills, education reformers recognize that schools ought to instill certain civic values in students. Put another way, schools should turn students into good citizens. What good citizenship looks like is a matter of some debate.
Historically, citizenship is often bound together with talk of democracy—good citizens help maintain a strong democracy. During the 19th century, reformers and leaders who created common schools understood that education should play some role in constructing and maintaining democracy (Labaree, 1997). Though these schools emerged in a time when the United States government denied many of its people the rights established in the constitution, and thus the rights of citizenship, reformers such as Horace Mann understand the school’s centrality in developing civic virtue (Labaree, 1997).

After the common school era, early progressive reformers such as Dewey (2013) established the importance of democracy for citizenship education (Fallace, 2017). The philosophy of John Dewey significantly influenced progressive education reform throughout the 20th century and onward. Operating from a pragmatic philosophical stance, Dewey emphasized transactional relationships and one’s place in the community to be a citizen and participate in democracy (Dewey, 2013). For Dewey, good democracy required citizens who were knowledgeable about social and economic life and able to take action to improve community life (Dewey, 2013; Fallace, 2017). Unlike reformers in the common school era though, Dewey was skeptical of the role of capitalism and consumerism in developing good citizens and maintaining strong democracy (Labaree, 1997; Thayer-Bacon, 2008).

In the past few decades conceptualizations of citizenship have begun to take on more a more global character (Becker, 1982; Byrnes, 1997; Hanvey, 1982; Merryfield, 2002). As the processes of globalization intensify the connections between people and places, policy makers and teachers adapt to make sense of an emerging educational landscape. Global citizenship education (GCE) has emerged as a conceptual framework to develop students into global citizens, but there is little scholarly agreement on what exactly GCE entails (Siczek & Engel,
Nor is it clear that K-12 teachers understand what GCE is or how to incorporate it in their curricula (Rapoport, 2010; Reilly & Neins, 2014). Despite the growing popularity of GCE, its scholarship, and its recognition by institutions like the National Council for the Social Studies, integration of GCE into curriculum and policy in the United States remains partial (Rapoport, 2010). To be sure, teachers who are adamant about global citizenship can and have found opportunities to infuse global citizenship into their curriculum. Bailey (2018) reported that, despite the many barriers to teaching GCE, self-proclaimed global educators identified gatekeeping strategies like altering curriculum and empowering well-trained teachers to take control of their own curriculum.

**Statement of the Problem**

What is not clear, however, is the extent to which teachers’ educational settings and geographies affect their gatekeeping decisions. Rural teachers work in unique spaces which offer opportunities and present challenges. In order to empower students to achieve success and act as global citizens, I find it important to consider how teachers’ rural identities affect the ways that they conceptualize and embed GCE into their curriculum. While there is some research on civic education in rural spaces (Merryfield, 1998; Moffa, 2019), applications of GCE in rural contexts and how rural teachers act as gatekeepers of GCE have not received much attention in research agendas. Moffa’s (2020) article, which examines the global citizenship aims of teachers in Central Appalachia is a notable exception. However, while this article provides valuable insights into GCE in rural spaces and contributes the conceptual base for my study, it does not specifically utilize gatekeeping as a framework. Nor does it include descriptions of teachers’ rural identities and the role identity plays in GCE gatekeeping.
In examining what choices rural teachers, or any teachers, make in creating and implementing their curriculum, it is an attractive prospect to research policy and official curriculum like state standards, organizational positions, and even scripted curriculum, but I have made the choice instead to specifically use teachers’ identities and GCE gatekeeping as data points. In making this decision, I acknowledge the importance of official policies. However, I believe there is great merit in understanding the extent to which teachers interact with policies and content standards in their day-to-day instruction.

Gatekeeping theories focus on the decisions teachers make in including or not including certain content in their curriculum (Thornton, 1989). In making these choices, teachers control what information students are exposed to, with significant consequences. I am interested in seeking to understand how these realities and teachers’ identities affect GCE content choices. Global citizenship education requires students to see themselves as citizens of a world community. A noted strength of rural schools is their entrenchment in local communities (Gallo 2020; Moffa, 2019; Provasnik et al., 2007). Community bonds are strong in rural areas, and partnerships between rural schools and their surrounding communities can contribute greatly to the success of their students (Johnson & Howley, 2015). Though GCE does not necessarily undermine students’ local realities and contexts, there is potential for tension between the global focus of GCE and the inward-looking nature of small communities (Groenke & Nespor, 2010; Moffa, 2020; Nespor, 2008). This tension need not exist, as certain scholars posit a “glocal” outlook that positions global issues in terms of local understandings (Mannion, 2015; Niemczyk, 2019; Sklad et al., 2016), but an inquiry into the global/local dynamic between GCE and rural teachers’ gatekeeping choices can help tease out this relationship and identity the extent to which rural teachers are incorporating GCE in their day-to-day instruction.
Purpose and Research Questions

Global citizenship education is an ill-defined topic with partial integration into education in the United States. Teachers in K-12 schools struggle to define what it is and how to implement it, and there is little research on what GCE looks like in rural settings. Further, studies on citizenship in rural areas typically ignore identity, assuming there is some essential meaning to the rural teaching experience. In my project, I seek to understand how the way rural social teachers think about themselves as rural teachers and the way they think about GCE in this context contributes to curricular gatekeeping.

Given the commitments to global education and international perspectives from organizations like NCSS (2016b) as well as the increasingly globalized world students find themselves living in, GCE is pedagogically valuable. However, for GCE to be implemented in rural settings, I believe it is necessary to explore what gatekeeping factors may support or preclude its implementation by teachers. Specifically, I seek to answer the following research questions:

1. How do secondary social studies teachers in one rural county describe their teacher identities?
2. How do these teachers conceptualize and implement global citizenship education as curricular instructional gatekeepers?
3. What relationships, if any, exist between these teachers’ identities and their global citizenship education gatekeeping?

Conceptual Framework

Rocco and Plakhotnik, (2009) describe a conceptual framework as a way to ground a study in knowledge bases that are relevant to answering research questions. Conceptual
frameworks may be more appropriate than theoretical frameworks in exploratory qualitative designs and should be used to help guide the researcher through inductive analysis (Imenda, 2014; Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009). Several bodies of research inform my inquiry. There is no one single theory guiding this research, nor am I seeking to test the efficacy of a theory. Rather, I put several strains of research into conversation with another to develop my conceptual framework (Figure 1) and answer my research questions.

The first task I set out for myself in this project is understanding how rural social studies teachers think of themselves. To make sense of what identities rural teachers construct for themselves, I apply Jenkin’s (2014) theory of identity that recognizes the importance of internal and external factors on identity development. This approaches to identity assume that identity is somewhat fluid. A person can have multiple identities, these identities can overlap or conflict, and they may change over time. This does not mean identity is necessarily fractured or impossible, but rather, identity evolves constantly through an individual’s reflexivity to the world around them. The internal self and external considerations form a dialect where, to borrow Hall’s (1996) term, the individual sutures an identity.

A teacher’s identity is further significant in how they conceptualize global citizenship education and what content and methods they choose to implement as curricular instructional gatekeepers. In researching how rural studies teachers think about GCE, I use Pashby et al.’s (2020) discursive orientations of GCE as my conceptual base for GCE. Pashby et al. (2020) identity three major discursive orientations of GCE (neoliberal, liberal, and critical) while also acknowledging these orientations can act as a spectrum where one may, for instance, think of GCE in neoliberal-liberal or post critical ways. The authors further offer a description of onto-
epistemological conceptualizations of GCE, including ontological thinking, epistemological thinking, and methodological thinking.

As I am interested in how rural social studies teachers’ identities and theories of GCE lead to choices of content and method, I also rely on theories of gatekeeping to guide my inquiry. Curricular gatekeeping can be understood as decisions teachers make that affect the content, sequencing, and instructional strategies used in day-to-day instruction (Thornton, 1989). There are myriad factors that can contribute to these choices from teachers’ training and beliefs to the curriculum materials they have available to them. Gatekeeping derives from whatever experiences the teacher brings to bear in the classroom, what Thornton (1989) refers to as frames of reference. For my conceptual framework (figure 1.1), I center rural identity and beliefs about global citizenship as frames of reference for gatekeeping.

Importantly, though I both epistemologically believe I occupy a unique space as the researcher and consider data collection to be a co-generative activity between participants and myself, I have developed my interview protocol (Appendix A) to give participants space to name their identities, their beliefs about GCE, and potential relationships between these identities, values, and GCE gatekeeping. Though I am the one designing, implementing, and reporting on the study, participants will speak for themselves, and I will attempt to listen to them on their own terms. I discuss my onto-epistemological assumptions and reflexive commitments in more detail in chapter three.

**Methodology**

I employ qualitative methods in seeking to answer my research questions. Qualitative research involves exploring people’s lived experiences though methods such as
The form of GCE teachers adopt depends on multiple considerations, not the least of which is a teacher’s identity. How teachers conceptualize and value GCE influences what curriculum choices, including content and methods, they make regarding it.

Rural teachers navigate local concerns and wider cultural discourses in developing their professional identity. Further, teacher identity, community context, and teachers’ interpretation of their role within that context have been shown to influence what content teachers teach and how they teach it.

There are many ways that scholars, organizations, and educators think about GCE. The way GCE is taught depends in part on a teacher’s context, including local, state, or national policy adoptions as well as their immediate community and students. As these factors also influence teachers’ professional identities, there is conceptual overlap between identity and GCE.

Rural Context
The context of the rural is central, not incidental, to this project.

Figure 1.1. Conceptual Framework
interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts (Miles et al., 2020). A great strength of qualitative research is the researcher’s access to rich, complex data. Quality data from multiple points can help a researcher provide a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of their subject and can lead to triangulation or crystallization of findings (Glesne, 2016).

One type of method within qualitative research is the case study. Though there are different approaches to case study, the significance of case study research is in how the researcher binds their topic (Yazan, 2015). Case studies may typically involve fewer subjects, but that alone does not constitute case study research. Cases are bounded or delimited systems that the researcher inquires into (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

I designed this inquiry as a case study bounded by single rural county school district in the southeastern United States and the secondary social studies at that district. Data come from semi-structured interviews and teacher informal lesson plans which include an overview of the lesson and an activity. I plan on using provisional coding as an analysis technique for my interview data as well as my artifact data.

**Significance of Study**

This research project begins with the assumption that GCE is a valuable enterprise in all education. Several key assumptions guide this study: (a) that in an increasingly globalized word GCE is relevant and important to students, teachers, and scholars; (b) that rural settings constitute a unique space for the teaching of GCE; (c) that because of this uniqueness, rural settings and teacher demand special consideration by researchers; (d) that teachers act as curricular gatekeepers; (e) that gatekeeping matters as much as official curriculum policies in determining what students learn; (f) and that what curriculum teachers expose students to will affect how students take up ideas of global citizenship.
With these assumptions and considerations in mind this topic embodies a critical area of inquiry for several reasons. First, GCE is relevant to a population of students in the United States that is growing more diverse. Compared to previous generations, there are now many more students in the United States who come from immigrant families or have some international connection (Jacobs, 2018). Certain rural schools can be more homogenous than urban schools, but despite the prevalence of stereotypes surrounding places, rural schools are not monolithic (Moffa, 2019). Rural teachers will serve increasingly diverse students going into the future (Mathema et al., 2018).

Additionally, rural schools are unique sites for GCE because of their size and the potentially insular nature of their surrounding communities. A great strength of rural schools is how embedded they are in their community and how involved community members can be in the school (Johnson & Howley, 2015; Keyes & Gregg, 2011). At the same time, conceptualizations of citizenship in rural areas may be bounded with one’s role in the community (Martin & Chiodo, 2007; Reilly & Niens, 2014). My research could help explore the dynamic that exists between the local and the global in rural settings by prioritizing social studies teachers’ rural identities and how they relate to their curriculum choices. Insights from this study could potentially help create high quality professional development for teaching GCE in rural spaces by examining how rural social studies teachers specifically think about it.

**Limitations**

All the participants in this study will be secondary social studies teachers one from rural county district in the southeastern United States. As I practiced purposive sampling and sought a small number of participants for my exploratory inquiry, the generalizability of my findings is limited.
An additional limitation is the type of data points informing my analysis. My primary data point was interviews which I supplemented with teacher artifacts in an effort to achieve triangulation (Glesne, 2016). However, I did not complete observations of teachers in practice. It is possible that teachers may be implementing GCE in different ways or more or less frequently than what they share in their interviews or what comes through from artifacts.

**Definition of Terms**

In any research article, it is important to establish how the author is taking up certain terms. I use the following terms in the following ways throughout this dissertation:

- **Curriculum**: The totality of content and methods teachers access and use in their day-to-day instruction. Curriculum is what knowledge students can access and how they access it.

- **Gatekeeping**: The decisions which teachers make about content, pacing, and instructional strategies that affect their day to day. These decisions are informed by some frame of reference.

- **Global Citizenship Education (GCE)**: An approach to education that seeks to prepare students to be global citizens. Conceptualizations of global citizenship vary. This paper used Pashby et al.’s (2020) framework which defines:
  - Neoliberal GCE: Positions citizenship education in service of developing human capital for the economies of nation-states.
  - Liberal GCE: Focuses on cultivating universal values like openness, mutual respect, and common humanity.
  - Critical GCE: An activist citizenship where students critique industrial capitalism, imperialism, and the hegemonic power structures that result from them.
• **Identity:** The way an individual thinks of themselves, which results from personal reflexivity over time. The individual self and one’s interactions with the external world contribute to personal identity. An individual may have multiple identities and these identities may change over time.

• **Official Curriculum:** Policies or curriculum prescribed to teachers or districts such as state standards, textbook adoptions, national mandates, and state laws.

• **Place:** Not only a physical location but the values and realities tied to that location. Place involves ecological, sociological, ideological, political, and perceptual dimensions (Gruenewald, 2003).

• **Rural school:** A school inside a rural area. Per the Census Bureau, rural areas are populations, housing, or territories not in an urban area. The National Center of Educational Statistics, which partners with the Census Bureau, recognizes three types of rural areas: fringe, distant, and remote:
  
  o **Fringe**— “Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster” (NCES, 2022).

  o **Distant**— “Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster” (NCES, 2022).

  o **Remote**— “Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster” (NCES, 2022).
• **Rural Teacher:** A teacher who teaches in a school that is in a designated rural area.

• **Teaching Artifact:** Artifacts in this study are lesson plans which include an activity. The lesson plan and activity relate to GCE, in the participant’s mind, in some way.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Introduction and Purpose**

Though literature reviews are universal in research inquiries, it is perhaps important to briefly consider the purpose of the literature review and how it drives research. Literature reviews are pre-requisite for conducting substantive research. They are meant to ground the researcher’s inquiry into a specific body of scholarship and should guide the researcher throughout developing research questions, choosing and implementing a methodology, analyzing data, and reporting findings. A good literature review not only summarizes what has been done in a field but analyzes claims from previous studies, examines research methods in those studies, and synthesizes findings across relevant literature (Boote & Beile, 2009, Creswell 1994). The literature review further relates to and builds off the researcher’s conceptual framework (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009).

**Placing Rural**

To understand the role of place and external factors in identity and to understand the interplay between rural identities and global citizenship education gatekeeping, it is necessary to understand what rural schools are. The United States federal government uses two definitions of rural, one from the U.S. Census Bureau and the other from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). However, the Census Bureau does not actually define rural but rather distinguishes rural as areas that are not metropolitan. Unlike the census, the OMB designates counties based around core population, but again the focus is on whatever is not metropolitan is rural.
The National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES), which partners with the Census Bureau, recognizes three types of rural areas: fringe, distant, and remote. A fringe rural area is a census-defined “rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster” (NCES). A distant rural area is a census-defined “rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster” (NCES, 2022). A remote rural area is a census-defined “rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster” (NCES, 2022). In the school year 2016-2017, nearly one in five students attended a rural school, which accounts for more students than the nation’s 85 largest districts combined (Showalter et al, 2019). Thus, rural schools serve a sizable portion of the population.

Despite the sizeable portion of students served by rural schools, historically there has been a lack of emphasis in education literature on rural schools (Steffes, 2008), and there remains a lack of academic literature on rural students and social studies education in rural areas (Bright, 2018; Moffa, 2019). When policy makers, academics, and writers do discuss rural schools, it is often through a deficit-minded lens (Johnson & Howley, 2015). According to Steffes (2008), rural schools have historically been thought of as a policy problem. The characterization of the “rural school problem” was integral to early state policy interventions into rural schools at the turn of the twentieth century. Prior to the rapid industrialization that accompanied both world wars, rural teaching often occurred in single-room schools and was characterized by “meager school funding and facilities, low attendance and interest, and poor instruction by unprepared teachers” (Steffes, 2008, p. 186). Much like contemporary urban-centric definitions of rural, policy matters in the early twentieth century centered around the gap
between the rural and the urban. This gap became more apparent with standardized testing and World War I draft statistics, which showed high rates of illiteracy and physical unfitness (Steffes, 2008). Going forward, this deficit-minded thinking remained and resulted in federal policy that promoted consolidation, centralization, and standardization (Steffes, 2008).

Given the nature of how reformers, the government, and society think about rural schools in the United States, it is not surprising that stereotypes and deficit-minded thinking about rural communities and schools abound. Depictions of rural communities are often simplistic and categorize rural life as either arcadian, idyllic, and homogenous, or behind the times (Theobald & Wood, 2010). Rural communities are also often seen and portrayed as uneducated, subpar, and unambitious (Johnson & Howley, 2015; Theobald & Wood, 2010). The prominence of such narratives, tragically, may lead to a stereotype threat that sabotages the success of rural students (Theobald & Wood, 2010).

To confront stereotypes of the rural does not, however, suggest that there are not challenges rural communities and schools face. Rural areas often have trouble sourcing high quality professional development (Bright, 2018, Johnson and Howley, 2015). The small size of districts and distance to more urbanized areas that typically contain experts in a field can make access to professional development difficult, making partnership with specific universities crucial (Hoppey, 2016). Rural schools also typically have difficulty obtaining specialized services like linguistic and mental health specialists, English as second language teachers, foreign language teachers, and special education teachers for their students (Provasnik et al. 2007; Showalter et al., 2019). This can be a significant hurdle to rural student success, as rural areas are experiencing health care consolidation and brain drain that involves young adults seeking work outside their community or moving to cities (Mathema et al. 2018). Additionally, a
similar percentage of rural students as urban or suburban have individualized education plans, and rural areas are growing increasingly diverse with more immigration in the past decade, making access to special services more important than ever (Mathema et al., 2018; Provasnik et al. 2007). Rural schools continue to report teacher shortages overall as well (Showalter et al., 2019).

There is also lower overall attainment and access to college preparatory courses in rural areas. Rural schools typically offer fewer advanced placement courses, and students in rural areas are less likely to pass the AP exams than their non-rural peers. (Provasnik et al., 2007; Showalter et al., 2019). Desire to enter college varies as well. Wilcox et al. (2018), found that attainment is strongly correlated to expectations of one’s future employment in rural areas. Data from their study suggests students in rural areas typically seek and obtain the level of post-secondary degree or certification they believe necessary for employment. Historically, this may have led to undermatching where rural youth seek opportunities that do not necessarily match their qualifications. There are, importantly, regional differences as well, as students from the United States Midwest, South, and West, are less likely to seek and obtain a bachelor’s degree than students from the Northeast.

In terms of social environment, there tends to be higher poverty rates in rural areas; though, when adjusted for cost of living, earning power in rural areas is higher than cities (Provasnik et al. 2007; Showalter et al, 2019). Unfortunately, rates of child poverty are higher in rural settings than elsewhere (Showalter et al., 2019). Children who grow up in poverty experience greater difficulty being successful (Bright, 2018). Due to consolidation of health care services and trouble staffing existing sites, access to health care can be more difficult in rural areas (Mathema et al. 2018). Corporate creep and geographic isolation also create the potential
for food deserts in rural areas (Showalter et al. 2019). For instance, Dollar stores bring food, but not fresh or nutritious produce, as their products are typically processed.

While all these issues constitute serious hurdles to rural students’ success, there are many potential advantages to living in a rural area. Typically, rural areas see greater community interactions and cohesion. Sense of civic responsibility in rural areas is high (Moffa, 2019), and more parents report attending after school events or volunteering at a school in rural areas (Provasnik et al., 2007). Though rural areas have difficult sourcing professional development and recruiting teachers, the average teacher in a rural school has more experience than those in non-rural areas (Provasnik et al., 2007). Rural schools also typically have smaller class sizes, which provides more potential time for one-on-one instruction (Provasnik et al., 2007; Showalter, et al. 2019). There are marked benefits to small class sizes, and in rural areas small sizes may mean comparably better performance on high-stakes assessments. Historically, there is mixed data on NAEP testing between rural and non-rural students, as rural students tend to score higher than urban students but lower than those in suburbs (Provasnik et al. 2007), and recently, rural students are scoring higher on average than their non-rural peers on NAEP assessments (Showalter et al 2019). There is also more enrollment in dual-credit courses in rural high schools (Showalter et al 2019). Though rural students are less likely to take AP courses and pass AP exams, about 23% of rural students earn dual enrollment credit (Showalter et al., 2019).

It is important to note that rural schools themselves are not monolithic, however. There are differences between rural areas across the country, and even rural schools within the same state can be vastly different. For instance, data from Pennsylvania suggests that its rural areas are some of the least diverse in the country, but specific rural districts, like East Stroudsburg, within Pennsylvania are incredibly diverse (Showalter et al 2019). Poverty gaps also vary by locale, and
unfortunately, there remains a performance gap that correlates with rural poverty gaps. Students in well-off homes tend to perform better than students in disadvantaged homes (Showalter, et al. 2019.

The rural should thus be thought of as a complex place in which rural teachers exist and practice. Just like there is no single rural place, there is no single way of being a teacher in a rural area. Researchers should not essentialize rural teachers’ identities or assume teachers are or are not a certain way because they happen to find themselves teaching in a rural school. This is why it is important to consider identity to get a better picture of what it means to be a rural teacher.

(Rural) Identity

Identity is a surprisingly tricky concept to discuss because it appears to be an obvious concept. It is seemingly woven so tightly into our daily lives in its influence on the way we as humans make decisions, and it is discussed in culture so much that one could take for granted what identity means or how identities manifest and change. The meaning of identity, or the self, and how identities emerge, however, is a matter of much discussion across multiple disciplines. Within this section, I will describe these varying conceptualizations of identity and explain how I will take up the concept of identity in this project. But first, I will explain why identity is worth considering at all.

It should be noted that the existence of identity itself cannot be assumed. Some scholars suggest the term identity itself has become meaningless due to overuse and are also skeptical of the usefulness of identity in conceptualizing the tapestry of human experience (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Malešević, 2006). Other scholars like Foucault (1995) preferred to think of human socio-cognitive phenomenon in terms of the self. Skepticism of identity is not purely linguistic,
however, as postmodern theories of identity suggest that at best identities are always fractured and unstable (Barker & Jane, 2016).

At the same time, scholars across disciplines argue for the usefulness of identity as a concept. From a sociological perspective, Jenkins (2014) asserts the primacy of identity in understanding and explaining human behavior. Identity, he argues, drives human cognition and is directly responsible for how humans conduct themselves individually and collectively. Without being deterministic, he suggests how individuals think of themselves and how others think of an individual encourages the individual to behave in certain ways. Ellemers et al. (2002) also consider the self a driving fact in decision making while arguing against prioritizing either an individual or collective sense of self. Rather, they argue, different degrees of group involvement can work to privilege one or the other.

Though he is a bit more skeptical about the stability of identity, Hall (1996) writes extensively on how identities manifest and are taken up by certain groups to certain ends. Much of Hall’s thinking on identity borrows from Foucault, whose work on the regulatory power of discourse acknowledges the importance of factors outside of the individual self in the creation of identity. Work by Foucault and others who acknowledge the power of discourse and the ways society and culture create acceptable ways of being decenter the individual as the sole creator of their identity. One cannot create identity in a vacuum but must engage with, accede to, and/or resist the society in which they find themselves. Society itself can of course be a vague notion but acknowledging social influence generally means acknowledging the importance of cultural, political, and economic realities in a place. Hall (1996) contends that acknowledging these realities and decentering the individual as creator of identity alone does not necessitate the abandonment of identity or the individual as subject. It is possible to read and implement
Foucault’s ideas in ways that strip individuals of agency in the face of regulatory discourse. Hall, however, acknowledges these discourses while also acknowledging the individual’s agency to interact with those discourses. This relates to Foucault’s thinking that discourses regulate and are regulated by people.

Rather than stripping individuals of agency, Hall (1996) instead argues for a reconceptualization of identity as a meeting point of the mental self and the discursive. It is at this “suturing point” that human society can be best understood. Grossberg (1996) shares Hall’s skepticism and further elaborates on how identity should be seen in terms of power. Social power articulates and anchors identity. It is how identity comes to be, and because systems of power can reorganize, so can identities. Provocatively, Grossberg (1996) further adds that belonging can exist before identity. Sites and places of belonging, like a protest site, can work to bind and define a group that did not have a preexisting common identity before their incidental gathering. Identity for Grossberg is tied to a sense of collective agency, which can help researchers think through collective action.

While scholars who discuss identity, either individual or collective, tend to position it as an explanatory variable in human behavior, scholars take up the term identity in very different ways. Hall (1992) embraces an anti-essentialist conceptualization of identity in line with cultural studies as a(n) (anti-)discipline (Hall, 2003; Wright, 1998). For Hall specifically, this means that there is no unifying principle of race, class, nationality, etc. alone. Rather, through fragmentation of cultural landscapes, modernity and globalization create the conditions for these characteristics to shift, mix, and evolve. For example, what is means to “be English” is tied with a complex social history. Though the nation-state of England is delineated by political borders, there are many races and ethnicities of people in England. Though England drove the Industrial
Revolution and continues to house a major financial banking sector in London, wealth is accumulated and experienced in different ways materially, culturally, and politically. This is not to say that identity does not exist, but it does suggest that identity cannot be essentialized. Whereas earlier conceptualizations of identity, what Hall (1992) calls the Enlightened subject and the sociological subject, recognized an inner core to the self-resulting from Cartesian reason or through relationships with significant others respectively, the post-modern subject does not have a single identity. Instead, the postmodern subject “assumes different identities at different times” (p 277). There is, in this postulation, no stable self precisely because identities are multiple and potentially conflicting.

For Hall, the conditions of modern society create the post-modern subject. This type of identity is distinguished from the sociological subject due to the destabilizing influences of globalization. Like the post-modern subject, the sociological subject articulates a concept a self through interactions with others—through relationships with people and symbols. But unlike the sociological subject who derives identity through relatively stable social structures, the post-modern subject has no such stable structure to interact with in Hall’s estimation. Five major events, including the emergence of Marxist structuralism, Freud’s conceptualization of the unconscious, Sassure’s work on linguistics, Foucault’s work on the disciplinary power, and the feminist movements have worked to de-center the subject. To further articulate this fractured conceptualization of identity, Hall (1992) offers the example of the confirmation hearings of Supreme Court justice Clarence Thomas. Hall argues that after Anita Hill accused Thomas of sexual assault, Thomas’ supporters and opponents organized around certain identities. Race, gender, and political ideology were just some of the factors that might lead to one supporting or opposing Thomas’ nomination to the Supreme Court.
It is important to note that Hall (1996) does not necessarily believe that identity is unattainable. Borrowing from Foucault’s later works, Hall (1996) argues that identities are forged through interaction between cognition and social interaction, which are mediated by discourses. Humans have some amount of agency in the face of regulatory discourses. Though the subject is historicized, the individual can construct a sense of self through interaction with regulatory discourses. It is at the points where discursive interpellation and the productive subjectivities of the individual meet, what Hall (1996) calls points of suture, that individuals construct their identities. There may be no core self, but there are “points of temporary attachment” (p. 19).

Hall (1990) also articulates an understanding of identity that goes beyond the personal individual self. Group identities, or cultural identity, exist in points of difference. Rather than a shared culture of collective self, Hall (1990) argues that it is the act of becoming through recognition of difference that creates a cultural identity. Like the individual self, these identities are always fluid and subject to change through a group’s positioning of themselves in terms of their historical context. Cultural identities also exist at the point of suture between history and culture.

One thing that becomes clear in considering the nature of identity is the importance of society and the collective on construction of the self. As with personal identity, the social self is a somewhat elusive concept as social groups themselves can be fluid constructs. Ellemers et al. (2002) provide insight into what group affiliation and an individual’s perception of group commitment and involvement along with perception of group threat means to the expression of one’s identities. Without a threat and with low commitment, there is little interplay between individual and group identity. If personal commitment to the group is higher, identity expression
and seeking of affirmation of distinctive identity within the group is likely. When there is a self-directed threat and low commitment to the group, the individual will likely seek self, rather than group affirmation. The commitment to the self here, rather than group, may stem from any number of reasons, including stereotype threat, conviction of uniqueness, commitment to individual autonomy, etc. However, if an individual has a high commitment to the group under conditions of self-directed threat, they will seek acceptance within the group, displaying normative behavior and possibly criticizing those with marginal status within the group. Finally, those with low commitment to a group under conditions of a group directed threat will seek individual mobility to avoid negative connotations or associations with the group. Identities shift to avoid the threat to the group. When commitment to the group is high, however, individuals seek affirmation for the group under threat. This could mean distinguishing the group in terms of its value or its uniqueness. The implications of this sociological study suggest that, as cultural studies theorists argue, identity construction and expression is neither a passive nor individual endeavor.

Giddens (1991) also offers insight into how self-identity interacts with external influences in the modern age. Modernity, for Giddens, is defined by three overarching dynamisms. First is the separation of time and space, which suggests globalization allows for interaction across wide spaces of time-space. That humans can interact and communicate instantaneously with anyone across the globe with an internet connection breaks down traditional understandings of time, while technological advances in travel and shipping, along with historical processes like colonization destabilize traditional notions of place. Second are disembarking mechanics, like money and expert systems. These mechanics mystify society and create barriers between humans’ everyday lives and the systems that sustain certain policies or
discourses. Last is institutional reflexivity, the idea that society and knowledge are always changing. Institutions, like discourses, affect and are affected by humans. It is within these mechanisms that individuals create notions of the self. These mechanisms, in Giddens’ account, form a dialectic between local and global considerations, where globalization in modern era does not allow the same type of disconnection or isolation from wider events as could occur in previous eras. Local and global come closer together. Creation of the self operates as a reflexive process where changes in the self reflect changes in local and global society. This reflexivity and dialectic are central to Giddens’ (1991) conceptualization of identity in the modern age. The self results from the individuals ongoing navigation of the local/global dialectic. The individual sustains identity, creates a narrative of the self, through constant reflexive awareness. This reflexive identity is robust, Giddens claims, in its ability to withstand shifts in the social environment but fragile because it is only one potential story of many.

Though written from a sociological perspective, Giddens’ (1991) work on modern identity shares ideas with Hall’s (1992) conceptualization of the post-modern subject. Both Hall and Giddens’ understand that identity is not solely individually constructed. Interactions with society and group belonging create conditions from which the self can manifest. In this way identity is reflexive. Both also argue that the modern age is unique in the conditions it creates for the project of the self. Time and space continue to shrink, and constantly shifting local and global social landscapes do not allow for the same type of stability as previous ages in human history. However, there is a particular distinction between Hall and Giddens’ conceptualization of identity that is worth teasing out. Giddens (1991) suggests that identities are robust because individuals may sustain them over time despite social fragmentation. Identity is reflexive and a constant project, but this robustness implies an enduring quality of identity. Hall (1992) on the
other hand seems to suggest that identity is more transient, and not so stable. The post-modern subject has no core self but rather forms identities through temporary attachments through the meeting points of regulatory discourses and individual subjectivity.

Jenkins’ (2014) work on social identity offers a way to reconcile some differences between sociological and cultural studies perspectives on identity, and his conceptualization of identity forms the crux of how I define and apply identity in this research project. As with theorists who have contributed to work on identity, Jenkins (2014) sees the importance of difference in the creation of identity. At the same time, he recognizes the role similarity plays in how we socially define ourselves. Humans compare similarity and difference in creating identity. Further, identity is always a process of becoming. Like Giddens’ reflexive arguments, Jenkins (2014) sees identity as an ongoing project, and similar to Hall’s (1992) sociological subject, he makes the case for an anti-essentialist understanding of identity. However, Jenkins departs with Hall and Giddens in his claim that understanding identity in this way is not novel and is not preconditioned by any conditions of modernity (or post-modernity). Identities were complicated a thousand years ago, and they continue to be complicated today. This suggests modern conditions do not have some special fragmentary or de-essentializing capacity. Globalization is certainly more powerful now than in the past, but people always lived in relation to one another. Globalization could even be said to have started with the Silk Roads and Afro-Eurasian trade networks over one thousand years ago. This brings up another critical point about globalization that is often glossed over. Like humans a thousand years ago, people today exist and live within varying degrees of globalization. Humans may not be able to fully escape globalization, but globalization does not globalize equally. Understanding identity exclusively through difference and globalization, Jenkins (2014) argues, is bounded with Western understandings of modernity.
Instead, Jenkins (2014) proposes a conceptualization of identity as a dialectic, not between local and global, but of internal and external definition. Three rough ‘orders’ give shape to identity in this dialectic. In the individual order, humans define and redefine themselves through their socialization: what goes on in our heads. The interaction order more directly recognizes the role human interactions play—what goes on between people. Finally, the institutional order recognizes the role of social organization: how we institutionally establish things are to be done. These orders and Jenkins’ (2014) overall dialectic allow for both individual and collective agency. Neither are necessarily privileged in accounting for how humans create identities, but both are essential. The self is reflexive and ongoing, but it is not necessarily shattered or fragmented. Rather, it changes with the times, both in terms of cognitive development and maturation and wider social change. Identities derive from the internal (inside embodied self) and the external (outside embodied self). Internal and external factors lead us to present ourselves in certain ways, we receive feedback from these presentations, and then we adjust ourselves accordingly. This is not a straightforward process. It involves individual agency, social interaction, and regulatory discourses, but it does not necessarily mean the self is fragmented or unstable. It just means the self is complex.

Understanding identity in this way means researchers must not take a teaching identity for granted or assume that a certain type of place privileges certain identities. Identities must be understood on their terms if researchers are to truly get at confluences between identity and practice. This is particularly important to consider when thinking about teaching identities in the context of the rural. Throughout history in the United States, rural schools have been seen as a problem. Policy and discourse around rural schools creates a discourse of deficits surrounding rural schooling (Schafft & Jackson, 2010; Steffes, 2008), and what research is available on rural
schools also creates storylines of problems and deficits (Burton et al., 2013). Burton et al. (2013) further remind us that just because research happens to be in a rural area does mean it is about the rural. Thus, it is important to consider what being a rural teacher means for actual rural teachers and how rural teachers name their identities.

In this project, I conceptualize identity as a point of suture between internal and external sites. Since I am interested in how rural teachers think of their teaching identities, it is then appropriate to consider what discourses and storylines exist about rural schools and teaching (external sites) as well as how rural teachers think of themselves in the environments those imaginaries create (internal sites). As mentioned, rural schooling has been described as a problem in education reform over the past century. As Theobald and Wood (2010) put it, “Rural students and adults alike seem to have learned that to be rural is to be sub-par, that the condition of living in a rural locale creates deficiencies of various kinds--an educational deficiency in particular” (p. 17). Theobald and Wood (2010) contend this learned deficiency has roots historically in U.S. economic policy and media. Wider shifts from an agrarian focused economy to industrial production combined with economic policy like tariffs and the preeminence of centralized banking to drive rural and urban areas further apart economically and culturally. Further, popular culture throughout the 20th century emphasized and characterized this division as a split between educated, cultured urbanites and backward, uneducated rural dwellers. This thinking is evident in popular programs like The Beverly Hillbillies and the prominence of “redneck” humor espoused by comedians like Jeff Foxworthy and Larry the Cable Guy, but even works of “high culture” like The Grapes of Wrath played into this trope, as a completely illiterate family of tenant farmers would be exceptional, not normal in Oklahoma during the Great Depression (Theobald & Wood, 2010). Nor has the ideological purchase of the rural as backward
been limited to popular imagination either. Textbooks and curriculum continue to downplay the rural. This most often through its simple omission. At best this could be interpreted as callous indifference, but at worst it reenergizes the cultural script of rural as backward (Theobald & Wood, 2010).

Burton et al. (2013) identify deficit understandings of the rural in academic writing surrounding rural schools. Noting the relatively limited scope of research dealing with rural schools and the importance of teachers’ roles in rural contexts, the authors sought to understand what narrative storylines research on rural teachers create and what these storylines suggest about research on teaching in rural schools. After searching research databases such as ERIC (EBSCO) and JSTOR as well as rural specific journals like the Journal of Research in Rural Education, the authors selected 48 articles that fit the scope of their study. Conducting narrative analysis of these articles, the authors identified four emergent narratives in rural teaching research. First, they found that research emphasizes the professional isolation of teachers. This storyline, which depicted geographic isolation from resources and professional development, was the most common theme. Teacher acted as protagonists in this storyline by attempting to overcome the “problem” of rural context. Almost as frequent as isolation was a storyline of comparison with urban and suburban teachers. Rural contexts are of course distinct from other contexts, and many of the studies sampled emphasized distinctions like cultural homogeneity or agrarian lifestyles. Somewhat related to cultural distinctions of rural places was a storyline of resistance to change. Research embodying this storyline emphasized professional and cultural conservatism by depicting teachers as guarding traditions from new ideas or cultural outsiders. Finally, there was a storyline of professional knowledge and credentials. This storyline was least common but popped up in eleven of the forty-eight articles. Within this narrative, teachers were
subjects who lacked knowledge or credentials while researchers or other professionals operated as “protagonists who ‘saved’ rural teachers” (Burton et al., 2013, p. 6). These findings point to the ubiquity of deficit narratives surrounding rural contexts. Though stereotypes and backward storylines of the rural may potentially be more salient for everyday cultural consumers or even policy makers, such storylines also infiltrate empirical research into rural settings as well. Though teachers themselves may not necessarily be as plugged in to research agendas as the scholars who use teachers to produce them, teachers nonetheless operate in space of deficits created by culture, policy, and even academic research.

It is within this cultural and social context that rural teachers practice their profession. At the same time, teachers must face an atmosphere of accountability and standardization brought on by programs such as No Child Left Behind and Race to Top as well as pressures of a neoliberal educational system that prioritizes competition and contribution to the nation state (Edmondson & Butler, 2010; Labaree, 1997). Edmondson and Butler (2010) describe four common scripts teachers often adopt when facing this environment. One design is conservative. This educational ideology focuses on tradition and is opposed to alternative ideas on principle. Another design is neoconservative, which is focused on Eurocentric and Judeo-Christian character education and views poverty, a feature not only common in rural schools, as a moral deficit. A neoliberal script offers another view of education that focuses on economic growth, preparation for work, and competition. This design can be potentially dangerous to rural schools as it encourages competition between schools and instills the idea that opportunity exists outside of the rural community. Lastly is a liberal design, which centers individual freedom and progress and ostensibly champions multiculturalism. Though this script may be more enticing than the others, it may overlook social and cultural realities of rural communities while reducing
multiculturalism to a buzzword. Each of these educational designs can contribute to how rural teachers think of education and thus how they think of their role and identity as a rural teacher.

Importantly these imaginaries and educational scripts are tied to material realities thrust onto rural areas by the forces of globalization and economic development. Howley and Howley (2010) argue that globalization damages the rural eroding sense of community. As outlined above, rural schools face significant challenges. These challenges are exacerbated when society and school frames the rural community as a place of stagnation or regress while encouraging outmigration in the name of opportunity.

Performing a Foucauldian discourse analysis of a public school district in Texas, Jackson (2010) found the district sought to create a conservative script of rural by maintaining a sense of tradition, privileging access to its schools to mostly White, well-off families, emphasizing an unity of community that excluded non-White members, and controlling public image. Importantly, as teachers in this system often went to one of its schools, they served as a “continuous surveillance system” (p. 86). Put another way, they acted like cultural hall monitors in the schools.

Rural areas are also experiencing demographic changes that challenge traditional and homogenous ideas of what it means to be rural (Mathema et al., 2018). This can lead to resistance if rural dwellers perceive change as a threat to the meanings of their place. Place is no doubt a complex concept that would deserve more space than can be afforded here to untangle, but because of how places are produced and reproduced by human actors with differing visions and goals, place offers a way to look at identity (Groenke & Nespor, 2010; Gruenewald, 2003).

Groenke and Nespor (2010) conducted an ethnographic inquiry into the identities created by rural students though students’ language use. After spending extended time in the school and
community and conducting interviews with teachers and students, the authors found that exclusive language offered a means for youth to map extra-local cultural constructions onto local issues. More specifically, students operationalized racial epithets and (perhaps willful) misunderstandings of government policy (e.g., immigrants do not pay taxes or receive interest-free loans) to resist threats to their perception of their rural place. Students interpreted “acting Black” as undesirable and employed hate speech to communicate disapproval. While such remarks and dialogue reported in the study can certainly be interpreted as racism on behalf of the students, these comments operate on a level beyond racial prejudice. Students employed hate speech to communicate their expectations for their place, linking ideas of race, class, and geography through their discourse of rural. Though my study does not focus on students’ identities, these findings are valuable as they speak to the intersections of race, class, and place when it comes to identity. These are factors worthy of consideration for teacher rural identities as well.

Though teachers play a significant role as cultural actors and curricular gatekeepers (detailed below) within schools, research on what identities rural teachers name for themselves is not as common as broader examinations of culture and discourse of the rural. Gallo’s (2020) article on professional narratives of rural teachers’ offers some insight into what identities teachers create for themselves. Situating their study in deficit understandings of the rural, Gallo (2020) interviewed four teachers in a Midwestern state to answer how the rural context affected teachers’ professional lives. Findings from interviews suggested three major professional narrative themes for rural teachers, including sense of belonging, professional family, and strong/complicated school-community connections. Teachers shared they had specifically made the choice to work in a rural context, and because many other teachers made that same choice,
there existed a sense of belonging. Teachers noted some of their colleagues even attended the school as students and that outsiders often chose to leave not long after starting the job. Importantly, this sense of belonging extended beyond the school walls to the community as well. The close-knit nature of rural life contributed to a sense of belonging in the community but also suggested an insider outsider dichotomy. Participants comments suggest understandings of what kind of people and identities belong in a rural place: “there is a sense that to be rural, you have to be a certain kind of person” (p. 5).

For those who had the specific values suggested by participants and chose to remain in the community, the rural school offered a professional family as well. Teachers’ thoughts on the school largely echoed their understanding of belonging in the community. A sense of shared responsibility and mutual support characterized the school climate. This sense of professional community extended beyond just teachers, as one participant shared both administration and school board members were part of the professional family. Related to teachers’ sense of what kind of person can be a rural teacher, teachers understood this professional family as a way to keep insiders in the community and support retention. The sense of family also applied to students, as teachers discussed wanting to both provide a strong education and offer extracurricular support to students.

Participants largely positively characterized relationships between teachers, administrators, and the community. However, these relationships are not as simple or idyllic as popular understandings of the rural might suggest. Though teachers and administration wanted to provide educational and community building opportunities for students, teachers understood that there were literal costs to community involvement. Raising funds, starting initiatives, and offering amenities all required time and money that seem to be in short supply in the community,
and when subsidies or tax dollars dry up, something has to give. Though teachers reported getting creative with available funds, they also shared reliance on community funding could strain relationships and lead to resentment. At the same time, teachers noted that community members provided non-monetary types of support like volunteer work and offering expertise to students in a quasi-teacher role.

Gallo’s (2020) study suggests that rural identity is not as simple popular culture makes it out to be. Rural teachers do face challenges like retention and fundraising. They may also experience a sense of belonging professionally and personal with their schools and communities. However, nothing about these relationships is straightforward or essential to the rural teaching identity. Teachers navigate complex relationships and different community needs, not to mention the demands of a wider educational system that paradoxically frames rural schools as both idyllic and a problem. To understand how teachers make sense of local issues and extra-local cultural scripts, it is important to consider what identities teachers name for themselves. Researchers should not uncritically adopt assumptions about rural contexts. To understand how the rural as a place, and more specifically how teachers’ visions of their identity in those places, contributes to their curricular decisions making, it is necessary to listen to what identities teachers name for themselves.

**Conceptualizing Gatekeeping**

Acknowledging identity may lead to deeper understandings of curricular instructional gatekeeping. Social studies as a discipline has evolved throughout the past century. Although there are clear shifts within the history of social studies on disciplinary thinking, methodological preferences, and prioritized content, there is a clear emphasis that what goes on in the classroom is important for student learning.
In one of the most influential works on curriculum and instruction in social studies, Thornton (1989) argued that teachers act as curricular instructional gatekeepers—meaning that they determine the content, sequence of content, and instructional strategies used to articulate content within the classrooms. Gatekeeping, then, refers to the totality of choices teachers make about curriculum that influences day-to-day instruction within their classrooms. Thornton (1989) acknowledges that official curriculum and technocratic beliefs about social studies instruction can constrain what materials students get exposed to, but importantly, he argues that teachers should be seen as the primary factor in determining curricular choices within their classrooms.

Thornton (1989) puts forth three overarching criteria for gatekeeping in social studies: meaning of social studies, planning for social studies, and teaching social studies. Although there is general agreement that social studies should involve some citizenship component (though the meaning of citizenship itself is not universal), Thornton (1989) notes that there is no single meaning of what the social studies should be or what social studies instruction should look like. For example, previous literature suggests teachers can impose their own meanings of social studies instruction and critical thinking onto curricular materials that they use (McKee, 1988). Planning for social studies instruction is also part of curricular gatekeeping. When social studies teachers plan, Thornton (1989) argues, they infuse their own disciplinary beliefs and alter material to fit their planning needs and routines. For instance, teachers may plan to stress the continuity of their material, or they may plan to omit material with the assumption that the textbook covers it. Lastly, the practice of teaching itself interacts with gatekeeping. Noting that gatekeeping is the most visible in the act of teaching, Thornton (1989) cites previous NSF studies to argue textbook-based and teacher-dominated instruction constitute gatekeeping. In relying on these methods, teachers control what information students can interact with. This does not
suggest, however, that teaching is universal across social studies classrooms. Teachers vary in the ways they use textbooks and the degree to which they didactically present information.

In one of the earlier works on teacher gatekeeping, McNeil (1980) explores teaching practices, and what he dubs defensive teaching as a form of classroom control. McNeil’s (1980) inquiry involves two ethnographic studies across high school U.S. history classrooms in four Wisconsin high schools, where he analyzes teachers’ prioritization of certain forms of knowledge. Put another way, he uncovers how teachers choose and implement curriculum within the context of their schools and communities. McNeil’s (1980) findings suggest that teachers prioritize efficiency and control in developing and implementing their curricula. By observing and interviewing teachers, McNeil (1980) found that while teachers had extensive background knowledge of their content, they choose to both limit what material they presented and reduce the cognitive strain of tasks for students in order limit student resistance to their instruction. Generally, teachers limited reading assignments and written work and relayed information primarily through lecture. Teachers also avoided controversial topics. Specifically, teachers maintained control and taught defensively in one or more of four ways.

First, McNeil (1980) describes fragmentation of content, that is, a reduction of the complexity of a topic to a simple list or bullet point form. By fragmenting content, teachers decided what was most important and worth knowing and presented summaries of simplified information. Second, teachers could mystify content by making the information appear unknowable or undesirable. This was often the case with controversial topics. Third, teachers omitted topics or time periods, often because the teachers perceived them as controversial. The Vietnam war and talk of Black history, for instance, did not receive coverage in some classrooms. By eliminating coverage, teachers were able to both avoid issues that might spark
controversy and make their curriculum, in their minds, more efficient. Lastly, teachers
defensively simplified instruction by reducing the difficulty of their lessons. Teachers used all of
these strategies to make work more efficient and easier in order to maintain control. By altering
their content and day to day instruction, these teachers acted as curricular instructional
gatekeepers.

Interestingly, McNeil (1980) found that these practices were universal across teacher ideology. Teachers across the political spectrum, even self-proclaimed Marxists and teachers who proclaimed they sought to resist dominant forms of knowledge, gatekept content and instruction in ways to maintain control of students. Teachers ideological and philosophical values were less salient, it appears in this study, than institutional priorities such as discipline and control.

Gitlin (1981) more directly took up this phenomenon of institutional priorities and structures as a consideration in teacher gatekeeping. Gitlin (1981) also takes up the idea of control, but whereas McNeil (1980) discussed teaching practice as a way to exercise control over students, control in Gitlin’s research refers to the ways in which teachers are constrained by school structures. Also employing ethnographic methods, Gitlin (1981) sought to understand the relationships between a school’s structure and teachers’ curriculum choices. Looking at observation data, interviews, and artifacts such as school documents and local newspapers, he determined that certain school structures, like administrator involvement, profoundly influenced the ways teachers chose and implemented their curriculum.

Gitlin’s (1981) research site was one Individually Guided Education (IGE) school. The IGE school provided a curriculum to teachers, which included a preorganized sequence of objectives. These objectives allowed for some flexibility in how objectives might be tackled, but
it limited what teachers felt like they could teach in the classroom. Teachers across contents felt these constraints, but within social studies, teachers felt the predetermined sequencing provided an additional hurdle. Teachers felt that refining or altering objectives or creating a new sequence or activity would require additional effort. Organization of teachers into teams could make this task more difficult as well because team consent would be needed to make changes. Across content areas, teachers also noted the fast pace of work as a challenge to reflecting on curriculum.

Lack of reflection might challenge Thornton’s (1989) assumption that reflection and personal inclinations manifest in content and instructional choices; however, it is clear that lack of time for reflection in itself affects gatekeeping. Like McNeil’s (1980) work, Gitlin’s (1981) findings suggest there are complex institutional factors at play when it comes to teachers’ gatekeeping practices.

Anyon (1987) more specifically looked at the relationship between social and cultural values and curriculum choices. Though Anyon (1987) does not refer to her work and observations as gatekeeping, her study on the interactions between teacher perception of student class and curricular decision making has strong implications for understanding gatekeeping.

Grounding her work in social class and how work conditions relationships between people and within society, Anyon (1987) looked at five schools that served different socioeconomic classes of students in northern New Jersey. Anyon (1987) defined class in her study through three dimensions: ownership of capital, relations to other people, and relations to one’s own production. Two of the five schools in the study were “Working-class Schools,” one was a “Middle-class School,” another she called a “Affluent Professional School,” and the final she called an “Executive Elite School” (p. 71-72). Compiling observation and interview data,
Anyon (1987) found that work operated as a hidden curriculum in these schools and contributed to teachers teaching different content and using different methods that they thought were most appropriate for their students’ socioeconomic class.

Anyon (1987) found that teachers in working class schools organized work procedurally, creating strict routines that offered little in the way of student choice and that emphasized control rather than creativity. Curriculum gatekeeping in these schools mirrored gatekeeping in McNeil’s (1980) study in emphasis on control and discipline. Teachers in the working-class school did offer students some degree of choice and require some explanation from students in their answers, but teachers in this school continued to emphasize procedural learning and getting the “right” answer. Social studies lessons in these schools were based on a textbook, and like in the McNeil (1980) study, suppressed critical thinking and controversial issues. Teachers in the affluent professional school allowed much greater independence and creativity in their assignments. Further, activities emphasized ideas and analysis rather than procedure. Within the executive elite school, teachers encouraged students to develop analytical techniques and reasoning capabilities rather than following rigid procedures. Teachers allowed and encouraged discussion, even when it brought disagreement. Students in this school had the most freedom and control over their own learning.

Class, work, and socio-economic meanings contributed to different curricular choices in the five schools at which Anyon (1987) gathered data. The centrality of class brings a new dimension to understanding gatekeeping. Through McNeil and Gitlin’s analysis, it is clear that institutional considerations and school structures contribute to gatekeeping. What Anyon (1987) offers is another consideration in work and class. Teachers in this study brought in their assumptions of what kind of work students might do in their future and structured their
curriculum to prepare students for these predetermined roles. Their gatekeeping responded to material realities and assumptions of workplace responsibilities and competencies.

Bullough et al. (1984) further describe how teaching ideology and philosophy can influence teachers’ instruction. Using observation and interview data from an elementary school, the authors sought to understand how teachers thought about teaching and how those attitudes informed their practice. Teachers at the research site exhibited a technocratic philosophy of curriculum, meaning that to a degree they accepted the legitimacy of curriculum created by experts in a field. Some teachers at the school utilized provided curriculum because they perceived it as helping students on standardized tests, which in turn made them look like better teachers. Other teachers completely divorced their role as teacher from the technocratic role played by outside experts as makers of curriculum, believing that the expert’s role is to make the curriculum while the teacher’s role is to teach it.

Considerations of time and the pace of teachers’ work also affected their curricular instructional choices. Good strategies were tantamount to those that produced results, quickly. After defining the amount of time to take on an objective, teachers measured the success of a strategy by how efficiently it helped them accomplish the objective within the timeframe. Within team meetings teachers more often discussed procedural questions of how a thing is taught, rather than normative questions of what is being taught, further bringing into relief the division of roles in creating versus implementing curriculum.

Lastly, relationships with students resulted in teachers making different choices for different students. Students identified as those with extra needs or who required considerations beyond the normal sequence of instruction received remediation. Standardized test data mediated recognition of these needs and remediation centered on redoing previous instructional sequences.
The pace of work stifled relationships with individual students and precluded individualized remediation. Together, the pace of work and prominence of technocratic beliefs supported gatekeeping choices that reinforced prevailing systems, like standardized testing and official curriculum, and stifled experimentation. However, as other studies suggest, this type of gatekeeping was not universal across teachers at the research site. Some teachers would break away from the prescribed curriculum and sequence to include objectives and content that they deemed significant, suggesting the person-by-person nature of gatekeeping.

Whereas Bullough et al.’s (1984) study revealed implications of teacher professional philosophy, Romanowski (1996) examined community values and how they interacted with teachers’ curricular choices. An understanding of teachers as cultural mediators informs the study which leverages interview and observation data from two separate, previous studies on textbook use around the topic of Japanese internment. While textbooks worked to define the overall parameters of what could be discussed in class, teachers in the study supplemented and even went beyond material in their curricular decision making.

Knowledge of students and community values was central to decision making. Teachers understood that U.S. history curriculum is infused with values and that these values vary in their alignment with community values. For instance, parents in the community, one teacher shared, expected “integration of a Christian ethic into the analysis and evaluation of American history” (p 297). Another teacher shared that students expect material to be presented from a conservative perspective and that tension with this perspective could lead to conflict. Like the teachers in McNeil’s (1980) study, it seems some teachers at the research site sought to teach defensively. More controversially, one teacher commented on racism in the community and how they designed a letter to Martin Luther King Jr. assignment uncover students’ racial attitudes. As
Romanowski (1996) notes, these teachers understood the wider values present in the community and among their students and shaped their curriculum accordingly. Teacher gatekeeping then was rooted in community ideology and values.

Shkedi and Nisan (2006) have also taken up the topic of gatekeeping and teachers’ ideology, specifically how teachers personal cultural ideologies influence their curricular choices. Their study examined 50 teachers who teach the Bible in Israeli schools. Study of the Bible is mandatory in Israeli schools, but, as has been argued by Thornton (2005), Shkedi and Nisan (2006) found that curriculum mandates do not act as simple pipeline of information from policy maker to student. Rather, teachers’ own cultural ideologies, defined as a teachers’ personal beliefs about their identity and the way they value certain texts, impacted the way they went about teaching the Bible to students.

Data from interviews, observations, and school documents revealed four patterns of interpretation and instruction around teaching the Bible that overlapped strongly with personal ideology. Teachers in the pervasive-traditional pattern held traditional religious personal ideologies and framed their instruction to communicate biblical values. Teachers in the restricted-traditional pattern similar expressed ideologies of religious tradition and deemphasized critical interpretation of text at the expense of emphasizing the Bible as an extension of God. In the personal value pattern were teachers who had more developmental views of Judaism that saw religion and culture as always evolving. These teachers sought to reconcile personal values with educational objectives. Lastly, teachers in the critical-value pattern focused on transmission of subject matter and both Jewish and universal values. Two other patterns emerged in the data that partially overlapped with cultural ideology: the normative value pattern, which saw teachers give the Bible modern and secular meanings and a critical cognitive pattern where teachers
emphasized critical reading of text and avoided religious-particularistic values. Though this research dealt specifically with a context that demanded teaching of religious text, Shkedi and Nisan’s (2006) findings suggest that teacher personal cultural ideologies strongly impact their gatekeeping practices.

Saada’s (2013) article on social studies teachers in Muslim schools offers an insight into how personal ideology can affect gatekeeping in citizenship education specifically. Like the religious ideological context of Shkedi and Nisan’s (2006) article, the context for Saada’s (2013) research was teachers in Islamic schools in Michigan. Noting the potential dilemma of balancing Muslim and American identities, the research looked at how Muslim social studies teachers navigated issues of identity and teaching citizenship. In their multiple case study design, the authors gathered data from one highly structured and one highly individualized interview. Findings suggested three dilemmas that teachers face.

The first dilemma is the atmosphere of Islam-phobia in the United States and the need to teach for American (United States) identity. Teachers sought to develop American national identity in students while incorporating Islamic content in U.S. history. Teachers suggested it was important for students to defend Islam intellectually in an atmosphere of Islam-phobia. A second dilemma was the need to educate for Islamic character values as well as moral pluralism. Teachers noted the responsibility of teaching Muslim values at Islamic schools, but whereas one teacher insisted on communicating conservative values, another stressed the need to incorporate a diverse moral outlook in students. Finally, teachers experienced tension between balancing national and transnational identities in their students. As many students had parents who immigrated into the U.S., teachers recognized their students had multiple national identities. These findings build on the cultural ideologic findings of Shkedi and Nisan (2006) and suggest
that national identity furthers the complexity of cultural ideology when it comes to teachers’ curricular choices.

Moffa (2020) explored how rural contexts shape teachers’ curricular choices around global citizenship education in central Appalachia. Unique to this study is a mixed-methods approach. Whereas many works on gatekeeping are conceptual or are grounded in qualitative methodologies, Moffa (2020) begins his inquiry with survey data, which he then used to help construct an interview protocol. Data from surveys and interviews led Moffa (2020) to conclude that a rural context requires special considerations on behalf of teachers when teaching GCE.

When discussing the aims of GCE in a rural context, most teachers agreed that transmission of content knowledge was of primary importance. Teachers also described the importance of education for human rights. Though there was not direct agreement on the means to bring about justice, teachers agreed that teaching GCE should inculcate in students a respect for rights for all humans. Interview data revealed two broad aims for GCE: individualism and cosmopolitanism. Teachers recognized the importance of student local and national identities experiences as an important consideration in framing GCE concepts. At the same time, teachers understood universal values and cosmopolitan discourses were appropriate in GCE instruction. Importantly, individualism and cosmopolitanism were not always mutually exclusive discourses, as one teacher used national identity to “stimulate students thinking about cosmopolitanism” (p 52). Findings from this study complicate discussions of the relevance of GCE in rural contexts and suggest that place operates as a factor in teachers’ gatekeeping choices.

Cornbleth (2015) and Thornton (2005) offer more insight into factors that constrain meaningful and high-quality teaching within social studies as a discipline. Defining meaningful social studies instruction as methods that promote critical thinking and diverse perspectives,
Cornbleth (2015) reviewed school climate as a gatekeeping factor and identified six “climates of constraint” which she then organized into three groups (p 267). Stifling climates, the first grouping, stifle creativity and innovation and lead to teachers doing as little as possible to survive. Within a bureaucratic climate, teachers choose their content and methods to maintain discipline and “law and order” (p 267). This climate is related to McNeil’s (1980) conceptualization of defensive teaching. The other stifling climate, conservative climate, is similar in that gatekeeping works to maintain a status quo. Often this status quo is rooted in dominate attitudes about instruction such as emphasizing rigid structures and ignoring controversial topics.

Chilling climates, the next subset, include threatening climates and judicial climates. Within threatening climates, teachers avoid controversial or potential material content and activities. Whether by the efforts of parents or administration, this type of climate leads to self-censorship on the part of the teacher to align with perceived community values. Somewhat similarly, within judicial climates teachers also avoid making waves by following others’ decisions. Though this climate emphasizes policy and legal decisions, the end result of teachers following and censoring remains prominent as a result of the chilling climate.

Lastly are drought-stricken climates, which include climates of student pathology and pessimism and competitive climates. Climates of pathology are grounded in deficit thinking and create the perception that students are pathologically behind or lacking, often because they are either not White, middle-class, or native speakers of English. This climate leads teachers to see diversion from this norm as a problem. Students who do not fit the norm are not expected to achieve much and thus teachers may not try to teach them as much. Finally, competitive climates
center ideas of success around high stakes testing data. Good teaching equates to high performance on these metrics. Teachers thus turn their attention to teaching to a test.

Teachers do also consider official curriculum when developing their curriculum. Hawley and Whiteman (2020) explored the effects of standardized testing considerations on teachers’ gatekeeping choices. Accountability, the authors argue, is a significant concern in teachers’ choices about daily instruction. Looking at semi-structured interview data, Hawley and Whiteman (2020) reported that teachers felt a need to teach to standardized tests. Disciplinary skills like reading and writing had their place, teachers shared, but rote memorization was crucial. Teachers also felt the need to align their material with official curriculum and not deviate significantly, or at all, from state standards. These attitudes became reinforced by teachers’ coworkers as well. After talking with another cooperating teacher about adjusting curriculum to better align with students the participant came away feeling it was inappropriate to deviate from the standards. Importantly, when teachers were in a class without state standards, like psychology, they felt much greater freedom in adapting their content and instruction to suit their students. Curriculum, then, does matter when it comes to teachers’ day to instruction. As Thornton (2005) points out purpose and method are not mutually exclusive when it comes to gatekeeping.

Examining the body of research around gatekeeping across the past few decades, gatekeeping is a complex phenomenon that does not derive from any one value or consideration on the behalf of students. Though curriculum and policy provide boundaries and expectations for what content teachers should cover in a given course, official curriculum itself does not dictate what goes on in a classroom. To a degree, standards may tell teachers what to teach but not how to teach it. Instead, teachers navigate personal and professional ideologies as well as student and
community values in shaping their curriculum and day to day instruction. In this review, I emphasize what factors contribute to gatekeeping and how they may interact with one another. These factors include school structure; teacher professional ideology; teacher assumptions about socioeconomics and material realities; community values; policy and official curriculum; teacher and student national group identity; high-stakes testing; teamwork; teacher and student religious identity; and considerations of place. These factors are what I am looking for when I ask my interview questions and analyze interview data, as any of these factors may contribute to the way teachers conceptualize and implement global citizenship instruction in their classrooms.

**Conceptualizing Global Citizenship Education**

Considering the need for education that promotes a global perspective, Hanvey (1982) identifies what he considered to be five essential dimensions that would promote attainment of a global perspective. The first dimension, perspective of consciousness, involves the recognition of a diversity of perspectives and the understanding that one’s own point of view is not universal. It does not necessarily involve destabilizing conceptions of the self or an inner core to one’s identity, but it does require a recognition of the partialness of one’s perspective and an interrogation of one’s own evolving values. This is not a simple recognition that everyone has different opinions. Rather, it involves probing into deeper awareness and socio-cognitive levels of perspective.

State of planet awareness, the next dimension, involves recognition of world conditions and developments such as population growth, migration, economic conditions, politics, technology, and conflict. Even with new developments in transportation and telecommunication that shrink barriers to connection (and potentially destabilize notions of place), many people live their lives in geographically bounded spaces, that is, their experiences are primarily local.
Awareness of the state of planet involves a shift in thinking that, though it does not eliminate local concerns, recognizes how choices and events in one area affect choices and events in another. It means understanding that there is a global dimension to decision making.

Cross cultural awareness, the third dimension, is similar to perspective of consciousness in that it involves recognition of how other humans exist in the world. But where perspective is relatively limited to one’s recognition of the possibilities of difference, cultural awareness involves recognition of the very ideas and practices that shape human society and behavior. Given the increasingly easy access to media, it is not difficult to have some superficial awareness of cultural differences. True awareness, however, involves going beyond the levels of “myth, prejudice, and tourist impression” toward deeply knowing others to admit the diverse ways of being human (Hanvey, 1982, p. 164).

The next dimension, knowledge of global dynamics, involves an understanding of how world systems operate and how global change happens. Again, ease of access to information does not necessarily translate into knowledge of how the world works as a system. Famine, for instance, can be easily known as lack of food leading to starvation, but a deep understanding of the Irish Potato Famine requires some knowledge of world history, trade, biodiversity, politics, and culture. Hanvey (1982) recommends knowing about basic principles of change (like feedback loops), growth as a form of change, and global planning, as ways to understand global dynamics.

The final dimension is an awareness of human choices. Connected to all the other dynamics of perspective and awareness is the knowledge that humans consciously make choices, and these choices shape global systems. Global systems like international geopolitical
coordination and trade are done by people. Choices are not always made rationally, nor are their consequences always benign, but they are made by people weighing evidence.

Hanvey’s (1982) recommendations for attaining a global perspective offer a starting point for thinking about global citizenship education, but the dimensions do not necessarily illuminate what GCE should focus on or what a global education curriculum ought to accomplish. Becker (1982) describes the goals of education by identifying four basic competencies for individual being in a global setting. Individuals should be competent in their own involvement in global society. This means recognizing humanity as a collective of people with different values and beliefs living together in a single biosphere. This competency shares much with Hanvey’s (1982) dimensions in its focus on awareness. Individuals should also be competent in making decisions in a global society. This means using one’s awareness of difference and global systems and making decisions with the knowledge that choices have potentially global ramifications in the here and now and for future generations. Individuals should be competent in reaching judgements about choices among alternatives of beliefs. This requires perceiving choices with respect to world problems, analyzing information to make judgements, and understanding that actions can have different consequences for different groups. Finally, individuals should be competent in exercising influence. This competency involves human agency and the recognition that even if grand systems or phenomenon (like inflation or energy costs) are not immediately changeable by the individual alone, the individual can exercise choice in how to confront those issues. Choice and agency can be achieved by work, political activities, and willful participation in local and global communities.

Heilman (2008) further identifies specific capabilities and competencies for global citizenship. Global citizens should be curious and open to new ideas. They should be
compassionate and sympathetic to others’ situations. They should be critical and capable of making political and moral judgements. They should be collaborative. They should be creative and able to utilize their talents for the common good. They should be courageous and willing to maintain and defend democratic values and universal human rights under difficult circumstances. They should be committed and able to keep up to date with events over time. To achieve these competencies, curriculum should promote local-global connections, link U.S. and world histories, promote collaboration and responsibility, and require thinking through tough topics.

Applied in classrooms settings, awareness of perception, choices, and agency can potentially empower students to behave like global citizens. Byrnes (1997) writes on the qualities of successful global educators. Using observation data from a magnet school in California, Byrnes (1997) identifies key teacher characteristics that may lead to promising global education outcomes. Successful teachers in the study emphasized interdisciplinary concepts. Global education is, of course, a grand scope to consider when developing curricula and presenting content. Emphasizing the interdisciplinarity of concepts helps students make sense of material within a global context. Connecting historical concepts and modern events, for example, make abstract concepts more concrete and applicable to students’ lives. Successful teachers also modeled inquisitiveness and skepticism about historical concepts and the practice of history. Rather than emphasizing a body or content or specific facts within a curriculum, teachers were able to teach critical thinking by modeling critical thought around their content and sources. Finally, teachers in the study emphasized participatory learning. Participatory learning involves decentering the teacher from their traditional role of transmitter of knowledge and, unlike traditional cooperative learning, it requires critical interrogation of information and unpredictable
outcomes. Rather than searching for a correct answer, students worked together to critically analyze information.

Taken together with Hanvey’s (1982) conceptualization of a global perspective and Becker’s (1982) goals for global education, Byrnes (1997) provides a useful foundation for thinking about what global citizenship education can look like in classrooms. At the same time, Merryfield (2002) reminds us that the changing times require an evolving understanding of what global education can and should mean. Writing after the events of September 11, 2001, Merryfield (2002) argues for a rethinking of how teachers frame global events in the context of social studies education. Rather than colonial understandings of the past that prioritize dichotomous thinking (e.g., democratic vs. totalitarian or Christian vs. Muslim), global education should embody a counter-imperial pedagogy that examines the world contrapuntally, having independent but related parts. Such contrapuntal thinking would destabilize us vs. them binaries that have historically worked to stereotype, essentialize, and/or obscure perspectives of non-Westerners. Africa and Asia would serve not as a backdrop to the developments and activities of the West but would have their own importance.

Such a decolonial understanding of education has not been the norm historically in the United States. Nor has it gained any real traction in the present day. In fact, global citizenship education itself is a contested term with many definitions and applications (Grossman, 2017). Myers (2006) identifies three broad approaches to global education that have solidified in U.S. education. First is the international business training model. The goal of this model is to prepare workers to exist and thrive in a globalized economy. Recognizing citizenship as potential human capital, it involves learning about global markets, international economic cooperation and competition, and market mechanisms. The international studies model, on the other hand,
focuses on content knowledge and broad understandings of different cultures and histories through the lens of the nation-state and the role of the U.S. in world affairs. Traditional coursework within social studies such as geography, history, and government fit within this mode. Lastly is the world systems approach, which sees the world as a collection of interdependent peoples and groups. It focuses on commonalities and cooperation and the shared problems of human existence and may include elements of social justice. This approach is not explicitly critical in ways like Andreotti (2006), or Stein (2016) detailed below, however. While it does leave space for collective action, the focus on commonalities can operate as a depoliticized multiculturalism.

Myers (2006) proceeds to argue for three broad topics for teaching about the world in the context of global citizenship. First, global citizenship should be grounded in international human rights. Global rights are additionally examined in relation to national and individual rights. Second, global citizenship requires reconciling the universal and local. As has been shown, globalization and modern culture have the potential to both universalize a consumer culture and destabilize local identity. Global citizenship, however, would acknowledge both global and local realities. Rather than homogeneity and uniformity it would emphasize intersections and dependencies. Finally, global citizenship requires globally oriented political action. More than simply voting in national elections, global citizenship would promote involvement in transnational movements and global democracy, emphasizing again intersections between the local and the global.

Andreotti (2006) more directly takes up activism and social justice within global citizenship and is deeply concerned with values in GCE and the literal and epistemic violence of colonialism perpetrated by the West through both physical colonialism in the age imperialism
and mental colonialism through the hegemony of Western scholarly research that ignores this damaging history. Centering this history of violence and colonialism, Andreotti offers a dualistic conceptualization of GCE. On one side of the spectrum falls soft GCE. This type of GCE falls in line with epistemic violence by ignoring power structures and absolving citizens of the responsibility of critically examining their own place (be it oppressor or oppressed) in such inequitable structures. Soft GCE emphasizes common humanity and posits solutions to global problems that operationalize the very structures that created those problems. It is also often globally Northern and Western in scope.

In contrast to soft GCE, critical GCE demands investigation into power structures and how inequities are produced and reproduced by global systems. It does not take unequal economic development as a natural outcome of globalization and capitalism necessarily but interrogates those developments as artificial constructs that privilege certain groups at the expense of others. Whereas a soft GCE might explore poverty as a result of lack of economic, cultural, and technological development, critical GCE would explore inequality as a byproduct of complex political, economic, and social structures that work to maintain power and privilege for certain groups. Whereas soft GCE might use common humanity and responsibility for others as a jumping off point for caring, a critical GCE is driven by a search for justice and responsibility towards others. Grounds for acting are thus moral and humanitarian in soft GCE, while they are political and ethical in critical GCE.

Stein (2015) describes four GCE discursive positions: entrepreneurial, liberal humanist, anti-oppressive, and incommensurable. Entrepreneurial GCE is aligned with economic interests and the place of the U.S. as a nation state in global economic systems. It accepts industrial capitalism and globalization as the status quo and values a citizenship where the individual can
make sense of and compete in global markets. Class, race, and gender among other factors position individuals at different starting points within this system, but regardless, all are obliged to participate. Citizenship in this discourse means economic competition and mobility, and thus trends to a neoliberal view of the world.

The liberal humanist position does not necessarily deny the salience of market forces in the lives of individuals, but it does displace economics as the primary animus for human interaction. Instead, it proceeds from the recognition of common humanity and an understanding and appreciation for difference. This discourse is also individualistic, perhaps more so than the entrepreneurial position, because it ignores structures and organizations. This position also has the unfortunate possibility of privileging those in the global North and West as “generous purveyors of knowledge, skills, and enlightened values” to disadvantaged and subaltern populations (p. 245). In a dark irony, emphasis on common humanity and liberal values privileges Western epistemologies and expertise while stripping those outside this group of agency. The West’s history of imperialism also goes unexplored in this construct.

The anti-oppressive position, on the other hand, takes up histories of imperialism and directly explores “how colonial, racialized, and gendered flows of power, wealth, and knowledge operate to the advantage of the Global North” (p. 246). Citizenship from this position seeks to disrupt structures that promote imbalances of power and are thus essentially political.

Finally, Stein (2015) envisions an alternative position of incommensurability. Whereas the previous positions create rather specific goals and programs for achieving a specific vision of citizenship, the position of incommensurability recognizes the shortcomings of each separate position and resists outright normative prescriptions. The position is incommensurable in that it brings together disparate scripts while disrupting assumptions of Western epistemologies. This
position is more abstract than the other positions, but it offers a multifaceted way to look at ill-defined and complex problems.

Oxley and Morris (2013) offer a more specific typology for distinguishing the multiple conceptions of global citizenship. Distinguishing between dichotomous, attributive, and ideological conceptualizations of GCE, the authors propose eight typologies of GCE that exist within current conceptualizations. These typologies fit into two broad dichotomies: cosmopolitan and advocacy-based.

Cosmopolitan types of GCE include political GCE, moral GCE, economic GCE, and cultural GCE. Political global citizenship focuses on the relationships between the individual and the state. It involves individual political status, be it more commonly to a nation-state or more radically to an imagined world-state. Moral global citizenship focuses on how individuals think of ethical decision making in relation to one another and involves concepts like universal human rights and legal systems of global justice. Economic global citizenship focuses on global economic systems and the relationships between capital, labor, and resources within human organization and behavior. This can tend to neoliberal understandings of the citizen as human capital, and as such, intersection with social justice is difficult. Finally, cultural global citizenship focuses on the globalization of art media, and technology and how individuals take up, sustain, and resist local and global symbols.

Advocacy types include social global GCE, critical GCE, environmental GCE, and spiritual GCE. Social global citizenship focuses on connections between individuals and groups and how people contribute to ideas of a global civil society. This involves transnational activism without necessarily an organizational commitment or affiliation. Critical global citizenship focuses on systemic inequities and oppression and how individuals can challenge those
oppressive structures. It is post-colonial in that it seeks to counter the cultural and political hegemony of the west that has resulted from modern imperialism. Environmental global citizenship focuses on advocacy for the natural environment. Lastly, spiritual global citizenship focuses on non-scientific aspects of human relations while embodying notions of care, love, empathy, and altruism.

Pashby et al. (2020) offer a broader orienting of GCE around three discursive orientations: neoliberal, liberal, and critical. Neoliberal GCE focuses on the development of citizens as human capital. This type of GCE treats students as future workers in the economy of a nation state and prioritizes content and skills that promote individual economic competence, and therefore international competitiveness. Neoliberal GCE is apolitical in character. Citizenship becomes economic productivity and the practical knowledge and skills one needs to thrive within a globalized economy.

Liberal GCE focuses on universal values like mutual respect and common humanity. Importantly, these values are not interrogated. As with soft GCE, the morality of common humanity (potentially) drives civic action, but there is no examination or critique of institutions that concentrate power or divide people. Problems like racism and poverty are seen as undesirable and incompatible with notions of universal humanness, but solutions to those problems proceed from the structures that create them. Further, liberal GCE is not essentially political. While it does make space for action and social justice when interfaced with critical citizenship, it does not require it. Rather than critiquing injustice, it is focuses on universal humanness.

Finally, critical GCE focuses on developing citizens that challenge structures that concentrate power and promote inequality. It is critical of the global North and West and
histories of imperialism. Activism is essential to this typology, and action is grounded in understanding overarching power structures and relationships. Global problems like poverty are not seen as individual failing (as might be in the case in a neoliberal view) or due to a lack of economic development (as might be seen in a liberal view). Rather, such problems are viewed through the lens of overarching structures like industrial capitalism and the concentration of wealth, and therefore power, which result from it.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to better understand secondary rural social studies teachers’ identities and the potential relationships between their identities and global citizenship education gatekeeping. Research into rural teachers’ identities as well as global citizenship education in rural contexts is limited. Studies that do examine either topic, such as Gallo’s (2020) narrative inquiry into rural identity or Moffa’s (2020) research on GCE in Appalachia do not specifically explore the relationships between rural identity and global citizenship education gatekeeping. Beyond gaps in the literature, I have identified this topic due to its significance to the field of social studies and global education. Rural communities constitute unique spaces, and teachers in rural schools navigate these spaces as curricular instructional gatekeepers. Gatekeeping choices derive from a variety of factors, including a teacher’s values, personal and professional identity, and how they interpret the educational space they are in, including students, administration, and the community. Global citizenship education is important to social studies education because it offers a way to prepare students for a world that is increasingly economically, socially, and culturally integrated. Rural schools provide unique opportunities and barriers to the successful implantation of GCE. If professionals are to capitalize on the usefulness of GCE, it is important to understand how rural social studies teachers go about conceptualizing GCE and what relationships exist between their rural teaching identities and GCE gatekeeping.
Research Questions

Research questions drive the methodology of study, not the other way around. (Greene, 2007; Miles et al., 2020). Indeed, certain methods can help the researcher ask certain types of questions. Thus, it is important to begin with thinking about what the research questions ask. The research questions for this study are:

1. How do secondary social studies teachers in one rural county describe their rural teacher identities?
2. How do these teachers conceptualize and implement global citizenship education as curricular instructional gatekeepers?
3. What relationships, if any, exist between these teachers’ identities and their global citizenship education gatekeeping?

My questions deal with experiences, thoughts, perceptions, and values – phenomenon that require deep investigation into rich data. Thus, to answer these questions, I employ qualitative methodology.

Methodology

Qualitative research is interdisciplinary in nature. It has evolved over time from the contributions of fields like anthropology, sociology, psychology, and education to name a few (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative research is often positioned in opposition to quantitative research. Whereas quantitative research requires objective measuring of phenomenon from an ontology of realism, qualitative research troubles the idea that the phenomenon can be easily categorized and or that a singular reality exists in the first place. Qualitative research tends to proceed from an ontology that acknowledges multiple constructed realities, or at least multiple, equally valid interpretations of a single reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Epistemologically, qualitative
research does not share the same objectivism as is often found in quantitative research. Qualitative research leans more to a subjectivist understanding of knowledge. Such a subjectivist position recognizes that it is impossible to understand the world free from an understanding one’s place within it (Glesne, 2016; Merriam, 2002). By design, the researcher cannot divorce themselves completely from the inquiry as they are both the collector, analyzer, and interpreter of data.

This is not to say there is a singular onto-epistemological understanding driving qualitative research or a universal agreement on how to do qualitative research. Different assumptions may lead to different designs. For example, interpretive qualitative research values individual experience within a certain context while critical theorists focus on political aspects of reality and how power produces and reproduces contexts. Merriam (2002) gives the example of foster care. A researcher proceeding from an interpretive frame might ask questions about the experiences of children or parents, while a critical theorist might look at the foster care agencies are institutionally tied up with power and ask whose interests are served by whom and why. These are only two paradigmatic qualitative orientation, but they serve to illustrate that the values and assumptions a researcher bring into a project can shape what types of questions the researcher asks and what methods they use to answer those questions.

In designing my research questions and methods, I proceed from a social constructionist-leaning interpretive paradigm (Lee, 2012). As mentioned, interpretivist research values individual experience and seeks to understand how actors make sense of their world within a given context. Ontologically, I believe there is a reality beyond human cognition. There are phenomena, like gravity, which exist without the need for humans to interpret them. However, I believe that in social spaces, it is human perception of reality that gives reality its substance.
Gravity may work on all humans in the same way on this planet, but the way we as humans experience weight is tied to social values (like thinness) that can vary over time. I believe that there is a single reality that all beings experience but that we all experience it in such different ways as to constitute our own version of that reality. My ability as researcher to make meaning and find truth in my data comes from my engagement with reality as the research instrument, and in engaging in critical reflexivity, I attempt to monitor my assumptions when interpreting data. (Lee, 2012). I also believe it is important to consider how my interactions with participants make possible understandings of the phenomenon I study. I believe research is a creative act that results from my interaction with participants, not through my observations of data from participants. This requires me to consider how participants and I co-generate meanings (Kim, 2014).

My understandings result from the entanglement of my position as knower and my research situation’s position as known (Barad, 2007; Dunk, 2020). My participants, my data, and I all necessarily occupy distinct positions relative to reality, but as meaning comes through our entanglement, these delineations are more convenient understandings than they are practically meaningful. My participants and I are different, but no meaning for my research situation could result without our entanglement—a social construction leaning. At the same time, I am uniquely positioned as a research instrument in a way my participants are not—I designed the framework for this study, and I will be the one collecting, analyzing, and reporting data. The data participants and I create together is unique to the time and space in which we produce. At the same time, my influence on the interpretation of data is unavoidable. Put another way, my participants and I create data together, but even with member checking as a validity measure, I believe I as a human and researcher am the one doing the interpretation—an interpretivist stance.
With this understanding of reality, knowledge, and method in mind, I do not attempt to completely remove or proactively undo my influence on the study. I am just as much a part of the study as my participants. It could not exist without both parties. Instead of striving for objectivity, I monitor my assumptions thorough critical reflexivity (detailed later).

This understanding of the nature of reality is important to my site specifically, because even though there are certain geographic and spatial characteristics that distinguish rural sites from urban or suburban spaces, the meaning of rural is created and coded by humans. Without humans, there may be pastoral spaces, but there would be no phenomenon of rural (or urban for that matter). Epistemologically, social reality is subjective; individuals construct realities differently depending on their positionalities and varying reflexivities. Simply put, there is no one way to experience the rural or global citizenship education in a rural space. Meanings differ.

These assumptions are inextricably tied to the way I think about my topic and the types of questions I think to ask. However, my paradigmatic commitments do not necessitate specific methods, even if interpretivists tend to do qualitative work. So why a qualitative methodology?

Miles et al. (2020) lay out what they consider common features of qualitative inquiry.

1. Qualitative research involves intense contact with participants in naturalistic settings. Multiple data points and collecting data in my participants’ settings (rural schools) gives me insights unafforded by distant, impersonal methods.

2. Qualitative research allows access to insights about holistic systems and how a setting works. I need to understand how my participants function within their schools, as well as how their schools function within the rural community, to understand their identities and gatekeeping choices.
3. Through interrogation of preconceptions, or bracketing, qualitative research allows the researcher to access data on perceptions of participants. I practice reflexivity in this project (more detailed below) as an ethical consideration for entering my participants’ spaces.

4. Within qualitative research, the researcher is the primary research instrument. Though my interview and artifact data provide rich descriptions, in this project specifically, I understand that I am the one doing the interpretation.

5. Qualitative analysis is linguistic in nature. It can involve narratives, categorization, thematic analysis, etc. I understand that writing itself is also a form of analysis (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

6. The primary purpose of qualitative research is to describe and understand something about a subject in a particular setting. This is my objective with this project—to understand what identities rural social studies teachers create for themselves and how those identities mesh with their curricular gatekeeping choices regarding global citizenships education.

**Research Design**

The exact type of qualitative methodology I employed in this study is case study methodology. Though social science researches commonly utilize case study methodology, there is no universal dogma on how a case study should look (Glesne, 2016; Yazan, 2015). The lack of singular guidance can lead to methodological confusion in the research design of a case study, with potentially significant consequences. An unfortunate commonality is the attribution of case study design to a project simply because a researcher has few participants. Number of participants alone does not quality a study as a case study, though. Instead, it is
how the researcher binds, or limits, the case (Glesne, 2016; Yazan, 2015). Data should help the researcher make some determination about a case, be it a person, group, or place (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). In designing my case study, I draw upon the work of Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995) and their subjectivism epistemological commitments to case study research as well as how they conceive of the binding or delimiting of the case.

My instrumental case study design prioritizes an issue (GCE gatekeeping and rural identity) rather than a particular case. As mentioned earlier, this issue became important to me through my experience growing up in a rural area, my practice as a high school teacher, and my ongoing growth as a scholar. Merriam (1998) suggests that once the researcher identifies their issue, they should begin conducting a literature review to become more familiar with how the issue has or has not been taken up by field, before developing a framework to address the problem. My framework drives my research design and contributes to how I limit this case study. The specific bounded system I am looking at in this study is secondary social studies teachers at one county district in east Tennessee.

Qualitative researchers often seek to understand how a person or group makes sense of an issue in a local context. Sampling in qualitative research is thus often purposive. Purposive sampling allows the research to select a specific sample to study to answer their research questions, and it is common in case study design (Teddlie & Yu, 2007; Yazan, 2015). The sample I seek to study derives from how I bind the case study. There is also an element of convenience sampling in this design (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Because of where I am working and attending the University of Tennessee, it is more convenient for me to gather data in east Tennessee rather than, for instance, in northern West Virginia. That the sample is convenient does not compromise my design, however, as my questions are specific to the binding of my
case study and not, for instance, central Appalachia. Generalizability will obviously be limited, but that is not the purpose of this study.

The selection of a purposive sample, and my binding, warrants explanation. I selected the rural as a place because of its lack of representation in research as well as the particularities of looking at GCE in a space where local concerns dominate and, therefore, there may be resistant to GCE (Groenke & Nespor, 2010; Moffa, 2020; Nespor, 2008). I chose social studies teachers because they a positioned to have exposure to content that is humanistic and global in scope and because the purpose of the social studies aligns to the purposes of GCE (NCSS, 2016a; NCSS 2016b).

I limited my case to secondary social studies teachers in one specific county school district in east Tennessee. Based on census data, the area in the county classifies as rural. Based on NCHE criteria, the area classifies as distant rural. There is only one middle and one high school in my case county district. I further limited my case to secondary social studies teachers. I choose secondary teachers because they specialize in a particular discipline and because teacher preparation programs typically have specific programs for elementary and secondary pre-service teachers. A potential area for future research would be exploring an elementary case or making comparisons across elementary and secondary teachers in a multiple case study. Importantly, I did not limit my case to only teachers who self-identified as rural teachers. I do not assume proximity to a rural space or a teacher’s employment circumstance within a rural school to be a proxy for rural identity. Rather, I made this decision to allow for the possibility of multiple and potentially conflicting teaching identities for rural teachers.
Recruitment of participants occurred in two ways. First, I leveraged my existing connections with the school district where I grew up to gain access to teachers there. Since returning to graduate school, I have corresponded with the director of schools for the county and the principal of the county high school to ascertain secondary social studies professional development needs. My work in the county and personal connection to the research site helped me gain access to potential participants (further ethical considerations detailed below).

**Description of Site(s) and Participants**

The county district that is my research site contains two secondary schools, a grades 6-8 middle schools and a grades 9-12 high school. Employing the National Council for Education Statistics definitions of rurality, the district is a distant rural area (NCES, 2022). Per state report card data (2022), the district in years 2021-2022 served approximately 5,000 students of which 80% are White, 14% are Black, 5% are Hispanic, and 1% are either Native American, Asian, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. About 40% of students are economically disadvantaged, 1% are English language learners, and about 14% are students with disabilities.

The district in which I conducted my study is located in east Tennessee. This is noteworthy for a few reasons. First, in year, the Tennessee legislature adopted a policy prohibiting the teaching or use of materials that promote certain concepts. While at first glance, some of the prohibitions like not teaching that “One (1) race or sex is inherently superior” or not promoting that “An individual should be discriminated against” seem like anodyne platitudes, the context surrounding the adoption raised eyebrows, eventually leading to backlash from teachers in the state (H.B. 580, 2021). Resistance to the bill has centered on both the vague language of the policy, including such statements as “This state or the United States is fundamentally or irredeemably racist or sexist,” as well as the policy-makers assumed goals of
limiting any talk about racism or sexism in the United States, historically or presently (Aldritch, 2023b). That the bill both responds to and reifies a social and legal context that vilifies and punishes discussion of structural racism is important to the findings in this study. As I will show, the community surrounding my research site as well as one of my participants’ attitudes about race and critical race theory are very much caught up in this context.

In addition to previous legislation outlining what the state deemed inappropriate concepts, in 2022 Tennessee enacted a law requiring school libraries to provide a catalogue of their books online for public viewing. There was some confusion with the rollout of this policy when it came to classroom libraries – did classroom teachers have to catalogue and justify the presence of all books they keep in their classroom personal libraries? Currently, the state is working on clarifying the language of the bill to exempt classroom libraries (Aldritch, 2023a). Taken together, these policies have worked to create at best confusion and at worst a chilling climate of mistrust and censorship in Tennessee schools. Unsurprisingly, the state policies on prohibited concepts and classrooms libraries came up in my interviews.

Data Collection

I collected one primary type of data to answer my research questions—interviews. Interviews are typical of qualitative work (Glesne, 2016). Interviews can be structured and rigid, semi-structured and flexible, or unstructured and conversational. The type of interview depends to a degree on the research question and what the researcher hopes to uncover. Different qualitative methodologies lend themselves to distinct types of interview questions and styles. Ethnographic inquiry, for instance might lead to deeply contextual questions about cultural behavior, while narrative inquiry might lead to more open-ended questions about peoples’ stories (Glesne, 2016). In this project, I implemented semi-structured interviews. I chose this style because it allowed
me to develop questions for three broad areas (rural identities, GCE, and gatekeeping) based around my conceptual framework. Having pre-established questions as well as some a priori codes (Appendix B) helped me collect the type of data I believe is useful in answering my research questions. Additionally, I allowed for some deviation from my interview protocol depending on my participants’ responses. I asked follow up questions and allowed participants to make connections or discuss topics that I had not initially considered in developing my conceptual framework. Put simply, I sought to balance structuring questions around my framework while allowing for unforeseen possibilities.

In developing my interview protocol, I relied on my conceptual framework as well as general recommendations from qualitative methodologists. Interview questions should be contextual and specific, based around theory, and, above all, should help the researcher gather data to answer their research questions (Glesne, 2016). Patton (2002) offers several conceptual categories to consider when developing interview questions including: grand tour questions, experience questions, opinion/value questions, feelings questions, sensory questions, and knowledge questions. I considered these categories in developing my protocol, but the key point is not necessarily to have one or an equal number of questions per category. Rather, these categories are a useful tool in thinking about the types of questions one might ask and how to revise and improve existing questions. For instance, thinking of questions in terms of experience/behavior is more useful than asking yes/no questions or leading questions. Glesne (2016) offers further advice on structuring and revising questions including: considering if questions are yes/no or close ended, preparing interviewees to give rich responses, avoiding leading questions, avoiding overly broad questions, asking for descriptive experiences rather than lists, and ensuring questions are fair.
My conceptual framework also guided the content of my questions. In asking questions about rural identities, I considered how identities are dialectically constructed between individual cognition and collective experience. I further consider how discourses can regulate conceptions of the self and professional identity and the extent to which individuals interact with, consent to, and resist such discourses. This means I needed questions that consider how the rural is socially constructed as well was how individuals take up that construction. It required questions that probe into individual and collective agency around the meaning of rural teaching identities.

In asking questions about global citizenship education conceptualizations and values, I considered how scholars conceptualize GCE and the gaps between research and practice that limit how teachers themselves can take up such discourses. I needed my questions to be specific to the three major orientations of GCE I sought to explore (neoliberal, liberal, critical) and general enough to allow for rich description by participants and interpretation by me as the research instrument. I did not assume participants have the vocabulary to refer to GCE in these ways, but I did assume I can map their experiences onto my conceptual framework. Recognizing my role as the research instrument and my responsibility in interpreting data is a onto-epistemological and ethical consideration in this project.

In asking questions about GCE gatekeeping, I considered the many ways gatekeeping can happen in the classroom. At the same time that I avoided leading questions, I planned probing questions to get at the various ways gatekeeping may be happening within my participants’ classrooms. Importantly, I considered how rural teaching identities, global citizenship education conceptualizations, and gatekeeping all interact. This means questions about GCE and gatekeeping prompt teachers to think of the ways their rural identities manifest within their philosophic values, curriculum design, and day to day pedagogy.
I collected interview data over two rounds of interviews as my research questions require significant thought and introspection on behalf of the participants. Structuring the interview to last too long and asking too many questions within one setting may lead to participant fatigue and could compromise the quality of my data. Of course, I recognize that asking participants to do two interviews rather than one was an additional commitment on their part, but I believe the risk from fatigue for doing one long interview is greater than risk from fatigue from doing two shorter interviews.

I gave participants the option for how I would collect interview data. Qualitative interviews generally occur in person in the interviewee’s context to build trust (Glesne, 2016). In person interviewing could help me establish rapport with my participants, which is a significant aspect of my romantic interviewing style (Roulston, 2010). However, I recognized that the COVID 19 pandemic is an ongoing concern (even at the time of writing) with the potential for new subvariants to emerge. Thus, I gave my participants the option to interview online via Zoom. While video recording presents a potential technological hurdle, it also increases accessibility for would-be participants (Archibald et al., 2019; Oliffe et al., 2021). Furthermore, video conferencing need not compromise rapport or the sharing of rich data. Recent research indicates that when making use of video, online virtual meeting spaces like Zoom and Skype can promote participant comfort, offer opportunities for building rapport and trust, and facilitate the transmission of rich data (Archibald et al. 2019; Jenner & Myers, 2019; Kobakhidze et al., 2021; Oliffe et al., 2021). When interviews occurred via Zoom, I required participants to keep their cameras on, but I did not keep video recordings of the interviews. Instead, I took notes during the interviews of any facial expression or conversational quirks that might provide insight into comments. Regardless of the setting, I recorded the audio of the interviews.
Originally, I had planned for an additional data point for this study to be an informal lesson plan, including an activity, as an artifact. Additional data points further help triangulate, or crystalize findings (Glesne, 2016), and documents and artifacts are useful in qualitative research because they provide additional contextualization to whatever phenomenon is under study. The artifact I planned to collect for this study was an informal lesson plan, with activities that deal, in the participants’ minds, with global citizenship education. However, while recruiting participants, I decided to leave the structure of the informal lesson plan flexible to reduce the barrier to entering into this study.

Upon receiving lesson plans, I determined it would not be appropriate to analyze the lesson plans separately as their own artifacts for two reasons. My first concern was due to length. One of the lesson plans was only a page long and offered limited rationale behind the teacher’s choices. Second, two of the teachers used Chat-GPT to help them make the lesson plans they shared. While I believe it may prove insightful to analyze lessons plans that derive partially from AI, such a focus is outside the scope of my study. Ultimately, I decided to keep the lesson plans as part of the study but to use them to drive conversation in interview two rather than their own point of data. The point of lesson plans was to create opportunities for insights to emerge regarding day-to-day instruction that may not manifest in teacher’s minds during conversation, i.e., they may be doing something with GCE gatekeeping without necessarily being aware of it. I solicited lesson plans before interview two and kept the lesson plans in this study for this purpose.

**Data Analysis**

I began analysis by transcribing interviews by hand into Microsoft word. I then uploaded transcripts into NVivo where I will begin analysis via coding. Miles et al. (2020) describe codes
as labels that give symbolic meaning to data compiled during the study. Codes can be straightforward and descriptive or complex and evocative. Saldana (2016) further describes codes as summative text or phrases that lend some salience to an evocative attribute of language-based data. As the researcher instrument, the researcher creates codes to categorize and prepare data for interpretation.

I coded in two cycles. During the first cycle, I started with reading my transcripts holistically. Doing this line-by-line coding at first helped me familiarize myself with my data. Once this was complete, I began provisional coding of the data. Provisional coding involves beginning with an a priori list of codes which the researcher develops from their conceptual framework (Miles et al., 2020). These codes provide structure to initial analysis, but the codes themselves are not set in stone. They can be modified, expanded, or deleted as the researcher becomes more immersed in the data. In this way, analysis is both inductive and iterative. My conceptual framework guided my coding, but it was not the only determinant of what exact codes I used. Provisional coding is relevant to this study because I seek to build on and integrate previous bodies of research (Miles et al., 2020).

Once I went through all my interview data and completed the first round of coding, I moved to second cycle coding. During this cycle, I reread my data with new understandings from the previous cycle of coding in mind to look for patterns. Pattern codes may involve categories, causes/explanations, relationships, concepts, and constructs (Miles et al., 2020). This pattern coding helped me condense my codes into themes. Once this round was complete, I reread my data again. During this subsequent reading, I attempted to monitor my understandings based previous rounds and attempt to look at the data with a fresh set of eyes (Tufford & Newman,
2010). I employ this type of bracketing not to attempt objectivity or reproducibility of findings, but to give myself a further opportunity to listen to what my data are saying.

This second round of pattern coding was also analytic, as I summarized, combined, refined, and removed codes to get a better picture of my data. For example, one of my original codes was “multiculturalism and diversity.” By the end of the data analysis, I shifted the code to be “perspective taking,” and ultimately a theme that emerged for one participant with this code was “creating opportunities for global awareness.”

Originally, I had planned to also employ provisional coding, using the same schema as my coding of interview data, with my artifact data. However, due to my decision to not utilize lesson plans as their own data point, I did not provisionally code the lesson plans separately. I did use the lessons plans to guide questions and conversation interview two.

Throughout my analysis, I also created analytic memos. Analytic memos are jottings or reflections that capture the researchers thinking process about the data (Miles et al., 2020). They are not only descriptive summaries but rather representations of the researcher’s ongoing analysis of the data. Miles et al. (2020) recommend the practice of memoing, as analytic memos capture thoughts about data collection, analysis, and display and act as “powerful sense-making tools” (p. 89). Taking their advice, I began memoing as soon as I entered the field and continued until I finished my manuscript. I also used memoing and journaling as a critical reflective practice (detailed below).

**Trustworthiness and Ethics**

Reliability and validity look somewhat different in qualitative research than in quantitative research. Whereas quantitative work and experimental design demands reproducibility, standardization, and internal and external validity, these terms are applied in different ways in
qualitative research. This is not to say reliability and validity are not issues that qualitative researchers are concerned about. Rather, they must be applied in separate ways due to the nature of qualitative data and research design.

In this study, I employed trustworthiness as a framework to monitor the credibility of my claims (Glesne, 2016; Golafshani, 2003). Trustworthiness sets a standard for qualitative studies and refers to the “quality and rigor of a study, about what sorts of criteria can be used to assess how well the research was carried out” (Glesne, 2016, p.53). This involves thinking about one’s framework and methods for collecting and analyzing data. Researchers should also have a strong understanding of their field and phenomena under study. Critical review of the research in a field, appropriateness and consistency of research design and methodology provides credibility to the research design and findings. (Dellinger & Leech, 2007).

Trustworthiness can further be thought of as a way to ensure results are worth listening to (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness can be verified in several ways. First, the researcher should practice reflexivity before entering the field and throughout data collection and analysis. Qualitative researchers themselves are the primary instrument in a research study, and paradigmatically, qualitative research often involves ontological relativism and epistemological subjectivism. If there are multiple ways of seeing reality and interpreting that reality within a project, it is imperative the researcher reflect on what values they bring to bear in a study. This does not mean that researchers must agree with their participants or remain objective or apolitical during the project. It does mean the researcher should understand why they are doing the work and what impact their values have on it. I engaged in critical reflexivity (detailed below) to monitor my assumptions throughout the project.

Glesne (2016) offers further suggestions for establishing trustworthiness of a study:
1. There should be prolonged engagement in the field. I spend extended time in interviews and collect data in multiple rounds to meet this criterion.

2. There should be triangulation of findings. I collect multiple sources of data and use multiple analysis techniques to meet this criterion.

3. There should be rich, thick description. I use my interview and artifact data to write extensively about my findings, and I provide deep context for my site and participants to meet this criterion.

4. There should be negative case analysis. I attempt to seek non-confirming evidence to provide robustness to my analysis and interpretation.

5. There should be member checking. I share my transcripts and analysis with my participants and obtain their feedback to meet this criterion.

6. There should be clarification of bias and subjectivity. Though I paradigmatically believe objectivity is neither possible nor desirable, I reflect on my subjectivities and how they contribute to my research design.

7. There should be peer review. I work with my committee on this project to meet this criterion.

8. There should be an audit trail. I save all my documents related to this project to meet this criterion.

I also considered the ethics of my involvement with my participants as a fundamental aspect of my research design. In addition to obtaining IRB approval for this study, I constantly reflected on my onto-epistemological commitments and my researcher positionality throughout this project (Cain et al., 2019). I have a personal connection to this research site through my schooling as a youth, and, as described above, I value GCE personally and professionally. I
understand that my experiences and thoughts may impact the way I approach my participants and color the way I interpret data.

Though there are different ways of conceptualizing reflexivity, it generally refers to effort on behalf of the researcher to monitor their assumptions and experiences through continuous self-critique of the researcher’s experiences and how and how not those experiences influence the research process (Dowling, 2006; Freshwater & Rolfe, 2001). I think reflexivity should be present during all stages of a research project since subjectivities can influence the types of questions we ask and inquiries in which we engage (Peshkin, 1988). Onto-epistemologically, I think degrees of bias are inevitable in any research endeavor, but I attempted to consciously reflect on these biases to monitor how they interact with my research (Mantzoukas, 2005). Moreover, as my research interest involves global perceptions of citizenship, I found it necessary to reflect on my positionality as it relates to power blocs and how identity influences education, namely how certain identities are often privileged in education models in the West (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2009) and how an uncritical and unreflective approach to research can lead to epistemic violence and colonial readings of phenomena (Andreotti, 2011).

In this project, I monitored my assumptions via critical reflexivity. In addition to considering epistemic questions like do the types of questions and techniques I am using influence what data I can produce with participants and what findings I can extrapolate, I consider political and social aspects of research. My research site is a rural area with which I have previous experience. I understand that culture, politics, and education reform in the United States creates certain storylines and scripts of what the rural is (Burton et al., 2013; Edmondson & Butler, 2010; Theobald & Wood, 2010). Furthermore, I understand that rural teachers interact with those scripts in individual ways (Gallo, 2020). In entering my research space, I did not want
to foster an exploitative arrangement with my site or participants. Though I have experiences in the rural, I wanted to hear my participants on their own terms. I also understand that research can be a political process. Again, I do not want my analysis or findings to exploit my site or participants. I practiced ongoing reflexivity and consider trustworthiness in my research as methods to improve both validity and promote ethical research behavior.

I practiced critical reflexivity specifically through keeping a journal. Peshkin (1988) recommends reflecting on one’s subjectivities before entering a research site and keeping a record of one’s reflections and subjective thoughts throughout the research project. In the planning stage of this project, I reflected on my experiences growing up in a rural area, teaching social studies, and beginning research on global citizenship. I have included some of these thoughts in the first chapter. I also journaled at each stage of the research project. When recruiting participants, I journaled about the experience of making contact and obtaining consent in addition to considering what personal connections or experiences I have had that might be related to each participant. I reflected on these writings before interviewing each participant. During data collection, I also journaled on my feelings going into and after each interview. Questions I considered were: Is there anything I am expecting to hear about and why or why not? What are my relationships with this participant? What is my mood? What do I think the participant’s experience was like during that interview? What stood out to me and why?

Qualitative research offers exciting opportunities to engage in deep discovery and analysis of data that provide insight on social phenomena. At the same time, it requires rigorous application of relevant principles of research design, data collection and analysis, and writing, as well as constant reflection from the researcher on what values and assumptions they bring to
bear in a study and how they produce meaning with participants. Practicing constant reflexivity on my positionality helped me think through issues of ethics and quality in my work.

The primary ethical hurdle I anticipated revolved around my previous experience in the school district as a student and citizen of the community. I care deeply about the community in which my site is situated, and I had previous relationships with workers throughout the school district. I do not think caring about a research site compromises a researcher’s quality in approaching a project. On the contrary, I think it is valuable, but because of my connection, I was intentional about reflecting on my values and assumptions throughout my project. I further treated my participants as co-meaning makers for this study without letting my previous understandings unduly color my interpretation of the data we create and I interpret. Onto-epistemologically, I believe my participants and I create data together, but I recognize that I am in a position of privilege as the research instrument. I was the one who did the analysis and reporting of findings in the dissertation, and I have attempted to represent our co-construction of data credibly. I have reflected on my understanding of reality and knowledge and the process of meaning creation through entanglement to try to accomplish this.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

In this chapter, I report results from my interviews with participants. I have structured this chapter to explore each research question in detail, along with unanticipated findings that emerged in the course of this study. Importantly, I situate all findings in this section in context of the rural site in which I conducted this research along with my conceptual framework. The rural context and rural teaching identities are not incidental to this project. I am intentional in my design and discussion about focusing on this context and these identities and exploring what they mean for curricular instructional gatekeeping for global citizenship education.

I have structured the following discussion of my results by research question and participants. I provide each research question its own section, and within each research question I discuss findings for each participant. Structuring findings in this manner allows me to deeply probe participant responses and construct a more nuanced portrait of each participant than would be possible if I immediately began synthesizing major themes. I compare and analyze themes across participants in chapter five. Cross-participant analysis allows me to identify and report common themes in my research site and secondary social studies teachers in this district as the case.

On a procedural level, I have made a few idiosyncratic choices to aid in readability. In transcribing data, I used ellipses to indicate momentary pauses. In reporting results, I have inserted [pause] instead of using ellipses to avoid confusing the reader. Ellipses indicate larger breaks in the conversation. I have mostly kept participant speech idiosyncrasies such as repeated
words, fragments, and run-on thoughts intact to better represent participants’ voices. When appropriate, I add bracketed emotions or action like [with laughter] to reflect participant mood and tone in their responses. A notable exception I make in adjusting participant voices is deleting repeated words when I believe it aids readability and does not alter the impact of the statement or though. I do not attempt to reproduce vernacular or phonetic characteristics of the southern accents, such as elongated vowels, in my transcriptions of interview data or the findings below.

Throughout interviews, the topic of race emerged consistently in relation to rural life and teaching. In both my writing and reporting of participants responses, I have chosen to capitalize both White and Black when I or participants use those words to relation to race. Capitalization of Black is perhaps more established in literature and popular culture. I also choose to capitalize White in an attempt to not allow Whiteness to be a taken-for-granted reality or norm. Though this work is not critical, I do not wish for Whiteness to obscure and color reality by hiding in plain sight in my manuscript. Capitalization of the word White hopefully directs the readers’ attention to how Whiteness operates in the context of this project.

On the topic of race, I also purposefully contextualize one of my participant’s (Alex) description and discussion of critical race theory (CRT). As CRT research does not conceptually or methodologically drive the structure of this research project, I did not explore its tenets or research applications in my literature review. However, as Alex’s remarks about CRT are, as I will show, salient for his teacher identity and curricular instructional gatekeeping, and because his depiction of CRT is fundamentally inaccurate, I find it necessary to provide appropriate context for his remarks. Hopefully, such context will shed light on discourse surrounding CRT and will help me as researcher avoid reifying any potentially hazardous misconceptions around CRT.
Descriptions of Participants & Reflexive Statements

What follows is a brief description of the professional background and some experience of the participants in this study. Descriptions in this section are brief snapshots of the participants and not in-depth portraits of their personal and career experiences. More detailed analysis will follow in subsequent sections. Following each description, I include a reflexive statement on my time with the participant. As mentioned, I reflexively journaled before and after meeting with participants and throughout data analysis. To write these statements, I pull from my journaling.

Participant 1: Brittany

Brittany identifies as a White, female. At the time of our interviews, Brittany was in her late 20s and had been teaching for a total of nine years. Part of two of those years included parental leave for her two children. Brittany began teaching in a middle school in the downtown area of a nearby city. The first few years of her career teaching occurred in this placement, which Brittany described as urban. I describe this school as [urban middle school] for simplicity and clarity when Brittany refers to it in her responses. Brittany then moved to a middle school in a suburb of the same city. All in all, Brittany spent five and half years in middle schools before beginning at her current placement and site for this research study. There is only one high school in the county district where I completed this project. Brittany was in her first year at this high school at the time of our interviews. Her first-year status was something she communicated a few times in our correspondence, first as a qualifier to me that she would participate in the study if I considered her an appropriate participant given the parameters of my project and again in our discussion in the first interview of her current and former professional experience. Brittany taught mostly juniors in U.S. history classes.
Despite most of her teaching career taking place in urban or suburban settings, Brittany considers herself rural born and raised, sharing “Most of where I grew up was very rural. I’m a rural girl. I live in [Rural] County now. Everything about me is rural.” Her experience growing up in rural areas resurfaced in our discussion of identity in our interviews.

**Reflexive Statement**

Brittany was the first participant to respond during the recruitment stages of my project, and she was the first participant to sit down on Zoom for both rounds of interviews. Prior to our first interview, I had gone through a career pivot. I transitioned from full time graduate work to teaching full time at a high school. Because of these shifts and other life events, there was a delay of several months between when I defended my prospectus and obtained IRB approval and then began recruiting and interviewing participants. Both of the interviews with Brittany happened in the middle of the school day during our overlapping planning block.

The most salient issue for me when participating with Brittany were my professional co-identities of researcher graduate student and secondary social studies teacher. I was incredibly nervous before our first interview. Though I have done qualitative research before, most of my energies in the past months had been dedicated to relearning how to be a secondary teacher and teaching classes and implementing a curriculum that was new to me. During those months I had not spent a significant amount of time with my dissertation study, other than recruiting participants. I was worried I may have lost a step, so to speak. Reflecting on the first interview right after its completion, I felt like I had not missed a beat and that I remained fluent in the art of interviewing. Though completing the interview in the middle of a teaching day was exhausting, I was very happy with my data and my performance as interviewer. My researcher identity resolidified.
Counterbalancing my researcher identity was my identity of social studies teacher.

Because I had been teaching for over a semester at the point of our first interview, I felt a comradery with Brittany and all of my participants that I may not have if I were still a full-time graduate student. I was back in the classroom spending most of my time with teenagers in a rigid schedule day in and day out. Though my school was different from the schools in my research site in terms of geography and diversity of student body, I felt a sense of shared responsibility and experience with my participants.

**Participant 2: Alex**

Alex identifies as a White man in his early 50s. At the time of our interview, Alex had been teaching for 28 years. Remarkably, all 28 of these years teaching occurred at the same school, teaching the same subject, in the same classroom. Alex entered teaching through a slightly non-traditional route by completing all of his educational coursework after obtaining his bachelor’s degree. He then completed an internship at a school in a suburb of a nearby city before beginning his career at his current placement. There is only one middle school in the district that comprises my research site. Alex has been teaching 8th grade U.S. history at this school for his entire career. Alex has lived his entire life in or near the community in which he teaches. Even when he went to college in the nearest city, he commuted for his entire student career, sharing that “I drove to [college] every day.” As a veteran teacher at his school and lifelong member of the community, Alex knows the community, the district, and his school as well as anyone and brings an entrenched perspective on his rural space to this project.

**Reflexive Statement**

Alex was the second teacher I began interviewing for this project. By the time we sat down for our first interview, I felt a renewed sense of confidence from my time interviewing
Brittany and beginning transcripts of our data. The most salient issue for me sitting down to interview Alex was my past experience as a student in the district and, as importantly, one of Alex’s former students. Though I had not kept regular correspondence with Alex, or any of my former K-12 teachers, I did have experience knowing him as a student for two semesters in his U.S. history class. At the time of our first interview, I was 30 years old. I had not spoken to Alex face to face in over a decade, but I had seen major events in his life via social media.

I was very aware of my former relationship with Alex before and during our interviews. It felt surreal interviewing a former teacher I had in middle school for a dissertation project for a terminal degree in education. Alex was a significant figure in my experience as a student. He is one of those teachers one looks back on fondly, and his treatment of me and our 8th grade history class was one reason I considered becoming a teacher. This is a man that, though I had spoken to in over a decade, I had the utmost respect and some admiration for as a professional. This is not to say I did or do not have respect for the other participants in my study. However, with Alex, the respect is more personal. Though I procedurally treated Alex like all of my participants, I understand my experience with him has impacted my personal and career trajectory. I closely monitored and reflected on my former relationship with Alex and my identity as one of his former students throughout my time with him during this project. As researcher and former student, my identities came into conflict with Alex’s discussion of race in his curriculum. While I maintained a diplomatic approach in my questioning, I was saddened by Alex’s curricular gatekeeping and whitewashing around the topic of slavery.

**Participant 3: Kelci**

Kelci identifies as a White female in her late 40s. At the time of our first interview, Kelci had been teaching for 21 years. Kelci grew up in the community in which she currently teaches
and went to the nearby university, but she began her teaching career in North Carolina. She spent five years there teaching English at a classical school in a suburb of a small city. This classical school had some notable differences compared to her current placement: it was more racially diverse, emphasized a different curriculum, and lacked sports programs. She eventually moved back to the community and district where she grew up and began teaching at her current placement, the county middle school. She began teaching English before a social studies position opened up. She now teaches 8th grade U.S. history, which she prefers. She shared with me that, “History was my passion. For my first few years. I taught English language arts. I'm a writer. So, you know, it's a good fit. But I much prefer teaching history.” The community she lives in means a lot to Kelci. She emphasized community strengths throughout our conversation and communicated her pride that from her grandmother, to her mother, to her, someone in her family has taught within the county for the past 60 years.

**Reflexive Statement**

Kelci was the third teacher that sat down to interview with me. By the time of our interview, it was nearly the last day of the spring semester. I had worked through much of my imposter syndrome that had grown over the two semesters I was full time teaching and felt confident in my interviewing abilities. At the same time, I, like Kelci, was exhausted given it was the end of the semester. I had many things on my mind other than this project, so I was conscious to take a moment before our interview to look over my notes and protocol and enter again into the researcher headspace.

The most salient issue for me heading into our first interview was my gratitude for Kelci agreeing to work with me. I had had some difficulty recruiting participants for this project. Part of this was to be expected. There is only one middle school and high school in the district and
only a handful of social studies teachers at either school. I was not working with a large pool to begin with. I was also rejected by a few teachers and ignored by a few others. While a large sample size was not a part of my research design, I was grateful to get another teacher to work with me. Furthermore, Kelci was battling laryngitis in the spring semester. While she could communicate clearly, speaking was not effortless for her. I had not expected her to participate, and I was extremely grateful that she did.

**Question 1: How do secondary social studies teachers in one rural county describe their teacher identities?**

In this section, I report findings on my teachers’ conceptualizations of their identities. As mentioned, I utilize a conceptual framework that recognizes identity as a multilayered and evolving phenomenon that occurs at a meeting point of external and internal sites of input. External sites are events, storylines, or ideas that are external to the individual. An example of this might be a popular movie that depicts rural living. Internal sites are the ways that individuals interpret, participate in, or resist external sites. The individual may participate or boycott these sites. An example of this may be an individual criticizing a popular movie about rural living as rife with stereotypes or not representative of their own authentic experiences, or conversely, the individual might participate in the storyline created by the film and internalize it into their identity. For the purposes of this project, I conceptualize identity as the meeting point between these two sites. I have structured this section to include responses that deal with external sites first, followed by internal sites for each participant. Because identity construction is a complex, ongoing process, there may be overlap between external and internal sites.
Participant 1: Brittany

*External Sites*

*Rural-Urban Dichotomy*

As mentioned, many official definitions of the rural are urban-centric—these definitions describe the rural through what it is not (namely, a city). When I asked Brittany to describe what the rural means to her, she defined rural by contrasting it with the urban. She shared:

A simple definition would be country living. It would be a student or people who live, not in suburbs, but even further out from that. You have open land. You have kids where the grocery is maybe not right down the road from them like everybody else.

When I asked her to further describe “country living,” she drew on her understanding of the rural as place while suggesting a difference with urban areas in her response:

Me: You mentioned country living. Could you explain more?

Brittany: Agriculture. I think of my girls now and they see cows in the field next to us.

Your conversation with your neighbor is “hey your cow’s in our front yard can you come get it?” or “we’ll watch it until you can get it.” That type of living. More familiar with the land and agriculture and not so much the stores are right down the road from us.

The rural-urban dichotomy mediated much of her discussion of internal identity sites as well. As I will describe in later sections on internal sites, much of Brittany’s comments on internal identity drew from comparisons of her time teaching at an urban school versus her current school. The following response illustrates Brittany’s recognition of rural and urban differences as a salient factor for being a teacher in a rural area:
When I talked about it at [urban middle school], we didn't talk about Great Depression in middle school but when you talk about any type of agriculture to those kids, you really have to explain a lot. And I learned a lot because I had to explain a lot. But talking about the cow in the front yard, they’re like “What?! That happens?” because they don't leave their [pause] their world.

Interestingly, while Brittany initially acknowledged these meaningful differences in students’ experiences altered the way she would present academic curriculum, she emphasized similarities in behavior between places. In the same response as the one above she went on to say:

So there is, there's a difference in that sense from the classroom perspective and making connections. When it comes to the way that kids act and behave I don't think that there's a huge difference. I think kids are kids and you have to use the same strategies everywhere you go.

*Backward Storylines*

When it comes to ideas of the rural in the collective imaginary of United States society, Brittany believes that rural areas are unfairly portrayed as backward and rural people unfairly portrayed as at best absurd and at worst imbecilic. Our exchange below highlights this thinking:

Me: Thinking about the rural and pop culture and the media -- how do you think rural areas are portrayed?

Brittany: Oh, I think rural areas in my lifetime, I've seen it and still see it somewhat today, is that they're perceived as the toothless redneck or hillbilly that doesn't know a
whole lot. They have a [pause] they talk slow, they learn slow, they are slow. I think 
that's the mentality that they portray a lot.

Me: Are there specific areas or examples that you might think of?

Brittany: I think sitcoms are probably what I go to. *Friends*, you know, that generation of 
when sitcoms were coming out and you just you see the [pause] when they go to the 
country, they've got, you know, the Uncle Billy Bob hanging out in those sitcoms. That's 
the way that they're portrayed.

Brittany centered her perception on media portrayal of rural areas and rural dwellers 
through the lens of popular culture, but she also discussed how these perceptions trickle down to 
common attitudes about rural people. When I asked how she would describe rural people, she 
referred to my question as “loaded” and shared, “I think rural people vary. I think a broad 
definition of rural people are [pause] they're assumed to be very backwards and that's not always 
the case.” She also shared how perceptions and attitudes of rural people reared up in her 
experience in college. In our following exchange she emphasis the role of language and dialect 
when it comes to characterizing rural people. She shared:

When I went to college to there was a lot of discussion between the way you said my 
college name and it depended on where you were from because it's spelled [college 
name]. But everybody said [southern pronunciation] because, you know, it's out in the 
middle of nowhere. So if you were from the middle of nowhere, that's the way you said 
it. And it was kind of looked down upon if you don't speak properly or speak a certain 
way. And so, you know, that slow mentality.
Brittany did not share any positive storylines preset in our wider cultural discourse.

**Differences Between Rural Communities**

Brittany did, however, contrast these backward, stereotypical storylines with a narrative of differences between rural communities, sharing, “I think that there's a difference in people and in everywhere that I've been.” In emphasizing the difference in rural places she has lived throughout her life, she contrasted the attitudes of the people that lived in each of those areas. She shared:

[Where she lives now] for me would be people who are a lot more clannish. I guess. They know their neighbors, and they know their family. And when new people come in, it's not that they're unwelcoming, they're just very protective of their land, of their own. And so that's why I use the word clannishness, because I don't think they mean to be rude. They just, they're going to protect their own first.

She then contrasted her initial experience with her current community with her experience in college, sharing:

But I think if I were to do a quick example, I lived in [southern state] for a year and that was just a short time but [pause]I lived outside of [large university] there in the county next to [large university], and people there were very welcoming and very nice and kind of want to get to know you and very nosy. And when I moved to [where she lives now], I was like, nobody here likes me. It's very different.

Brittany also folded in socioeconomics to her conceptualization of rural differences. She shared, “I think rural people for socioeconomic status, they can vary from very wealthy to very, very poor. Probably some of the poorest in our country are probably in the rural areas.” At the
same time, she acknowledged similarities in wealth distribution across space via her experiences teaching in an urban setting. She shared, “I think socioeconomically I see some of the same poverty here in [Rural] County that I saw when I worked at [urban middle school]. So, I don't [pause] even though it might look different, it's still pretty rough here too.” Though Brittany utilized her experience teaching in an urban setting to draw contrasts to her rural school, this comparison in wealth status was a notable similarity she drew between rural and urban spaces.

**Barriers**

Though Brittany’s responses suggest her disfavor toward backward and monolithic conceptualizations of rural areas, she did acknowledge barriers to being a teacher and student in a rural place. One of these barriers was student access to different perspectives. She shared:

I think the biggest thing with the rural stuff here in [rural] County is the way that I prepare my lessons and stuff. I don't necessarily always think, you know, these are rural kids that don't understand the world. But I do feel like sometimes I have to make more connections, I think, to the rest of the world, to them, because they don't always have it right in their face like someone else maybe who lives in an urban area does.

Brittany linked this lack of access with socioeconomic concerns. Later in our conversation, when talking about current events and political knowledge she shared:

[Students are] not exposed to different types of things very often like that. Some of them are out with the pigs and the cows in the morning and they're not exposed to like [pause] like I grew up with my parents watching the news. And so I had that in the background or
going to a historical site when you go on vacation. Some of these kids are so poor they
don't even go on vacation.

She also linked this lack of access with awareness of race and inappropriate behavior on
behalf of her students. When I asked her about ethical considerations in rural teaching, she
shared:

I think ethically, if I were to put it like, if I understand you correctly, I think the biggest
thing in [Rural] County is honestly race and racism that we have to talk about with these
kids because they aren't exposed to other races. Very often that worldview is very hard
for them to understand. And so they say things and they do things that I have to talk to
them about quite often about why that's not okay and why we can't say things like that
and why we shouldn't say things like that.

One a more academic level, Brittany also lamented the lack of technological access to
which rural students are privy. Speaking of internet access, she shared:

And I understand living in [Rural] County, you know, some of my kids, they don't have
access to Wi-Fi because we're so out in the middle of nowhere that they don't have that.
So their Wi-Fi is here at school. When I worked at [nearby middle school], we had kids
who would sit on the sidewalk because they didn't have Wi-Fi in [nearby rural town].
And so they would sit on the sidewalk until they got their homework done.

**Politics, Mediated by Family**

Throughout our discussion, Brittany referenced politics in rural areas. I had expected
politics to come up in our conversation, but I was surprised at the contours of our discussion
around politics. At no point did Brittany make explicit what she or society believe rural dwellers politically believe or value. Her comments avoided specifics and instead focused on the experiences of rural students and the significance of families as agents of political socialization. She shared that:

[Students’] political worldview usually revolves around what they've been told and who everybody should like, not necessarily what their political beliefs are. And so that from a simple standpoint, I do have to explain that a little bit further.

She reiterated later that, “usually [students’] political mind is what mom, dad, grandpa, grandma, grandma, grandpa and grandpa say.”

Brittany further suggested that there is some ossification when it comes to rural dwellers’ political ideologies. When discussing politics, she shared that “the hardest part about a rural environment is that they're stuck in their ways.” She also shared:

To [students] it can almost come off a process like, “wait a second, that's not what I believe.” And you have to say, you know, “that's okay. This is just what they believe or this is just what happened. This is just this political point of view and it's good for you to know.”

Her comments suggest students are not immune to such political ossification. Their beliefs solidify through socialization with their families and through their interactions with peers in the community over time.
**Internal Sites**

**Growing Up and Living in Rural Spaces**

Our first discussion of identity in our interview centered on growing up and living in rural areas. In her early life, Brittany lived in several areas that she characterized as rural, as she had moved often as a child. This movement was an important experience and helped shape her identity. She shared:

I grew up a preacher’s kid. That played a major role in who I am today because I moved around a lot. I’m from [first southern state] originally, I lived outside of [major city] for a bit. I went to high school in [second southern state], which really shaped a lot of what I love and don’t love about life… I lived in [third southern state] for a year and I went to college in [fourth southern state].

Brittany also sees her experience moving often as a child as something she shares with her own students. She told me:

People don't realize this, but some rural kids living in poverty, they may still live in the same county forever and ever and ever, but they've moved around a lot and that still affects you. So I definitely have that shared experience with kids, knowing what it's like. And then I've got some kids that, you know, they move from other rural areas to this rural area. And so I'm able to have that shared experience with them.

Brittany further connected these moving experiences to her identity as a student growing up. When discussing moving, she shared:

That played a lot into who I was because I moved around a lot. I was a student you didn’t necessarily see in class because I moved around. I was quiet and I wanted to not be
noticed [pause] I had a learning disability with dyslexia but because of moving it wasn’t diagnosed until later, so I just thought I was bad at school.

It was partially the experience of moving around so much as a youth and her experience with an undiagnosed disability that prompted her to consider teaching as a career. This experience is also significant for her identity as a social studies teacher professional, which I will turn to in a subsequent section. She shared that, “I don’t want any student to feel like I felt. Moving around a lot with an undiagnosed learning disability. I wanted to be there for those students who had never been seen.”

Though Brittany acknowledges differences between rural people and rural areas, and laments the monolithic script of rural space, she considers all the spaces she has inhabited as rural. The prominence of rural space is central to her identity, as revealed by her self-characterization: “I’m a rural girl [pause] Everything about me is rural.” The following sections explore what this means to Brittany.

**Race, and Comingling of Gender**

Brittany’s race and gender were two factors that immediately came up when we discussed her rural identity. She shared, “I definitely think [pause] I'm female and I am White and that definitely fits that role teacher kind of stereotype for sure. I had more White female teachers that I had anything else growing up in rural education as well.”

Though Brittany was conscious of her identity as a female teacher, she more often discussed race in our interview. She also connected awareness of race to her awareness of the rural space in which she lives and teaches. She shared, “I was much more aware of me being a female and White at [urban middle school] than I am here.” Her responses further suggest that the type of awareness of race differs in her White-majority community:
Me: When I asked about identity, you first went into being a White female and race and gender. In what ways do you consider that in your own teaching or preparing for class?

Brittany: I would definitely be answering that question differently, if I were talking about [urban middle school], because I definitely noticed that a lot more when I worked there. Honestly, I don't think that that has ever even crossed my mind being in a rural environment. I teach to kids who most of the time they look like me and have the same experience as me. So I'm able to make those connections easily because, I mean, our cultures are very similar.

Race seems to move to the background of identity in her current placement, not disappearing completely but lurking beneath the surface as a taken-for-granted demographic and cultural assumption.

Interestingly, Brittany often spoke of her gender simultaneously with other aspects of her identity like race and being a teacher when we discussed internal sites of identity. In addition to recognizing she embodied a stereotype through her race and gender intersection with her professional identity, she offered the following comments on race and gender to a follow up question:

Me: Could you provide an example of how [your race or gender] was apparent to you? Are you speaking to race or gender?

Brittany: Both of those things, race and gender at [urban middle school]. Preparing for lessons in history, which middle school it’s early, I taught eighth grade so it's early American history. And we talked about slavery and things like that. And so knowing that,
I would never understand what that child has experienced as an African American in the world.

Though initially acknowledging both race and gender in her response, her example most directly relates to race. This exchange and comments throughout our interview suggested that gender was something she considered as part of her identity, but she often spoke of gender in concert with other aspects of her identity, most often race, rather than as its own unique internal site.

**Politics – Empowering Student Identities and Suppressing Her Own**

Brittany did not explicitly discuss her own political values in context of her teaching identity to the extent she did with race. At times throughout our interview, she mentioned political or political thinking, but she most often discussed politics in terms of helping students think about their own political identities. Brittany suggests she brackets her political identity for the sake of her students:

I tell the kids all the time, I am not here to tell you what to believe or how to believe or what to think. I’m going to give you the facts and the facts of history and this is what happened. And then how you want to form your political beliefs, your moral beliefs and all of that. That is completely up to you.

As one might expect, Brittany avoids overtly communicating her own political beliefs and avoids swaying students in one way or another.

While recognizing the impact of political socialization on students in discussing external identity sites, Brittany also reiterated the need to push students to interrogate and develop their own political identities. In her mind, this process is part of her role as instructor:
I think having grown up in rural environments, I know the typical political views, I know the typical religion, and I know how communities usually value or what they value, rather. And so even if it's not necessarily the same, because I have so many different experiences in rural places, I know how to play on those emotions with the kids, I guess, or talk to various different groups of kids in rural environments because of that. So I do think that plays a huge role in who I am as a teacher.

From her responses, it is clear Brittany believes empowering students to think about their own political identities is part of her role as teacher. Her experiences in rural areas in her youth and adult life are something she can leverage in her role as a social studies teacher.

Engaging students to think critically about their political worldview is fraught with potential difficulties, however. As have other states throughout the country, Tennessee has passed laws outlining what lawmakers deem inappropriate content in classrooms. I asked Brittany how she approached political conversations given her recognition of student political socialization through families and the educational environment created by these laws:

Me: How do you approach that since, as you've mentioned, there's some political conditioning or socialization; how would you say you approach those topics?

Brittany: Carefully [laughs]. Definitely carefully, but I think the advantage of [pause] thinking in my experience from middle school to high school and one of the things that I love about high school is that I get to tell them, no matter what your you believe and what you're forming for yourself, that's your opinion. And you need to be doing that.
Brittany’s emotive reaction belies the issues teachers face when approaching thorny issues like politics in the classroom. It also reflects the way she treats her political identity in the classroom—awareness of it and suppression.

**Religion, Navigating Shared Experiences**

In her response on sharing experiences with students, she acknowledged “I know the typical religion” through her experience in rural spaces. Though Brittany never names this religion specifically, she acknowledges religion generally as an important facet of rural life. She told me:

> Religion is very important to rural communities. And that's not just where you know [pause] it doesn't always have to do with what you believe, but that's the people that you have grown up with. That's the people that you do life with. And so I don't share [pause] like I don't go to church with any of these kids. But I do understand that mentality of, you know, that religion is important to them and I've grown up like that.

Though Brittany refers to religion as an important component of rural life and refers to growing up in religious environments as a shared experience, she did not offer any examples of specific shared experiences. At the same time, like, politics, she sees her ability to navigate religious discourse as some fundamental to her teaching identity; she refers to politics and religion as “delicate” topics and shared, “[navigating religion and politics with students] plays a huge role in who I am as a teacher.”
Professional and Disciplinary Concerns

Much of Brittany’s discussion of her identity revolved around her professional role as a social studies teacher. Throughout our interview, when I asked Brittany questions about her identity, she kept turning to her experience with students, centering her teacher self through her interactions with students. Part of her teaching self is being an advocate for her students, who might face stereotype threats due to living in a rural area. She shared:

As a rural teacher, I think I view myself as an advocate for these kids. I think that rural kids like we talked about earlier, they do get a bad rap. Sometimes when you're out and about in the social world and pop culture and all of the places and I sometimes I feel like I do have to be an advocate for these kids as a teacher when I'm talking to people who aren't from [here].

Another part of her teaching self involves advocacy for her curriculum and her professional responsibility to her students. She shared, “I also see myself as an advocate for the curriculum itself, because so often U.S. history has been twisted and so many different ways.” In Brittany’s estimation, it is important for her as rural turned teacher to successfully communicate an accurate picture of United States history to students. She shared:

Well, I tell my kids all the time, and this is this is me being funny to them, I tell them at my first job is to make sure that they're not the idiot on a YouTube channel saying that the first president was Abraham Lincoln. And if they can come out and answer basic United States history questions, I feel like I've done half my job, especially in the world that we live in today, where people don't know history at all.
Part of this curricular advocacy involves making relevant connections to students to draw them in to the material. Brittany mediates these connections through her understanding of the place she inhabits. She shared:

Teaching history, you try to make connections with your kids [pause] When I taught in [urban middle school], for instance, the connections I was making with those kids were extremely different than what I would make here in [Rural] County. I can easily [pause] we talk about agriculture, and we just finished up the Great Depression in my U.S. history class right now, and so when I talk about the Dust Bowl and agriculture, these kids probably know more than I do about that stuff.

Another part of curricular advocacy is also communicating the importance of her curriculum to a study body that lacks racial diversity. She shared:

There are things that I emphasize, especially in the community that we're in. It is a predominantly White community. And so with the curriculum there is [pause] I do have to emphasize what other minority groups have gone through in our history and emphasizing how important it is to note that even though you don't have an African American a Mexican American sitting next to you, this is something that you need to be aware of [pause] that it has happened. It is part of our history.

In addition to appropriately addressing race in the narrative of U.S. history, Brittany considers monitoring student conversation on current events and race as part of her professional role. In Brittany’s estimation, teaching at a more racially diverse middle school helped prepare her for such conversations. She shared:
I think I'm at an advantage in the rural community because I have taught in a predominantly Black community before. And so I have that in the back of my mind when [students are] talking about race and things that go on in other communities that they know of but they don't really know the nitty gritty of it and they don't know they don't have a personal experience with it.

This may mean challenging her students to see beyond themselves. When I asked her in what ways her identity has changed over time, Brittany returned to her professional role as a social studies teacher and shared:

I think challenging the students as well and being their challenger, I think when you first start out teaching, no matter urban, rural, whatever, you tiptoe around a bunch of things and then as you gain confidence, you're able to push them and challenge them as you need.

In challenging her students, Brittany again draws on her shared rural experience with. She told me that, “going back to my shared experiences with them, knowing what they experience or how they're experiencing things or what's going on in the world or what's going on in [Rural] County, I'm able to challenge them as I see fit and appropriate every time we come into class.”

Participant 2: Alex

External Sites

Country Culture

When I asked Alex about the term rural and its meanings, he described the rural through a cultural lens vis a vis what he termed “country” lifestyle. He spoke about the way his students
and people in rural areas act and carry out their day to day lives. A salient part of “country”
culture to Alex is the way his students choose to dress and speak. He shared:

[Students] do all the country things [pause] wear cowboy boots, I mean, not cowboy
boots, but just boots in general to school. I bet you in a class I've got 10 boys with boots
on. [pause] Talk country, so that's really the majority of what goes on in a rural
community.

Elsewhere in our interview he reiterated fashion as an indicator of lifestyle, sharing “The basic
kids wear more the cowboy [pause] I mean, the boots and everything.”

In addition to fashion choices, Alex indicated that recreational activities are an indicator
of “country” living. These recreational choices can be innocuous. Alex shared, “[Students] just
they do hunting, fishing, they [pause] they, you know, the four wheeler, riding, muddin’ and
stuff like that, that's what they do for their good times”. Rural recreation can also be more legally
and morally hazardous. Speaking about animal baiting in and around his community, Alex
shared:

We had a big chicken bust up here. We had a big, like, one hundred people got arrested
for fighting chickens just up the road here, and some of my students were there. They
didn't get arrested because they were minors.

It bears mentioning that animal baiting does not only occur in rural communities, but in Alex’s
mind, chicken fighting is representative of a “country” lifestyle.

Embedded elsewhere in his description of “country living” were comparisons to suburban
and urban lifestyles. Procedurally and geographically, institutions like the census bureau define
the rural against the urban. Here in our interview, Alex drew upon this distinction to underscore differences in lifestyle. While describing rural recreational activities like hunting and fishing, he went on to say that “somebody in a cultural suburban area might go to a play or go to you know. Something that's more culturally available to them.” Taken in isolation, Alex’s naming of the word culture in his response here might seem to suggest that culture (here described as high culture) is something unavailable to rural dwellers. Indeed, as I will discuss in subsequent sections, Alex emphasized the lack of access to worldly knowledge for rural students throughout our interview. At the same time, his previous comments suggest that, rather than having no culture, rural culture is distinguishable through lifestyle choices like fashion and recreation.

**Backward Storylines**

Like Brittany, Alex described backward storylines when it comes to how media portray rural areas. His response to my question of rural portrayals was particularly emotionally charged. Though his response was brief, he was very animated when he described portrayals of rural areas. He shared:

[With emotion] I'll tell you exactly how they portray us when the news comes to the school. They find the one parent that has no teeth, and they interview that parent. We've got good parents, but they're never, ever showcased.

To Alex, such portrayals are a conscious choice on the behalf of the news media. He went to share:

And they're [pause] the news does it on purpose, I'm convinced of it just to make us look like we [pause] We are country bumpkins, but we got some good things going up here,
too, just because we're rural doesn't mean that we don't have positive things happening on a daily basis.

Interestingly, Alex uses the phrase “country bumpkin” as a sort of reclaimed epithet here. Earlier in our interview, he similarly described members of the community as “redneck,” not as an insult per se, but as a matter-of-fact descriptor of a member of a rural community.

When I followed up to this response and asked Alex about rural portrayals in popular culture, his response was equally pessimistic:

Me: What about in movies or TV shows? How are rural areas portrayed?

Alex: [Smirks] Well, seeing that one of the biggest movies right now is *Cocaine Bear*. [laughs].

Me: [Laughs] I actually haven't seen it.

Alex: I haven't seen it either, but it's [pause] it just depicts this whole area, I'm sure, as country.

Alex seems to show a marked distrust of portrayals that come from actors outside of the community. Alex freely uses words like “redneck” or “country bumpkin.” When he uses such terms, they seem to be morally-neutral descriptors of complex individuals who embody “country living”. When outsiders employ such terms, they seem to be appropriations willfully employed to essentialize and denigrate a lifestyle.
Socioeconomics as a Barrier

Though Alex laments portrayals of rural areas and country living in media and popular culture, recognizes there are barriers to living and teaching in a rural community. One of these barriers is the socioeconomic realities of rural life as indicated by our exchange below:

Me: You grew up around here. How would you describe this area?

Alex: It is a rural area. We have a lot of economically disadvantaged children. We’re a Title I school, which means we have the majority is [pause] closer to the majority is economically disadvantaged.

In describing the area, the first thing Alex went to was economics and the role of the school in the community.

In our conversation, Alex spoke of work and what it means to students in his community. To Alex, the economic realities of rural living might encourage certain career choices while precluding others. He shared:

Our kids don't think they can become lawyers. You do have some you have some of the advanced kids that’ll go “well I’m gonna be a lawyer.” “Do you realize how much work that involves?” “Well it don't matter, I can do it” and I'm like, “go for it, you can do it.” But a lot of our kids don't even see the potential. You know, diesel mechanic is huge at our school. They all want to be diesel mechanics or build houses. And well the boys do but not necessarily the girls [pause] the girls all want to be cosmetologists.
Related to career tracks, the need for money might also mean going directly into full time employment upon graduation rather than college or a career that requires unpaid post-secondary training:

Well our kids want [pause] a lot of our kids get married young and they want to start a family and they want their job, the money, immediately, they can't foresee putting off four years of getting into that. So that is one of the things that I try to tell even my own daughters, you know, four years of college, let you grow up before you go out and make these big things.

Lack of income may prohibit exposure to unique places and ideas too. Much of our conversation of rural youth centered around perspective and exposure to the world and places outside the immediate community. I detail most of these examples in a subsequent section, but our exchange below highlights how Alex connects these concerns to socioeconomic realities:

Our kids don't know what's outside [Rural] County for them. And they've never traveled. They might go to the beach once every five years, but they don't know anything. They don't know what the world has to offer. And that's the difference between people in a suburban area who get to travel and get to go places. They've got a little more economic stability.

**Race and Critical Race Theory**

Race was another salient factor of rural living for Alex. Importantly, Alex always situated his discussion of race in the context of his role as a teacher. While the racial homogeneity of his community may have be taken for granted on his behalf, he never named it in our interview.
When he did speak of racial diversity, it was in terms of his classroom and the student behavior. He shared:

Well, as far as [pause] we do have issues with African American students in the building. When you were in school, there probably was nobody [pause] We now have several mixed students. And the N-word gets thrown out there *a lot* [emphasis in interview] to those students so we [pause] that is a contentious part of our school. Matter of fact, I had a boy suspended today that said the N-word to one of the African American kids.

It appeared to me that Alex wanted to be very deliberate in this part of our interview. He notably paused and considered his next statements in our discussion here. Recalling name-calling and the use of racial epithets seemed to be emotional for Alex.

Alex further connected race in his classroom and curriculum to wider concerns in the community about instruction at the middle school. Namely, parents in the community, in Alex’s words, are concerned about critical race theory:

Alex: Have you ever heard, what’s it called? Where you’re taking African American doctrine [pause] what’s it called? You know what I’m talking about, it was it's big on the news right now.

Me: Critical race theory?

Alex: [animated]That's it! I had a parent last year that I was in a meeting, and the first thing he said to me when he found out I was a social studies teacher he said, “you better not be teaching any of that critical race theory.”
Alex and I did not discuss the academic tenets of critical race theory or its application in legal or educational scholarship in detail. Understandings and misunderstandings, as his next remark will indicate, of critical race theory were not as central to Alex’s experience as the mere existence of it as a politically charged topic in the realm of education. He continued:

Most of my parents don't even understand critical race theory. But the ones that do you have to make sure you're not trying to indoctrinate them with, you know with White people were horrible, they've always been horrible, etc.

It is here that I must briefly deviate from Alex’s discussion to contextualize his remarks. Though, to Alex, the existence of CRT in itself is more salient to his identity than its tenets or the discourse surrounding it, his fundamental misunderstanding and misrepresentation of CRT does reify a discourse of vilifying CRT. Furthermore, his own misunderstanding of CRT may influence his gatekeeping choices.

Critical race theory is not, as Alex suggests, an ideology that promotes universal condemnation of White people either for their simple existence as White people or for the very real legal racial segregation constructed by White people historically in the United States. Race itself is a complicated idea for critical race theorists, as racial identities are flexible within contexts of power (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Moreover, there is not single universal CRT platform (Chandler, 2010). Conceptually, CRT is an outgrowth of critical legal studies and the work of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman among others. From critical legal studies, CRT understands race as normal, but not neutral. In other words, race and understandings of race exist and have historically benefitted Whiteness in the United States (Chandler, 2010). Ladson-Billings identifies four conceptual components of CRT:
1. Race is a fundamental feature of life in the United States and that racism is “a permanent fixture of American life (p 11).

2. Critical race theory uses narrative and story-telling to manifest lived experiences, which are equally if not more valuable that “add necessary contextual contours to the seeming ‘objectivity’ of positivist perspectives (p 11).

3. Critical race theory is critical of liberalism and its ability to effect change.

4. Critical race theory is critical of the legal outcomes of civil rights legislation, recognizing that such outcomes have historically primarily benefited White people.

Importantly, different scholars might apply CRT to different projects. Navarro and Howard (2017) outline major tenets of CRT in educational research, including the centrality of race and racism, challenging the dominant perspective, commitment to social justice, valuing experiential knowledge, and interdisciplinarity (p 213). Critical race theory’s focus on the intersections of injustice, such as racism, nativism, and homophobia, does not dilute it as a critical research tool. In fact, it is its emphasis on power that distinguishes CRT from other approaches, like multicultural education, which are not as critical (Navarro & Howard, 2017).

This is not to say, however, that CRTs applications are purely academic. Indeed, a core tenet of CRT is focus on effecting change. Within a classroom context, this may mean focusing on the constructed nature of race and asking students critical questions about how race has operated historically. Chandler (2010) recommends aligning questions with tenets of CRT:
1. Racism in the American context is normal: What role did settler’s ideas about race play in their actions against Native people (p 44)?

2. Experiential knowledge is important: What can be learned from primary documents dealing with this time period that the textbook omits (p 45)?

3. A critique of the liberal, traditional methods of settling grievances with the government: What was the record of the US government when dealing with Natives in terms of land acquisition (p 46)?

4. Whites benefit from race based legislation: Who benefited the most from the white-Native encounter (p 47)?

In his remarks and curricular gatekeeping, Alex does not recognize the tenets of CRT or its applications in educational contexts. In fact, his gatekeeping choices regarding slavery, as I will further report, are based on his and his community’s fallacious understanding of CRT, such an understanding that the anti-CRT bill passed by Tennessee described earlier reifies.

Though Alex mischaracterizes CRT, he acknowledges that the discourse around critical race theory has the potential to impact his curriculum instruction. As his course includes United States history from European “discovery” to Reconstruction, race is an unescapable part of the curriculum. When discussing responding to parents concerned about critical race theory, Alex shared:

And I said, well, I don't [teach critical race theory], but you have to teach slavery. You can't get around that, you know, and you're not going to go and say the Middle Passage was this wonderful trip for the African Americans, I said, you've got to have some of that in there, but they don't want you to [long, thoughtful pause] African American stuff
[pause] I’ve been called on the carpet, not by the principal, but by parents more than one time over teaching slavery. And I don't teach it like [pause] I don't [pause] They just don't want it to be mentioned. They just, it's [pause] and it's a shame.

While Alex’s comments do not suggest any procedural difficulties when discussing slavery or other topic in his curriculum regarding race from his school or district leadership, these comments do suggest that race is a salient issue in his community and that he laments the impact of the current politically charged discourse around race and critical race theory. At the same time, Alex holds to a misunderstood view of CRT that reifies the very discourse that he laments makes his ability to teach slavery more difficult.

**Procedural Barriers to Social Studies Teaching**

At the same time, there are school procedures that Alex acknowledges make teaching social studies specifically difficult. One of these difficulties is the emphasis or prestige of the social studies when compared to other courses, namely math and English. Social studies, as well as science in his middle school, does not receive the same support or the same recognition of importance as math and English, in his estimation. One way this manifests is through the daily schedule and time with students. He shared:

My other challenge is a school problem [pause] social studies and science are not prioritized. I get [pause] 90 days is all I get in a school year with a group of kids. Ninety days to teach from colonization all the way to reconstruction. So if you miss one day, you might, that might be the only day I have on that lesson because I've got to keep moving to get done. That's a real sore spot for social studies and science teachers right now. Math and English gets an hour and a half. They have five kids total, twenty five. And they get
an hour and a half every day with the same kids for the entire year, two semesters.

[Incredulous] Two semesters. They have them all year. Science and social studies gets them every other day.

The lack of time Alex has with his students has influenced the way he structures his curriculum via what activities and materials he chooses to include in his instruction. As he feels he does not have as much time as he did as when he was a younger teacher, given the amount of state standards and emphasis on standardized testing, Alex has shifted his curriculum. He shared:

There are things that I would like to do that I don't get to do anymore, like [pause] I don't know if you all had to read the book *April Morning*, but I used to have at least the advanced kids read that book about the Battle of Lexington and Concord. I don't get to do stuff like that anymore. There's just no time.

Alex’s choice of words suggests that though he makes curriculum decisions, the realities of being a social studies teacher put some decisions beyond his control.

Another issue Alex communicated with regard to scheduling has to do with standardized testing. While many teachers recognize standardized testing as an unfortunate reality, Alex seems to take issue with the validity of test scores given the time he has with students compared to math and English teachers. He went on to say:

I could probably preach a sermon if you needed me to on that whole issue. Next year we're going to nine weeks and nine weeks. We’ll have a certain set of kids for nine weeks. Then we switch kids. We have them for nine weeks. Then we get [pause] [flustered] How are you supposed to test kids? I mean, how are you supposed to do that?
That last set, I’m not even going to get to see them before the TCAP. That's a big issue for me right now. I wouldn't care to tell, I have told the principal this is not working. You're killing the social studies and science scores.

Alex further connects lack of time with students with a compounding lack of access to chronically absent students. Practically speaking, no teacher has much access to their chronically absent students, regardless of subject. To Alex though, lack of time with his students due to the school’s scheduling initiative makes accessing the “eight to nine percent” who are chronically absent students even more difficult. He shared:

We are on a block schedule. It's just 80 minutes, 80 minutes, then 80 minutes. And then I have an 80-minute plan. But I guess the thing about chronic absenteeism is. It's just. In the situation that I’m in, it's almost impossible to make gains on those kids at miss all the time. They expect you to still be a 5 teacher, even though they've crippled you in every way they could.

In these comments Alex directly connects his lack of access to students and perceptions of his performance as a social studies teacher with the school’s choice to prioritize math and English at the expense of social studies and science. Indirectly referencing the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) rubric, Alex suggests his administrators expect him to be a level 5 teacher, meaning significantly above expectations, even though the school does not prioritize social studies instruction.
“Cultural Collateral”

In our conversation, Alex frequently turned to a term that was unfamiliar to me. When I asked him to describe his experience teaching in a rural area, he discussed how his students and youth in the community do not have much access to ways of living outside of the immediate community. He termed this phenomenon, “cultural collateral.” When discussing being a rural teacher, he shared:

I've not really had much experience with like suburban teaching since I've been here for all these years, but I would imagine and we talked about this this cultural collateral, our kids don't know what's outside [Rural] County for them. And they've never traveled. They might go to the beach once every five years, but they don't know anything.

Despite access to technology and internet, which itself is not uniform across the community, Alex’s comments suggest there is a world outside of the community largely unknown to students.

Alex did not paint a specific picture of a type of “culture” when discussing cultural collateral. It seems to Alex that this culture can mean many things, as long the “culture” is something unfamiliar to students. Importantly, he did not discuss ethnicity, religion, or daily practices of groups of people outside of the community, be it domestic or international. One might be tempted to take diversity for granted as culture, for, at least demographically speaking, the community is largely politically, economically, religiously, and racially homogenous. However, when speaking with me, Alex tied the culture of cultural collateral more specifically with affluent lifestyles and opportunities. When discussing a yearly field trip to Washington D.C. for instance, he shared:
[Students are] amazed at the subway system because they've never been to the subway, they've never seen anything like that. And so we always take them on the subway and we take them to, you know, we go on a dinner cruise and let them dance and carry on and eat or whatever. So that's the difference in my opinion, is they. They don't have the advantages of seeing the world like suburban, and I wouldn't say urban because a lot of urban cities, kids don't get a lot travel time either. They don't get to go out and do things.

Here, Alex connects travel and exposure, which are facilitated more by wealth than one’s community geography, to cultural collateral.

Later in our conversation, Alex returned to discussing exposure to outside influences and economic opportunity. Like his discussion of travel and the class field trip to Washington D.C., he tied lack of economic stability and the need to work with the impetus not to venture outside the community. When discussing his students’ job prospects, he shared:

Alex: Well our kids want [pause] a lot of our kids get married young and they want to start a family and they want their job, the money, immediately, they can't foresee putting off four years of getting into that. So that is one of the things that I try to tell even my own daughters, you know, four years of college, let you grow up before you go out and make these big things.

Me: [adjusts computer] Sorry. You were saying?

Alex: Well, it opens you up to there are people out there that are not White Baptist, you know. There are other people in the world, and you need to know how to get along with them.
To Alex, students in the community do not have the same opportunity to expose themselves to the world outside the community because the economic need to obtain an income immediately upon graduating.

Throughout our conversation, Alex kept referring to what his students did not have access to. As he did this, he crafted a negative experience where rural students were missing out on opportunities. When discussing his students and cultural collateral, he lamented that “They don't know what the world has to offer to them.”

It is worth briefly mentioning here that with Alex’s data, I struggled to code comments that had to do with barriers. Much of Alex’s discussion of the community and being a social studies teacher in it had to do with barriers. Many of these barriers are structural in nature. For instance, access to culture and opportunity, to Alex, is tied to distribution of wealth, while course schedules are a barrier brought about by staff at the school reacting to the structures put in place by the high stakes testing regime of the state and nation. At the same time, these barriers are all essentially different. Procedural barriers, for example, have to do with subject matter and curriculum instruction while “cultural collateral” has to do with personal experience on behalf of the student.

Further complicating this section on external identity was how Alex tied discussion of being a teacher with wider educational structures like testing and curriculum standards and demographic experiential factors like race and wealth. I had to return to and recode this transcript several times to delineate when and where Alex was most likely referring to internal and external identity factors concerning being a rural social studies teacher. For instance, his comments on cultural collateral were difficult to tease apart from his comments on his role as a social studies
teacher. Much of his talk about disciplinary concerns and his role in exposing students to new ideas (detailed later) has to do with his students’ exposure, or lack thereof, to cultures outside of the immediate community. I tried my best to separate when I thought Alex was referring to factors and barriers outside of himself in this section on external identity. I return to how Alex interacts with these barriers and what it means for his rural teaching identity below.

**Internal Sites**

*Race as a Disciplinary-Curriculum Concern*

It was clear from my conversation with Alex that he viewed wider political narratives around race, and critical race theory, to be a barrier to teaching in a rural community. However, while much of his comments regarding race centered on parents as a barrier, he made clear to me that he continues to discuss race in his classroom when it is an essential part of his curriculum standards. The following quote from a conversation Alex had with a parent, which I also coded as an external identity factor, demonstrates this: “And I said, well, I don't, but you have to teach slavery. You can't get around that, you know, and you're not going to go and say the Middle Passage was this wonderful trip for the African Americans.”

When I followed up on curriculum, I made a point to ask about politically charged topics like race given legislation in the state of Tennessee regarding teaching race in K-12 schools. I wanted to see if and how it has affected him as a rural social studies teacher. He told me that it has not directly affected him:

Me: Are there topics like slavery or race that you avoid? It sounds like you don’t.
Alex: No, I don't avoid it. Me nor [the other 8th grade social studies teacher], we neither one.

He went on to provide an example of how he infuses the topic of race in his classroom.

You know, as long as slavery has ever been an issue and, you know, like the other day it came up in my class. They're wanting to change the twenty-dollar bill from Andrew Jackson to maybe possibly Harriet Tubman. So I brought that up in class. They [grimaces] they did not like that at all. The students, not the parents. I’ve been talked to about it by parents, but they were like, “That's not right. Andrew Jackson was an important president.” I was like, “What do you know about Andrew Jackson first of all? We've got to talk about the Trail of Tears and all that.” But the [pause] I don't avoid it, but I don't go about trying to, like I said, prove White people are horrible.

Alex went on to talk about race and critical race theory. In the comments below Alex seems to mediate inclusion of classroom materials dealing with race, like slavery, with his own understanding of critical race theory as it pertains to educators. He shared:

I don't go in there and say all White people are horrible because we had slaves. I think that's the big issue of critical race theory, is that we're supposed to all feel bad because of slavery and I don't think [pause] Most of my parents don't even understand critical race theory. But the ones that do you have to make sure you're not trying to indoctrinate them with, you know with White people were horrible, they've always been horrible.

The meaning and purpose of critical race theory as an academic framework have certainly been obscured as it has become more popular in political discourse. K-12 educators are not insulated
from wider political discourses. Critical race theory, to Alex, has been influential in the way he thinks about and presents curriculum.

We revisited race and critical race theory again later in our interview when I brought up legislation in Tennessee specifically:

Me: Earlier, you mentioned critical race theory. The last few years there have been laws in Tennessee about teaching race, gender, et cetera. Is that something you find yourself thinking about?

Alex: No, those issues, we don't even bring them up if we can keep from it, because it's just [pause] Nobody wants central office called on them, you know, because they're teaching this or that or whatever. So if the state says don't teach it, we just don't teach it to you.

Alex’s comments illustrate a tension in his conceptualization of his role as a social studies teacher when it comes to race and curriculum. On the one hand, he believes that laws, political discourse, and parents do not directly constrain his ability to teach about controversial topics. He continues to teach the realities of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and discuss the racist actions and policies of important historical figures like Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson, for instance. At the same time, he acknowledges that the high stakes testing regime, state content standards, school policies, and the central office and local board of education do directly influence the topics he can cover and how long he can cover them.
Monitoring Personal Politics and Religion

Alex also seems to experience a tension between his personal religious and political identities and his need to appear impartial before his students. When I asked Alex directly about his identity, he at first seemed nonplussed, and unsure how to answer. I had to mention categories like race, gender, religion and politics to prompt him to discuss his identity. His responses likewise suggest a taken-for-granted idea of his identity. He shared:

I'm just a regular teacher [laughs]. I'm not I'm not a Democrat or Republican. Even though I have tended to lean Democrat in my past, back at times. For this last election for president, I didn't like either candidate so I just didn't vote. And I know how horrible that is as a social studies teacher, not to vote. [Pause] I consider myself a Christian, I'm at church all the time, and that's a big part of my identity, I guess you would say.

Though Alex deemed these characteristics “regular” and spoke as if they were not worth remarking on, I wanted to see to what extent and how his political and religious identities entered into this thinking as a rural social studies teacher:

Me: I’d like to follow up on that. Are those things you find yourself thinking about in your teaching, your identity?

Alex: [Sighs] I have a student this year that's an atheist. I'm sure I have more than one. This one just makes it known very much. The other day [drinks water] I have a student that writes on the board basically every day. I erase it after he leaves, but he writes on the board, “I love Jesus, Jesus loves you.” This boy is so offended by that statement being on my board that he's come up to me before he says, “do you believe in God?” I said, “yes I do.” “Well, you're wrong.” He's told me this [pause] and he's done it two or three times,
and that kind of goes against my nature, but I'm very adamant that I'm not going to hold anything like that against a child. If they're not, if they're an atheist then so be it. I'm not trying to indoctrinate them with my religious beliefs. I’m pretty adamant about that. And if you study American history, Christians, didn’t always have the best track record of how they treated people.

Alex’s response suggests his need to balance his personal beliefs with his role as a rural social studies teacher. While somewhat perturbed about having a vocal atheist in his class who mocks his religious beliefs, he is quick to assert his belief that his students should have their own religious identities, even if it conflicts with his own. Though he seemingly shares a religious identity with the student writing “Jesus loves you” on his board, he also erases the writing when the student leaves, presumably not to appear as if he is attempting to indoctrinate students in later class blocks. He is also acutely aware of how Christians have treated non-Christians in the United States and seems to want to avoid such past wrongdoings and/or proselytization.

Alex is also sure to monitor his political beliefs. He mentioned that in the past he used to “lean Democrat.” I wanted to follow up on his political identity and what it means to him as a rural social studies teacher:

Me: You mentioned politics. Is that something you consider?

Alex: Well, I don't know if you know about being in [Rural County], I don't know if you know about being in Tennessee, but if you're not a Republican, you're going to hell, and that's why I don't bring up what I believe and how I believe very often in class, because all the kids are like “Trump's the greatest.” I just say, okay, and move on. And “Biden's a pedophile!” They all think he's [pause] that's the big word on the street for him. And so I
try to keep my political things to myself. I do use political parties. You have to talk about political parties when you do your teaching.

Alex’s comments suggest that while being openly conservative is common and righteous in his community, his own liberal leanings would likely not be tolerated in the community or in his classroom. Interestingly, Alex did not connect his ambivalence or neutrality to his students’ self-actualization as one might expect or as he did with religion. That is to say, he avoids non-academic political talk not in an effort to avoid inappropriately coloring his students’ perspectives through his identity, but rather to preserve his own reputation. He clarified this sentiment when he told me, “I never go into detail of what I believe because I think I think it would lower my reputation with those kids if they thought I was a Democrat all the time.” He also connected student beliefs and attitudes with their parents, telling me, “You talk about being indoctrinated. They're indoctrinated at home about that.”

**Cultural Competence as a Disciplinary Concern**

A final area of Alex’s internal identity is his professional concerns around being a social studies teacher. Related to how he spoke of race in terms of his curriculum, Alex framed his discussion of student cultural competence, or “cultural collateral” via his role as a social studies teacher. In our conversation, he emphasized his desire to expose students to new ideas and ways of life outside of the immediate community. The need for exposure connects directly with his conceptualization of “cultural collateral” and how his students have limited awareness of the world and opportunities and ideas outside of their rural bubble. He sees his role of social studies teacher as one that allows him to offer exposure, as evidenced by our conversation below:

Me: How does being in a rural area affect the way that you go about teaching?
Alex: I really enjoy getting to show rural kids things that are not in their everyday lives, and you can do that in social studies probably as well as or better than you can in any other subject. Math is math, you got to learn it. Social studies [pause] You can take and go above and beyond what the curriculum says and show them different things.

Referring implicitly back to “cultural collateral,” he went on to emphasize the need for exposure for his students:

So just trying to expose them to things that they and I feel like I'm repeating myself, but that's [pause] that's what we try to do. We try to bring in things and like the other teacher, my teaching partner at school, and she teaches eighth grade history just like I do, she [pause she travels worldwide and she brings that into her classroom. And just I guess [pause] I keep repeating myself, but just knowing that the kids are getting something besides just basic history is important to a lot of teachers.

Alex’s comments reflect his, and his partner teacher’s, positioning as a rural social studies teacher. He suggests that social studies teachers are uniquely able and responsible to bring about this exposure for students in the community. Alex spoke at length about exposure and cultural competence. Most of his comments I coded as external factors in the preceding section. The discussion above more directly highlights how he conceptualizes his role as broadener of minds.
Participant 3: Kelci

*External Sites*

*“Living Off the Land”*

Kelci, like Alex and Brittany, has spent a great deal of time in rural areas, and her experience living in rural spaces influenced came through with her responses. When I asked Kelci to describe rural life, she spoke of self-reliance and the agricultural productive capacity of rural land. Responding to my question about rural life, she responded:

Kelci: More living in the country, more living off the land rather than having a lot of shops nearby. But even though [the community] has grown and there are shops, a lot of people still, you know keep to themselves, but they'll help their neighbors. It's just country living, I guess, is the way I would describe it.

Me: You mentioned living off the land, just so I'm clear on that you’re referring to farming.

Kelci: Yeah, having animals, farming and cows, cows are animals [laughs], but you know what I mean. Farm animals, yeah. Horses, chickens, all the gambit.

When I followed up about the development of the community, she acknowledged the growth of commercial opportunities for residence while emphasizing the continuity of personal industry and respect for animal life:

I think where I grew up, people shopped for everything, you didn't grow it, you know, you might make clothes, but very rare, but I still see that happening here, maybe not the
making clothes so much because kids have changed and, you know, they will make fun of classmates, but the, you know, kids raise chickens and they talk about raising their chickens with pride and they're happy. And it's really neat to see that. I think the kids, for the most part, they care about their land and, you know, they treat their animals with respect.

She went on to discuss how increased access to commercial shopping has not limited self-reliance. Comparable to animal husbandry, she sees members of the community as capable agriculturalists. She shared, “I think that [students and members of the community] do not consume as much out of stores like they [pause] they may go to the stores for necessities, but they also have during the summer vegetables and things that have grown on their own.”

To Kelci, this continued self-reliance is characteristic of rural identity via the personal disposition and character of members of the community. Though she did not refer to rural cultural in such specific ways as Alex, for instance, she spoke of how living off the land is part of an ethos of hard work and, while not dismissing consumerism or commercial opportunity, an appreciation of what one has. She further suggested hard work creates a sense of community and even empathy amongst members of the community. Her comments below illustrate these thoughts:

I think that people who have to work hard for everything they get appreciate it more, and they look at other people who are also working hard, whether it's in the city or in the country. And they [pause] they see their struggle and so they're more likely to be empathetic as opposed to let them down or make fun. So that's [pause] I just think it's a respect that comes from hard work.
At the same time, Kelci avoided stereotyping members of the community as yeoman farmers or overly romanticizing the rural way of life. Rather, she suggested that there is diversity of ways of living in the community. Finishing her thought on rural life, she told me, “Of course, that doesn’t encompass everyone in [Rural] County. You have, you know, people out on the lake that have huge houses and probably don't grow their own food.”

**Rural Suburban/Urban Comparisons**

While acknowledging some diversity in ways of life within rural communities, Kelci also remarked on the differences between rural and urban and suburban communities. Like Alex and Brittany, Kelci drew on these comparisons to develop her conceptualization of rural life. One of these contrasts was racial diversity. Commenting on her previous experience teaching in what Kelci called a “suburban school,” she remarked:

> Well, at my previous school, my Caucasian children were a minority. I had kids from all over the world. I had Chinese children, Japanese children, Asian children, children from Guam and I had a young man from was Samoan and Middle Eastern children, so I had a wide spectrum of kids.

Importantly, Kelci’s previous school was a classical school that drew students from an international community. Given the difference in its curriculum and mission, it is not surprising there would be a difference in racial or ethnic diversity. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that classical schools are not a staple of rural education. No classical schools exist in Kelci’s current rural community. What matters here is not whether the existence of a classical school is a cause or consequence of a community’s diversity, but rather that Kelci experienced diversity differently in her previous “suburban school” than in her current rural school.
Kelci continued to contrast rural and suburban life elsewhere in our interview. Another of these contrasts was socioeconomic and wealth as an attitude. While Kelci attended a school in [Rural] County as a youth, she lived in a suburb of a nearby city. She initially attended a school in that suburb but asked to transfer to a school in the rural community. She described her experience in the suburb school unfavorably:

My friends all went to [suburban school], which is kind of still [pause] It does have some rural areas, but there was more of a suburban school. I tried to go there for a year and I wasn't really happy, so mom brought me back to [rural school]. [Pause] The kids wore nicer clothes. They made fun of people if they didn't have nicer clothes. So it was a little different than what I was used to in [rural community].

She went on to emphasize the difference in wealth between her rural school and the suburban community where she lived:

I grew up in [suburb of nearby city]. I just went to school in [Rural County]. I know some of my classmates did not have much, but it wasn't a big deal when I was growing up. You know, you [pause] you worked with people at school that came from different backgrounds. You had the wealthier kids and then the poor kids. But we all worked together.

Interestingly, while Kelci most often drew contrast between rural and suburban life, she did discuss similarities between rural and urban students in our interview. A major similarity she identified was lack of parental support due to difficulty meeting material needs. When I asked about skills rural teachers need, she shared:
Patience because. In the rural areas, you still have pushback from parents that don't think education is that important. And, you know, you've got to be the support for that kid because they don't have educational support at home, and I'm sure in urban areas it's the same. Like an inner city, but I think both rural and inner city, it's kind of weird to say that, but they have a lot more in common with each other than they do with suburban. Because, you know, they have difficulties, they have to survive.

In her comments, the contrast between rural and suburban life remains. The comparison between rural and urban life vis a vis material survival comes into relief via this contrast.

**Backward Storylines**

Like the other participants in this study, Kelci recognized and lamented the portrayal of rural communities and people in popular culture and media. Though I had planned in my interview protocol to ask all participants about media portrayal to get at external identity factors, Kelci beat me to the punch in our interview and started discussing stereotypes before I had planned to ask her. Her story below highlights her perception of media portrayals of rural areas and people:

Me: You mentioned stereotyping. How are rural areas or rural people portrayed in media?

Kelci: [Laughs/scuffs] It makes me so mad. And I will give you a story from my old classroom and it might help. The kids always teased me and called me a redneck and they weren't doing it to be mean they were just teasing. And back in those days, we had Channel One and I told them finally one day I got a little upset with them and I said, “Look, [city where Kelci grew up] is five times as big as [North Carolina city]. I'm not a
redneck. And just drop it.” That morning on Channel One in my homeroom they interviewed, it was flooding in [city where Kelci grew up], they interviewed a guy in a wife beater with a stain down the front, two teeth, saying his trailer, floated down the river, which is awful and I'm not making fun of him in any way. I'm just saying they look for the people that suit their stereotype. And I told my homeroom, “Just wait, my first period's coming in.” And I mean, the bell had not even finished ringing for the first kid got in there and yelled, “you said you weren't a redneck! You said they're not rednecks!” You know, that's I think that's how we're portrayed.

Kelci’s recollection of this incident at her previous classical school reveals a complex understanding on her part of portraying rural people. First, Kelci implicitly characterizes the Tennessee resident as rural, even though her story suggests the man lives in the city. Part of this characterization likely comes from responding to her students, who have a limited geographical awareness of a region in east Tennessee that they have never been to. Additionally, Kelci is quick to avoid shaming the man or people who might dress and look similarly. At the same time, she acknowledges that the image of the man calls to mind unflattering perceived aspects of rural existence: poverty and lack of hygiene. To Kelci personally as a rural dweller, this man seems to embody one type of rural dweller whose existence is not necessarily shameful. Kelci does not, perhaps understandably given her students’ reaction, allow the same complex understanding of the media and outsiders, however.

This lack of complex understanding on behalf of outsiders reared up as Kelci continued her thoughts of portrayals of rural people. Shifting from news media to popular culture, she shared:
I mean, *The Beverly Hillbillies* my God, you know, that's from many years ago. You may not even know what I'm talking about with that, but it's we've always been portrayed that way. And people with a southern accent tend to be looked down upon. I think maybe that's just me being sensitive to it because I have one now. When I grew up, I didn't have a big accent and people would always ask me where I was from. But now, oh, my gosh, I do.

To Kelci, simplistic portrayals of rural life are frustrating and essentializing. It comes hard for her to trust media and outside portrayals given the historical narrative of rural dwellers as uncivilized. Her comments on southern accents also point to a regionalization of the rural experience. While Kelci acknowledges that there are different types of rural people, she also links the south to the rural through media backwards storylines.

Interestingly, Kelci did share an anecdote elsewhere in our interview that challenges the portrayal and consumption of backward rural narratives. Speaking about regional differences in the United States, she shared:

> [Southerners are] just as good as any other part of the country. And, you know, but when I go overseas, my friend, she always says, “you go ask” and I'm like, “why?” She says, “they love Southern accents here.” So, and they do. And I went into a store in Edinburgh once and I said “hi” to the lady and I went shopping and she goes, “You must be from the southern United States.” And I said, “How do you know? Was it my accent?” And she said, “No. You said please and thank you.”

This story adds a wrinkle to the pervasive backwards narratives of rural people, given that Kelci had previously conflated southern with rural identity.
Community Strengths

In contrast to deficit-centered popular portrayals of rural life, Kelci created an image of rural life as communally robust and one of solidarity between its members. More than Alex or Brittany, Kelci remarked on the sense of community as a strength to being a teacher in a rural space. Kelci told me that “Kids tend to have more of a community feel,” and that “They tend to support each other.” She went on to liken this feeling of support to being a part of a family:

I mean, they may it's kind of like inside a family. You may pick on your little brother or sister, but somebody else does. [pause] They [pause] Even though they're not all in the same groups, they're all from the school and they may find they may have arguments, but they all have a shared identity. So I think that's part of it.

The sense of belonging to this rural familiar comes from a sense of shared identity. Students in the community share identity via sharing space and experience.

Kelci made this sense of space more apparent later on in our conversation. When I followed up on the sense of community she recognized as a strength, she began to speak of the county as a shared rural space, essentially different from suburban or urban space or even other rural spaces. She shared:

Well, they, they're all from this school. they're all from [Rural] County. And so they [pause] they see themselves as [pauses, contemplates] They're more likely to reach out to someone here than to reach out to a friend in a different school, if they need something. They all can get together and write the same teacher. I mean, I think that might be the same in other schools, even in urban schools. But I think part of it is [pause] they do have
like events in this area, and it's such a small community that when they go to, you know, the fireworks show or they go somewhere else, they see people that they know. Like if I go to an event in [nearby city] sometimes I see people I know, but not all the time. But let me tell you, if I go to [local market] to get chicken tenders, I'm going to see somebody I know. I did today on the way to school.

Kelci’s understanding of rural space and experience here is complex. On one hand, she recognizes that shared experience is not something unique to rural dwellers. Students who share a space in an urban community might have similar experiences to one another. At the same time, the exact shared experience of students in the rural community does constitute something unique. By inhabiting a shared, and small, space, students have different experiences than their peers in an urban setting. It is almost as if they cannot help but be members of a conceptual community by virtue simply of interacting with one another constantly in a small, shared space.

Another strength that Kelci recognized is the quality of character of her students. She shared an example of a boy who, though he had a checkered past, had demonstrated positive character in an intense situation. She told me:

Our kids. Our kids are good at heart, and that's something that I'm proud of. Even the ones that cause chaos, they're generally good at heart and I don't know if that comes from this community or what, but that's something I've seen. We had a boy who got in trouble all the time. This was several years ago. I mean, he ended up going to an alternative school, but a teacher had a seizure in a room that, he was the only person [pause] he picked her up and carried her out to get her help. It was in the middle of the fire drill and it caused her to have a seizure.
Here, Kelci relates the character children develop to the sense of community in a rural area.

Relating this story, she continued to emphasize the positive character of her students. She reiterated, “my kids, our kids in this community are good at heart.

**Internal Sites**

**Monitoring Personal Politics**

When I began asking questions about aspects of Kelci’s personal identity, she was somewhat slow and reserved to answer. Most of her responses dealt with her position as a social studies teacher and her responsibility to her students vis a vis that position. Kelci did not have as much to say about her race, gender, or religion as Alex or Brittany. She did, however, discuss political ideology and why she monitors discussion of politics in her classroom. Interestingly, this topic came up not when I asked about her teacher identity directly but when I asked about curriculum and content:

Me: Are there any issues or content that you avoid because you're in a rural area?

Kelci: Not really. I do know the state's been making life a little difficult, make you afraid to say things that you're actually required to teach by law [pause] with some of the new legislation that they've passed, but I still teach about slavery, I still teach as I've always done, I haven't changed it. You know, I don't tell the kids what to think. They always want to know what my political background is and I tell them “No, there's only two things that could come out of, you knowing my political background. One, you would be interested in it because you like me, or two you hate me, and you'll never give it a fair
share.” So, I mean [pause] It's not my position to influence their politics. It's my position to just give them relevant information.

To Kelci, the most pressing issue when it comes to politics is not directly sharing her ideology with her students. Kelci did not share her own political ideology with me either.

Neither did she articulate specific ways or times in class where she prioritizes monitoring her beliefs. The why of monitoring political ideology was apparent from her response, but the how was not. When I followed up to see how she might monitor her own ideology, she repeated the notion that to directly share any personal political beliefs with students would be inconsistent with her professional responsibility.

Me: You mentioned politics and the new laws that the Tennessee legislature has passed in the last few years. Is that something you think about as you go through planning or teaching?

Kelci: Well, I wonder what I might say that somebody could take out of context occasionally, but I really don't. My kids tend to know I love history and they tend to trust me to teach them the facts because mainly because I won't tell them what political, you know [phone rings, pause] I'm really passionate that is not my job as an educator to make kids believe one way or the other. It's my job to give them the facts, give them the background and let them come up with their own theory of what happens. Obviously, I'm not going to let them come up with a theory that somebody didn't kill Lincoln or something like that, but, you know, a political ideology, I'm not going to push in one way or the other.
To Kelci, the professional responsibility of teachers when it comes to politically charged topics is to “give them the facts.” What constitutes a “fact” and the idea that facts are politically neutral seems to be a taken for granted assumption on her behalf from her response here. At the same time, her mention of teaching slavery being potentially complicated by the Tennessee legislature would complicate the idea of facts being politically neutral. The government-sanctioned institution of chattel slavery throughout early United States history is a fact, but, in the rural context, the teaching of race as it relates to slavery can be controversial (Moffa, 2022).

Politics and political ideology seem to be a more constraining than empowering part of teaching to Kelci. To maintain a “fact” focused curriculum, she suppresses her political identity. She also suppresses her political identity when students discuss politics outside of her curriculum instruction. She told me:

I do think about [politics] because it's hard when you hear a student saying something and you're like [sighs] They haven't really looked at the whole issue, but I never say anything. All I tell them, I'd rather them be the total opposite of me and be politically involved than to be on the same side as me and not care at all, you know. That's what I tell them. but I don't tell them what I am.

Rather than steering discussion or utilizing facts to present the “whole issue,” Kelci seems to remove herself from political discussion for fear of unethically influencing her students. She does, however, seek to create an environment of respectful political discourse. Later in the interview, she described for me the type of discussion environment she wants to create:

I have a rule they're not allowed to talk about any president like name-calling. They can say so and so's policies are awful. But they're not allowed to say that he’s a stupid idiot or
something like that, because I had a lot of that with President Obama and President Trump. So I was like, we're just not we're not going to say negative things about our commander in chief or president. So, you know, I don't [pause] I'm sure they go home and say it. But, you know, at least in the classroom they know it's a space where we're going to treat everybody with respect.

From these comments it is clear that Kelci does not seek to suppress political discussion entirely but rather her own political identity.

Optimism and Shared Community

At the same time, Kelci complicates this notion of abdicating a political stance with a desire for students to recognize the progress our country has made and the progress that students can continue to make. As we were discussing politics, she pivoted to this position:

I have a tendency to tell my kids, and maybe this is [pause] I don't mean this politically, I just tell them, look for the good in our country, we've had bad things but every single time there's somebody trying to look to make it better. So look for the good. If you want to be proud of your country, look for where people have tried to make things better.

Though Kelci was quick to preface this patriotic optimism with the caveat that such optimism was not political in nature, it is hard to divorce a conceptualization of national progress from politics wholesale. She went on to say:

I don't think anybody should be embarrassed about their country or feel that or embarrassed about their race, any child. I don't think any child should [pause] they should feel pride in their shared community. I'm not advocating any negative thing, I just want
them to know that the country is worth doing their best and being an active [pause] and that's part of teaching social studies, you're teaching responsibilities as a citizen and the responsibility is to try to make your country better and leave it better for the next generation. And I want them to feel like they can. That they can get active, they can do things rather than just blindly accept what they hear on the news.

Kelci’s conceptualization of progress and pride is complex. Though distancing such talk from politics, she discusses both patriotism and race, two politically charged topics. She also likens progress to being an active citizen and member of a community. The national community takes on local dimension in her conceptualization—students can be good members of the nation by being good members of the community. However, though Kelci desires her students to take on active, constructive roles in the community, she does not articulate what this might look like. This may be due to her professional beliefs on remaining politically neutral and allowing (though not facilitating) students to find their own political and citizenship path.

Curious about her thoughts on national and local community, I followed up on her response:

Me: I'd like to revisit quickly; you mentioned shared community. Could you define that for me?

Kelci: I think that rather than seeing ourselves as this [pause] and this is my own opinion, this is not something I tell the kids, so I'm going to be clear on that. I don't ever say this to the kids. Instead of being a group, we can still be that group, but we can also work together with other groups to be a community. We don't have to be raised just alike to be a community. We can have different cultures, different religions, different thoughts. But
if we work together, for common good, we're a community. And I try to teach them that.

We can change things that we don't like, I just never tell them what the things are. I let them decide what those things are.

Again, Kelci is quick to establish that she keeps her personal beliefs separate from what she communicates to students in her role as a social studies teacher. In this response, she envisions a larger multicultural community, potentially the nation or nation state, made up of multiple groups of different people with different backgrounds. Yoked to this vision is her idea of community progress as well. She sees students as potential actors to enable progress, even if she does not conceptualize or communicate what the exact nature of progress looks like.

Kelci also looks for opportunities in her teaching to instill pride in her students. Later in our conversation as she was discussing students using the term “redneck,” she shared:

They'll say the word just like that because I try to teach them that being called a redneck is [pause]some may mean it as a slur, but it's actually a good thing because it was hard work. You're out working and I try to make them proud of their heritage. Also, I talk to them about linguistics and how Southern speech is very much more relatable to Elizabethan English than any other speech in our country, because a lot of the words we say were Elizabethan. And so, they get proud of that. They're like “our English is better than other English.”

Here, Kelci encourages students to reclaim the word “redneck” and their collective history.
Barriers to Instruction

Kelci was quicker to discuss disciplinary aspects of her rural teacher identity than personal categories like race or gender. As I asked her about distinct aspects of her identity, my question about teaching social studies made her light up. She shared, “Oh, yeah! [Enthusiastic change in facial expression]. I think about that! I love being a social studies teacher. I love trying to get kids interested.” In responding to this question, she was at her most enthusiastic in the interview. At the same time, she was quick to temper this enthusiasm with barriers to teaching social studies. She went on to say:

Of course, the state has made that hard. I have eighty something standards and being a social studies teacher, I have less than 90 days to teach them, and one of them is the Constitution so that, you know, not going to do in 80 minutes.

Direction from the state was a barrier that kept coming up in our conversation, and the amount and type of content standards was a big part of this barrier. She told me:

I think that they have given us too many standards. I think if they would lower the amount of standards, we could go deeper and kids would have an appreciation and a love of history like they used to. Kids used to leave my and [Alex’s] room and they liked history. They would talk about it. And now it's just it's not as [pause] There's not the love there because they're learning about the X, Y, Z affair instead of the bigger ideas.

It was clear from our conversation that Kelci loves her discipline and content area and that she wants to kindle that love in her students. Content standards, while seemingly an external barrier, are something she grapples with internally in her identity and practice as a social studies teacher.
Another type of direction from above that has been a roadblock to Kelci are the state requirements to catalogue and explain the academic merits of teachers’ classroom libraries. Kelci listed this legislation as an obstacle to her teaching:

I finally got a classroom library of books that aren't history related so the kids can read them and now I can't use it because I don't have time to write down every single title of every single book. So. Maybe by next year I'll have it up.

Certainly, state requirements like disclosing books are an external barrier, but Kelci’s suggestions that she might have her library ready at the start of the next school year indicates how she is interacting with such barriers as a teacher.

Socioeconomic conditions and lack of support from parents combine to be another barrier Kelci seeks to overcome. Recognizing the reality of poverty in the community, she shared:

I've become more aware that a student's home life can really impact their education. If they're struggling with poverty and let's face it, a lot of people in rural communities are struggling with poverty then they're more worried about eating than they are about, you know, the X, Y, Z affair. So you've got to meet their needs first so they can show up. Those kind of things, I think when I was younger, I didn't think about stuff like that as much. Like, why is Johnny not doing this? Well, now I know he was up all night babysitting while his parents are out.

Kelci’s comment that she needs to meet students’ needs before addressing specific content reflects a Maslowian understanding of human needs. Kelci recognizes that overcoming poverty and meeting material needs is a prerequisite for higher levels of cognition or self-actualization.
Unfortunately, Kelci suggests that parents may not have the same outlook as her when it comes to school and education. While she works to communicate content and, ideally, cultivate a love of history, she suggests that parents in the community do not hold form education in as high regard. She shared:

In the rural areas, you still have pushback from parents that don’t think education is that important. And, you know, you’ve got to be the support for that kid because they don't have educational support at home.

Kelci sees herself as a pillar of support for students whose parents, either through indifference to education or the inability to offer support, cannot academically provide at home what students need to thrive at school. Speaking of her students, Kelci went on to say:

They have difficulties, they have to survive. And with that, you know, parents [pause] I have a kid who missed a lot of days and I think it's because she was home babysitting. I really do. I don't think she's sick. But, you know, I can't judge, I can't [pause] but still, I think a lot of lack of faith in education or, you know, “I only went to a middle school, that's good enough for me why is it not good enough for you?” kind of thing.

Again, it is important to note that Kelci does not see parents as always necessarily antagonistic to education. Her comments here suggest that some may be antagonistic, but her discussion also reflects an attitude of indifference. At the same time, parents simply be unable to provide support may be stealing students away from school during the day for child rearing purposes. It is tough to pin down if these behaviors and attitudes are done maliciously, indifferently, or regrettably on behalf of the parents.
Gatekeeping Curriculum – Relevance and Empowerment

Part of how Kelci overcomes these barriers is through her role as a curricular instructional gatekeeper. Though I structured most of my interview questions regarding gatekeeping to take place in the second interview, many of Kelci’s answers had to do with how she adjusts, or gatekeeps, curriculum to be more relevant and enriching to her rural students. When I first asked about being a rural teacher, however, she downplayed differences in her teaching experience between the rural and suburban schools she has taught at:

Me: How would you describe your identity as a rural teacher?

Kelci: I would say just like any teacher, I care about my kids, I want my kids to do well. I want them to feel supported. I want to work together with their families to help them be the best they can be. I don't know that it's different [pause] I don't really see myself differently today than I did when I taught at the classic school, so I don't know. That might not be an answer you're looking for, but that's I don't really see that big of a difference.

On the surface, Kelci’s comment challenges the notion that when it comes to her being a teacher, rural schools and students are necessarily different from schools and students in other spaces. Of course, here responses elsewhere in the interview regarding overcoming rural barriers, backward storylines, and contrasts between rural and urban space seem to undo this challenge.

Similarly, her comments on curriculum reinforce differences in her teaching experience despite her comments downplaying such differences. When discussing curriculum, she shared:
Well, I try to use things that are relevant to my kids, you know, it's not going [pause] if I use scenarios about people in big cities, it's not as relevant to them as if like, for example, when I'm teaching the Bill of Rights, if I bring it to the country and talk about it in a you know, a country type atmosphere, it's a lot easier for them to understand and relate to.

From these comments, it seems Kelci monitors and adjusts her curriculum to be more relevant and accessible for her students. Curious about her curriculum gatekeeping, I asked if she could think of any examples where she adjusts curriculum to be more applicable to her students. She shared:

I know with the Bill of Rights I have scenarios and I look [pause] some of them I’ve altered because religion is part of the rural area. For the most part. Kids understand that -- freedom of religion. And so there's a scenario about religion because they are from the area, religion, and even kids who aren't religious, they understand that their friends are, and so they look at it like, well, I wouldn’t my friend to have to deal with this. And so the scenarios regarding freedom of religion and freedom of speech, things like that, I try to make them more geared towards kids, you know, tweak them a little, not a lot, but I do tweak them a little.

Though the Bill of Rights and freedom of religion are part of her curriculum, it is clear from her comments that Kelci looks for opportunities or adjusts parts of her curriculum to be more relevant to students. Through this practice, she acts as a curriculum instructional gatekeeper.

Another topic that Kelci finds relevant to students is things in her curriculum that have local connections. Her comments below on the Battle of King’s Mountain shed further light on the relevance of parts of her curriculum and she capitalizes on student interest.
[Students] like the idea of self-minded people. Oh, yes, there is one [lesson]. The Battle of King’s Mountain and I talk to them and say if you're from this area, some of your grandparents, [laughs] well not grandparents but some of your ancestors probably fought in the Battle of King’s Mountain, and they get interested in it. And like later in the year, even kids who rarely remember anything about history will be like, yeah, the time the rednecks whip the British.

Like the Bill of Rights, the Battle of King’s Mountain is an established part of Kelci’s content standards. Though it is somewhat different in its organic connection to local geography, Kelci is able to capitalize on student interest by discussing the battle.

**Question 2: How do these teachers conceptualize and implement global citizenship education as curricular instructional gatekeepers?**

Findings from this section primarily come from interview two. Though I had my conceptual framework in mind as I coded and complied this data, I have not organized this section by neoliberal, liberal, or critical themes directly. These certainly exist in these findings, and I utilize these themes in my analysis in chapter five to make sense of conceptualization and gatekeeping choices. In this section, I report how participants both conceptualize GCE and what gatekeeping decisions they make with those conceptualizations, and their rural identities, in mind. Once more, I report findings one participant at a time to prioritize the individual and set the stage for comparisons for individual teacher identities and curricular gatekeeping decisions later.
Participant 1 – Brittany

Conceptualizing GCE

Perspective Taking and Race

When I asked Brittany what global citizenship means to her, she often spoke of perspective taking and students exhibiting kindness and empathy to people unlike themselves. Throughout our conversation, this theme kept recurring. At times it was in reference to subject matter and historical perspective taking and problem solving, and at other times it was in reference to day-to-day student behaviors. Brittany’s experience teaching at a more diverse urban school partly informs this conceptualization. She told me:

Then when I was at [urban school] in that predominantly Black community, just like there was a ton of different types of people. We didn't just teach American citizens. We taught kids that were from Africa and we taught kids that had come from Venezuela. And so I think I had to be a student in that situation, even though I had my standards that I had to teach, I had to learn from them about their cultures and what they come from, because I, I wasn't raised in that environment that they are being raised in. I'm not from another country. And so I think almost modeling in that situation where I sat and I listened and I heard and that was hard. Because when you were when your culture is the minority, it's different to sit in and have to listen and be like, whoa, this isn't normal. But to them it was normal.

In her previous urban school, Brittany had to practice perspective taking. Though this might be expected of any effective teacher, she likened the experience to being a global citizen.
The rural school in which Brittany currently teaches is not as racially or ethnically diverse. The difference in her experience underscores a difference in attitudes between the communities. She shared:

I think especially in the world we live in today, just exhibiting kindness and understanding perspectives of others. That's really big here in [Rural] County. I have taught in several different types of schools. I'm not gonna say every type of school, but several different types. I have gone from a predominantly Black community to a predominantly White community. And one thing that I have a hard time with in [Rural] County specifically is seeing things from another point of view.

The racial homogeneity of the rural community, in Brittany’s mind, is a barrier to perspective taking. At the same time, it animates her as a rural social studies teacher. She went on to say:

And I think that that's the as a teacher, that's what I want to get across to these kids constantly, that, yes, your world is right here in [Rural] County at the time, but you are not the only one in the world. And we have to think about the things that we say. We have to think about the decisions that we make, because even though it might seem like you are just impacting your little world because it's so it's so hard for them to see the big picture, but to go about it in a way that they see that everything that they do affects everybody around them and the world essentially.

In our previous interview, awareness of race was a salient issue for Brittany’s identity as a rural social studies teacher. She returned to race as a topic again in this interview via the lens of perspective taking. When I asked Brittany about specific topics or issues global citizens ought to be aware of, she highlighted race and racism:

Me: What issues should global citizens be aware of?
Brittany: I think racism. Just because that's the topic in our world today, in our country today really more than anything, but when you think globally, outside of America, there's so many other things that, you know, I'm all about letting kids follow their passion and teaching them the way that they need to learn or how they learn. And I think that being a global citizen, you don't just focus on, that's the big thing here in [Rural] County when I'm thinking like, oh, they don't understand people because they don't understand other ethnicities or races, but there's other things that they can get involved in as well that makes them a positive global citizen.

In her response, Brittany almost equivocates on the topic of race. On the one hand, she sees it as a major issue in our country and in her community, but on the other hand, it is, to her, one of many issues that students might consider to be good global citizens.

**Rural Resistance to Global Citizenship**

Brittany was much clearer in her perspective on race and global citizenship when it came to describing community attitudes about global citizenship. As I am interested in the interaction between the local, via the research site community, and the global, I had planned to ask Brittany what hindrances or helps she sees from the community. She beat me to it, though, by describing community resistance to global citizenship. Part of this resistance has to do with attitudes toward race. She told me:

The people, their world is so small. I mean, even though we have the internet and we have access to so much more than we did when I was a kid, they see it and yet they still don't accept it, I guess. So a lot of times I think kids just say things because they think, well, my dad said it, so it's okay. And a lot of that leans towards racism.
Despite increased access to diversity via technology, Brittany sees bigoted attitudes persisting in the community. Speaking of these attitudes, she returned once more to the pervasiveness of racial homogeneity in the community. She shared:

And that is I mean, they're in a predominantly White community. And so they don't think that it affects them as much. But we have [pause] we do have a small Black community here and it does affect them. And it has. And I've heard a couple of them say, “It's just [Rural] County.” Well what does it matter if it's just [Rural] County? You know, we need to be understanding of all people. So that's the main thing I think I hear here.

Bigoted language and attitudes, to Brittany, seem to be taken-for-granted aspects of life in the rural community. Because of the racial homogeneity of the community, White students do not independently practice the perspective taking that Brittany sees as part of global citizenship. Solidifying this taken-for-granted nature, she told me:

Yeah, and I don't think that anyone's like being outright malicious. I just think that they think “what is the matter?” And it's because they're not faced with it all the time. And the community that is faced with that racism isn't willing to speak out or they don't see the point in speaking out.

It seems from Brittany’s responses that Whiteness is both obscured and normalized via such language and attitudes -- obscured in that students do not recognize their racial position and normalized via the process of othering Black community members.

Bolstering this process of othering are the attitudes of adult community members and students’ parents. Discussing correcting prejudicial attitudes, Brittany shared:

I know I try, but it is hard, especially for some of these kids when they're having to listen to mom, dad, grandma and grandpa and what they hear. And you don't you know, I think
it's what's that lady's name that the famous TED talk? She's like, you don't want to break momma's rule. And that's so true. You don't want to be like, well, your mom's wrong, but still give them my perspective. Like let me show you this in another way without causing an argument, without being defiant or disrespectful to them and their values, but just trying to show them another way about it so that they can exhibit empathy and kindness to those around them.

By “momma’s rule,” she refers to familiar, agreed-upon attitude and practices, which, at least to her mind, indicate and reinforce wider community perspectives. Brittany’s remarks suggest that she must carefully navigate discussion of prejudice at her school and in her classroom by tiptoeing around “momma’s rule.”

Brittany made the connection between family values and rural community values more explicit when I followed up on “momma’s rule:

Me: You mentioned not breaking momma’s rule. Do you see any tension between teaching global citizenship or being a global citizen and being a part of a rural community there?

Brittany: Uh, yeah [laughs]. Definitely. I think [pause] I respect the values and the morals of a rural community. I understand them. I understand that we’re in the Bible Belt. I understand all of those things. I respect all of those things by all means. I grew up in a very conservative way.

Brittany, here, makes a strong connection between a rural mindset, or at least the mindset in her community, and global citizenship. The nature of global citizenship to her might be incompatible with wider, collective community values. She went on to describe suppression of outside ideas as an incompatibility:
Thankfully, my parents weren't all about censorship, but I definitely have seen that here in [Rural] County where parents are wanting to censor a lot even at the high school level. I know that we've seen books that they've not wanted their kids to read here. You know, as a social studies teacher, thank goodness I have not had [pause] I've not dealt with any of that necessarily, but I have seen the English department deal with it. And like I said, I get the values, I get the morals. But I don't understand wanting to censor your children from the world that much. I also think, you know, your kids on Tik Tok [laughs]. I mean, there's nothing worse that they can’t see there. But yes, I could definitely see a clash in the rural communities,

Closing her comment, Brittany did clarify that when it came to book complaints, censorship requests were more of a “squeaky wheel gets the oil” issue rather a widespread community initiative. Still, her comments directly suggest a wider community antipathy toward global citizenship. These and other comments suggest that part of her conceptualization of global citizenship is its (in)compatibility with rural life. Brittany sees global citizenship education as a necessary perspective-taking corrective to bigoted racial attitudes, but it is those same attitudes that make the rural community infertile ground for multicultural components of global citizenship to take hold.

**Work and Job Training**

Less controversial than multicultural global citizenship to the community is the possibility of job and work training opportunities, which Brittany sees as a solid component of global citizenship education. In our conversation of issues that global citizenship should be aware of, Brittany trailed her discussion of racism with talk of job training. She told me:
One thing I love about teaching at [Rural] County is the many, many opportunities that these kids have. And I think our leadership has done a great job at offering them opportunities that know when I was in high school, it was go to college, go to college, go to college. And now there's so many more opportunities that they get and that opens up so many other doors where they can experience being a positive global citizen.

She went on to describe different opportunities and how a student’s choice of job and labor can make the world better:

And we have the medical assistant program, the CNA program, construction workers like if they want to if they see a need, they have that ability at 18 years old to go and start working on that. That passion of theirs that they want to do. So it's not just like solving the world's problems in the politics of today. It can be something that they're passionate about.

She offered a separate example of labor opportunity elsewhere in our interview that she connected to global citizenship as well:

I have a kid that works with a daycare and she's having to experience all these different things with young kids. And she's 17 years old. And those were not opportunities that we had. I mean, she works during the day like she comes to school and then she goes there. So I think that that definitely is helping them become global citizens.

Brittany also made clear that the school plays a direct role in developing global citizenship by offering post-academic and early post-secondary opportunities, specifically through the school’s career technical program and dual enrollment college credit courses:

And these kids, I see that in them every single day when they tell me what they want to do and how they're going through our CTE program or how they're going through the
college program here, because I teach one of the dual enrollment classes and they have that opportunity with [local community college]. So it's [pause] I love that about [Rural] County. And I think that they're doing a great job in that way of producing, if you will, positive global citizens.

It is clear from Brittany’s responses that global citizenship is tied with labor outside of, and mediated by, the school. When I followed up to clarify this connection, Brittany went on to make the relationship between the job opportunities and global citizenship even more explicit:

Me: You mentioned job opportunities and vocational training. You see that as a support for global citizenship?

Brittany: Oh, absolutely, I think that that is a huge support in helping these kids become global citizens, and I think that that because when we talked about 10 years ago, 10 years ago in high school when I was graduating because [pause] I graduated in 2012, so not long after you. But it was so college, college, college, college, college. I did not have any of these opportunities. And I am so envious of them. Like when they talk about “I'm going to graduate with my CNA and then I'm going to work through college” and “I'm going to have all this opportunity” like that is so great for them. And they're getting that experience. And I think part of being a global citizen and learning that is interacting with other human beings. And so they're getting to do that [emphasizes] in high school.

Interaction with others seemed to be a part of global citizenship in the workplace to Brittany, but her comments about interaction remained surface level in our interview. Neither did she tie workplace interaction to perspective taking or multiculturalism. The presence of the job itself and the student’s ability to do labor were most salient when it came to discussions of work and global citizenship.
Disciplinary Studies

Brittany also sees global citizenship as something she can effectuate in her classroom via her curriculum instruction. Speaking broadly about social studies as a discipline, she told me:

Definitely from a social studies perspective. I mean, I teach United States history, so we don't necessarily go global a whole lot unless you start talking about foreign policies and wars and things like that. But I think as a social studies teacher, having taught world history and U.S. history, you're teaching students what the interactions of governments have been in the past positively and negatively, and showing them like this has worked or this has not worked.

Though Brittany’s core course, United States history, does not have as many organic global content connections as say world history or world geography, she still envisions global citizenship happening through her official curriculum.

One place this happens in Brittany’s curriculum is with her lessons on the Vietnam War. When I asked Brittany about global citizenship, she told me it involved “teaching the good and the bad from the past in order to influence these kids to be and stay positive for the future.” Immediately here, she made the connection between global citizenship and her content. When I followed up on what a good or bad piece of the past might look like, she spoke of instruction for peace. The Vietnam War was fresh in her mind as she had recently covered it in her instruction:

You just pick on the Vietnam War and you could talk about how we got involved and what at the time the political culture was and why we got there. And looking back, obviously, I always say 20/20 hindsight, like you get full vision when you're looking back into it and you have to look at the political culture and stuff but we look at, things
like what could we what could we have done differently? What did they do that didn't necessarily work out to great.

To Brittany, global citizenship includes disciplinary content. In this case, students learn lessons from the past toward creating a better future. More than job labor and work study, Brittany sees a clear connection between perspective taking and her content. Continuing her discussion of Vietnam, she told me:

For my classes. I always have Vietnam vets come and talk to them about the effects of war on the country itself that they saw in Vietnam on the soldiers and what they’re still seeing when they go to the VA. So just exposing them to those negative sides and then giving them an opportunity to maybe problem solve about, you know, the political culture was containment and keeping communism at bay and how they could have done that differently.

Brittany’s ability to develop students into global citizens in the classroom centers on perspective taking via curriculum instruction. Here, she combines historical problem solving with historical perspective taking. She went on to offer final example of historical perspective taking in the September 11th terrorists attacks:

We talked about how people have come together after terrorist attacks and helped one another and the culture after those things and how to keep that up from here on out, like not just when something bad happens. But, you know, I remember 9/11 like it was yesterday and these kids weren't even born. And it still blows my mind. And so just letting them experience that and see their point of view.

Again, she ties content and historical problem solving with historical perspective taking.
From her comments about historical problem solving, it is clear that she sees a relationship between positive global citizenship and disciplinary content and skills.

**Everyday Citizenship**

A final area worth exploring in Brittany’s conceptualization of global citizenship is the small forms it can take on a day-to-day basis. Brittany is optimistic about the ability of her students to practice positive global citizenship, and she sees global citizenship as an ongoing daily activity that does not require massive student life changes. She told me:

Yeah, I think it just starts small. I think it's thinking of when you are out and about, you think of others and you put them first. I think within the hallways you don't just walk past a piece of trash. You don't just, you know, push through the line to get to the front like you think maybe someone else needs to go before me. And when someone's having a bad day, you're realizing, hey, it may be not about me. It may just be that they're having a bad day.

She went on to reiterate the everyday nature of global citizenship and share other examples:

So I think just starting small, I don't expect for kids to be like, you know, I'm going to go and be a medical doctor overseas. That's great if they want to do that. But I expect [pause] to be a positive global citizen I don't think that that has to be everybody. I think you can be working at the Valvoline down the road and you're positively changing someone’s oil and just being nice to him and not a crook, you know.

Brittany’s response, while potentially stripping global citizenship of any critical or advocacy-based components (doing one’s job effectively and simply not being a hooligan may be a low bar), displays her attitude of optimism:
And, you know, you're the future leaders even if you're cutting somebody's hair or changing somebody’s oil you're making decisions by voting, you're making decisions by what you say and do to the people around you. For the world, it may seem small and insignificant, but it does mean something.

Brittany sees potential positive global ripples emanating from small, local actions. In such comments, it seems that she is conceptually reducing the barrier to entry of global citizenship so that a greater number of her students can act productively. It is not that she denies the impact of large commitments like volunteering or working abroad. Rather, she sees positive opportunities everywhere.

*Gatekeeping GCE*

*Curricular Gatekeeping for Historical Perspective Taking*

The main purpose for which Brittany includes global citizenship topics and issues in her curriculum is to develop her students’ historical awareness. She does this by including materials that offer multiple perspectives of historical events. Communicating the importance of historical awareness, she told me:

I try to tell people all the time, you know, look at that person's perspective first or look at history through that, the eyes of the political culture and we have to do that a lot in American history. You know, it's easy to point fingers and be like they're bad, they're evil. When I taught 8th grade history, I loved showing the video of it's a Ted Ed video of Andrew Jackson on the stand. And it's about is he just an evil human being that made these Native Americans walk this death march or was it the political culture? I mean, and you kind of have to do that with everything you even though I'm not condoning [knowingly laughs], you know, the death march, but you have to look at history that way.
The Ted Ed video that Brittany draws on in her example provides context on Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal policy and presents arguments from the time about the political appropriateness of Jackson’s actions in his own time.

To Brittany, this historical awareness is primarily about perspective taking and students’ ability to place themselves in an unfamiliar time period and context. This perspective-taking, however, stops short of advocacy for any particular cause. When she brought up advocating for the “underdog” I asked her about advocacy. She responded:

I don't know about advocacy. I think I don't leave the underdog out and I definitely want people to see that perspective. So when we do talk about, you know, the Native Americans or the Homestead Act and things like that, I don't want to just show, you know, the typical White perspective. I also want to have students think of, well, so this is one perspective. They're getting land, they're moving, they have opportunity. But who else is involved and what is their perspective? So I don't think that I'm like trying to push my own self and advocacy for that on them. I think I'm just trying to show everything I possibly can. I want you to just get all the facts.

Though presenting diverse perspectives on historical events might potentially open avenues for advocacy for historically disenfranchised groups, Brittany is quick to limit perspective taking to developing historical awareness and solid content knowledge.

When we spoke about the lesson plan that Brittany provided for our second interview, she referred back to historical perspective taking as a goal for the lesson. She told me:

So this to me with my perspective of global citizenship was talking about was teaching them, obviously, the alliance of NATO. And we're coming out of World War II and we're getting into the issues of communism and the Warsaw Pact and then tying that to some
current events because Ukraine has been so prevalent, especially last year in January, February, when it when it happened and the kids were like, “What is going on? You know, why is this important to us?”

Brittany drew on this current event to draw attention to the relevance of historical perspective. She went on to say:

So they're having to go through some what-if questions about what about what if [Russia] invaded Poland, what's going to happen and then how do we respond? What are some ways that could be positive, which ways can be negative and giving them that opportunity to just kind of brainstorm without any criticism, but also to kind of express their own concerns.

Again, Brittany’s concern is developing awareness and content knowledge, not advocacy. That she gives space to express, in her words, “positives” of the Ukrainian invasion indicate a teaching approach divorced from moral or historical judgment. To clarify Brittany’s purpose of perspective taking, I asked her to explain how she thinks that perspective taking comes through with her sample lesson. She told me:

Yes, definitely when we have done things like this and when we have watched videos that might have been about the perspective of people, I wasn't able to pull up anything from the Ukraine. We were rushing at this point for testing. But when I have had opportunities to show them other people's perspectives, they definitely, it means more to them. When we're talking about history, when those [Vietnam] veterans came in and spoke about their experience, they were like, “oh, my goodness. I just you know, this was just an event in my notes. This was just a thing I read about. This was just a primary source.” But when you actually put that thing in front of them, they definitely feel more
empathetic. And there was one of the veterans who came and talked and some of the girls were like, “I'm crying” because it was just so moving to actually hear their perspective and see that this happened to real people.

For Brittany, historical perspective taking is authentic empathy. It means see the world how historical figures might have seen it, absent moral judgement. By asking Vietnam veterans to come speak, or selecting materials like the Ted Ed video on Andrew Jackson, Brittany gatekeeps to include historical perspective. This historical perspective-taking, as made apparent by her previous disciplinary comments on U.S. history curriculum, bolsters global citizenship.

**Minimizing Rural Gatekeeping**

While it is clear that Brittany practices curricular instruction gatekeeping for global citizenship in her teaching, Brittany’s comments sometimes support and sometimes challenge the differences in gatekeeping between rural and urban spaces. One the one hand, she sees clear differences between teaching in a rural and urban space. At the same time, she does not see a practical difference in teaching or practicing global citizenship between the two spaces:

When I look at global citizenship and you're hoping to have students leave your classroom with an understanding of kindness and empathy. I think that it is it is the same across the board for your students. The way you approach things as the teacher, I think is the difference, because the way that I teach at [Rural] County is very different than how I taught at [urban middle school]. But no, I don't think the expectations should be different for citizenship.

Here, Brittany speaks to the difference in teaching spaces but sets a similar expectation between the rural and urban global citizens. The students are different, which makes the manner of gatekeeping different, but the expectations are the same.
However, elsewhere in our interview Brittany denied gatekeeping differences in her teaching practices. When I asked if there were issues she prioritized for global citizenship due to teaching in a rural space, she told me:

I don't think so, because I feel like I've even though some things are maybe more significant than others, especially to the students, I probably lean more towards their interest if I'm going to emphasize anything than being like, oh, this is going to help them with their life. I [pause] I don't think I do.

While acknowledging differences in students’ interests here, as she did in our first interview as well, she simultaneously downplays the necessity to gatekeep differently owing to being in a rural space. Brittany made this lack of distinction clear later in our interview when I asked about the lesson she shared with me:

Me: Do you think this lesson would look different if you were at another school, let's say, [urban middle school] or anywhere else?

Brittany: I don't think so. I think that this was a lesson that could be picked up from rural [Rural] County and put in to [nearby urban] High School. I don't I don't think that this was specific to a rural community.

She also made clear that her rural identity did not play a part in her construction of this lesson:

Me: In what ways do you think your identity contributed to this lesson?

Brittany: I don't think I actually was thinking much about my identity when I prepared this. I think maybe connecting it into current events, it was sensitive to me. And so maybe [pause] I'd heard other students talk about it. So maybe adding that was my identity. But for the most part, I just felt like, you know, you need to, you have to know NATO, you have to know the Warsaw Pact. And so getting some current events in there
and maybe some problem-solving as well, it just worked out. I don't think my identity had anything to do with it.

Of course, other lessons than the one shared may have more directly derived from her rural identity. Brittany’s response here with this lesson, though, suggests a complicated understanding of gatekeeping and rural identity. In her own words, she denies her rural teacher identity as a contributing factor to gatekeeping. However, she has consistently acknowledged differences in rural and urban space and how she teaches differently in those spaces throughout both our interviews. She has made clear that students in the rural community require different considerations when it comes to global citizenship gatekeeping, much of this in relation to community resistance to global citizenship. She has also spoken to shaping content differently in different spaces to capitalize on student interests. Her comments about this lesson and minimizing her rural identity and rural global citizenship gatekeeping then seem to be inconsistent with the entirety of our conversations. She suggests that gatekeeping should be different in different spaces but also that she does not do it differently in practice.

**Standards as a Gatekeeping Opportunity**

Part of this tension may derive from how Brittany conceptualizes standards-based instruction. State content standards provide the blueprint for what teachers should cover in the courses. Brittany likewise prioritizes these standards. She told me:

> I pretty much stick to the Tennessee state standards because that's how I was when I was at [urban middle school]. It was, what was it called? I don't remember. But it was [pause] we had the mastery learning things and all that stuff and it was standards standards. And so I think that just in in drilled into my head in those first few years of teaching that you do not [emphasizes] go away from the standards [laughs].
It is clear Brittany prioritizes the standards. On first blush, it appears that such devotion leads her to a “just the facts” approach. However, she speaks of controversial standards as if they were an opportunity for global citizenship. She told me that, despite community attitudes, she does not avoid controversial issues:

No. I talk about it all. If it's in our standards, then I, I do not shy away from it. If the state of Tennessee says this is what I'm supposed to teach, that is what I teach. I don't add curriculum to that standard. I know I'm not going to go hunting for controversial stuff just to do it. I'm not that type of teacher, but we have several standards on KKK. We have several standards on, you know, Vietnam itself, the My Lai massacre, things like that. I don't I don't shy away from those things. No, I think it's important that students know the good and the bad.

For students to practice historical perspective taking, they must know such “good” and “bad” parts of United States history. Brittany went on to describe how the presence of standards offers her a support for infusing perspective taking in her curriculum:

I'm not worried about [parental blowback] because I know that if I'm teaching my standards and what the state requires me to teach, then I'm doing my job. And I think that you can still teach empathy and global citizenship without being, you know, controversial or without hurting anybody and their own morals and values. And if you're doing what the state has asked you to do, then there shouldn't be any issues.

Given wider community values and potential resistance to global citizenship instruction, one might think Brittany would shrink away from global citizenship topics and issues in her curriculum. However, the presence of the standards offers her a tool to meet any resistance.
While teaching the standards might be a subversive act in a rural community, based on Brittany’s account, the fact that the standards are state sanctioned gives Brittany a leg to stand on.

**Participant 2 – Alex**

*Conceptualizing GCE*

*Global Connections*

Alex was less confident than Brittany in his ability to articulate a definition of global citizenship education. His description was initially much less robust and revolved around an unspecific idea of global interconnectedness. Describing GCE, he told me that it means “how, for my class, how the United States is involved in the global world. Like how we interact with other countries. How we treat other countries and things of that nature.” When I followed up on the nature of this interconnectedness, Alex was able to describe global issues, like climate change and racism that, in his mind, are related to GCE.

What connects these issues to global citizenship for Alex is their international, or transnational, scope. Part of our conversation about global issues concerned conflict and war. Alex talked about the attacks in Israel carried out by Hamas (our interview was a few days after the October 7 attacks) as well as the war in Ukraine:

There are many global issues, Israel just got attacked. That's going to affect how the United States is going to [pause] they're either going to support which they say they're going to support but is that going to bring us into fighting with troops on the ground. Ukraine we've been involved in Ukraine for seems like forever.
Though the conflicts Alex discussed are geographically distant to his students, he made explicit his thoughts concerning the relevance of such issues to members of his community and the world more broadly:

Globally, I guess the best way to say that is to say they all need to know what's going on. It's not just a rural issue. It's not just an urban issue. It's a community issue [pantomimes a circle] that they need to be watching and trying to understand what's going on in the world.

He went on to connect how issues like war in Ukraine and conflict in Israel might specifically impact his students as global citizens:

I know [the war in Ukraine] has probably not even been a whole year [pause] But they [pause] All that stuff is going to affect our youth. If we get involved in that [pause] financially and [pause] who knows you get involved in a war it could start to draft back or something like that.

Later, he reiterated, “You know, if we go to war, [students] might be fighting in that war. And you need to know what you're fighting for and why that's even a concern to you.”

Elsewhere in our conversation, Alex related global citizenship to content and skills embedded in his curriculum. Many of the examples of global citizenship knowledge that he shared came from the content standards he is responsible for teaching in his history class, such as the American Revolution or slavery in the United States. I highlight these examples in a subsequent section, but importantly, Alex related that the global connections he highlights in such content connects to global citizenship in his mind:
And I get asked every year, why is history even important? And I tell them, you know, if you don't know your history, you're liable to repeat it. And then I mentioned some things like the Holocaust and the Civil War and things like that that have been a negative on the United States and the European countries.

Though the Holocaust is outside of his curriculum, Alex draws on such examples to demonstrate the importance of his subject matter to students. Such topics, in Alex’s estimation, also offer an opportunity to bring global citizenship into a U.S. history classroom.

**Climate and Environmental Stewardship**

In addition to international conflict and war, Alex identified climate change and environmental stewardship as important issues for global citizens. Early in our conversation, Alex described a high school credit-bearing world geography class he teaches in addition to his standard U.S. history course. He drew on the topic of climate change in that class to clarify his conceptualization of global citizenship:

Me: You mentioned climate change and global citizenship. In what way would you say climate change is related to global citizenship?

Alex: Well, if the temperature is rising throughout the world, then it's affecting all nations. Like, for example, I saw in the news the other night where China is suffering great drought. And they're losing a lot of their crops. And they're saying that that's all about climate change and things of that nature.

Like conflict in Israel and the war in Ukraine, Alex went on to clarify the relevance of climate change as an issue to his students as global citizens. He told me, “Well, it’s their future.
If climate change is really happening, it's going to be a part of their lives from now on. And they're going to need to try to help solve the problem.”

Connected to climate change for Alex is environmental stewardship. Good global citizens, for Alex, “take care of what is out there. All the natural resources and things of that nature.” In the same vein, the major global citizenship value that Alex identified and discussed was environmental stewardship.

Me: What values would a good global citizen have?

Alex: Values [pause] Well, concern for others. Concern for the environment. Concern for our natural resources and using them effectively.

When I asked Alex what that concern for the environment would look like specifically, he told me:

Well, recycling or doing things that keep the environment clean. Not. You know, throwing out their garbage and on the side of the road is as they're driving down the highway. I don't know. That's probably it.

Importantly, though Alex identified climate change and environmental stewardship as important issues and values for global citizens, he was not sanguine about promoting such awareness in his community. When I asked if there was tension between global citizenship as his community, he shared:

Very much so [with emphasis]. There are many people that do not believe we've been talking about climate change, there are people that don't believe climate change is an actual thing. They think it’s a conspiracy of the government. And I've got family
members that'll tell you it's not real. That we're just trying to [pause] promote a scared philosophy.

Climate change was not the only global issue Alex identified as a sticking point with his community.

*Prejudice as a Glocal Issue*

The other major global issue Alex recognized as relevant to global citizenship and his community was prejudice, namely in the forms of anti-Semitism, racism, and homophobia. Alex began speaking about anti-Semitism during our discussion of the recent attacks in Israel. Though Alex recognized the attacks happened before fall break and thus he had not had a chance to discuss the conflict with students, he worried anti-Semitic beliefs and student apathy. He told me:

I would almost think that in a rural community Israel does not play an effect [pause] on a very strong part of their lives because kids do not watch the news. They do not. They don't know what's going on in the world half the time. And so. I don't think that the students especially for Israel is going to [pause] and we have some anti-Semitic beliefs in our school system.

He went on to describe the nature of anti-Semitism.

Well, I've had [pause] jokes. I've heard jokes about, anti-Semitic jokes, about the Jewish people. And I always try to correct that and say, you know. not everybody's a White Baptist. You know. And I try to stop that. And it's not been horrible. It's not been frequently, but we do have some people that are not Jewish appreciative.
Though Alex’s comments suggest anti-Semitism might not be pervasive, he feels the responsibility the correct prejudicial behavior.

More pervasive than anti-Semitism, to Alex, is racism in the community. When I asked about important issues for global citizens, he responded with racism and then immediately drew upon his experiences in his school and wider community. He told me:

Well, racism. We have [pause] that pops up every so often. And we're so limited in the number of African Americans that we have in [Rural] County that [pause] we have had an African American boy move into the community and he's in the 8th grade. And even though they make jokes and carry on about stuff like that like with racism, they're treating him pretty good. And I was pleased to see that.

From these comments, it appears that casual racism in the form of jokes is an expected aspect of everyday life in a rural community, to the point where Alex is happy racism does not progress further than jokes. Importantly, however, Alex recognizes that the White students’ treatment of the Black student is mediated by the Black student’s athletic prowess. He went on to say:

Alex: But he's very athletic and so that elevates his status. If you know, if he came in there and he couldn't do basketball or football or whatever [pause] that's why they like him because he's athletic, I think.

Me: To make sure I’m hearing you right, you think that treatment is because of what he can provide to them rather than who he is as a person?

Alex: Yes, I do.
Status in this context is complex. It appears that though prejudicial attitudes are a taken-for-granted outlook among students broadly, transactions that benefit White students can moderate their prejudicial actions.

Adding to this complexity is the position of Latinx students in the community (Alex refers to these students as Hispanic, which I mimic in our conversation). Describing the growth of the Latinx community in the county, Alex told me:

There is a much larger percentage of Hispanics in [Rural] County. And they [pause] they're really big on fitting in and being just like the rest of them. But I probably would say that 10% of my classroom population is Hispanic. And that's really changed from years ago. And [pause] they [pause] I don't know [my wife] was talking about she thought that they were getting bullied or whatever. I don't think they are as much as we think. I think African Americans have a more negative stereotype than the Hispanics do.

Again, the issue of race and identity in Alex’s comments is complex. He first acknowledges that Latinx students are essentially apart from White students due to their race. Latinx students work to bridge this gap by trying to fit in. One way this might occur, as with the Black student Alex mentioned, is through sports. Alex told me that “the whole soccer team is Hispanic.”

Though perhaps obvious, it is important to clarify that such attitudes do not only exist in Alex’s school. Rather, they seem to be the prevailing attitude in the community more broadly. When I asked about stereotypes, Alex explained how his students develop these attitudes:

Well, if there are negative stereotypes, they didn't just pick up on that themselves. They've heard it through parents. They've heard it through grandparents. I mean, I grew up in African Americans were made fun of by my grandmother I remember distinctly
hearing her make [jokes], so it's no different today. There are people that make fun of different cultures. And they just, I don't know, they pick up from their adults that are around them.

**Disciplinary Concerns**

In addition to pressing global issues, Alex conceptualized global citizenship through his position as a social studies teacher and the content and skills necessary required to succeed in his U.S. history course. When he spoke of global citizenship, it was often in relation to specific course content wherein the United States interacted with foreign powers. When I asked if he shapes his curriculum to include global citizenship education, he said, “we try to include the world in our classroom.” Alex then gave several examples of content that he believes include the global interconnectedness of global citizenship that he conceptualized earlier in our interview. One example was the French and Indian War and “trouble in the Ohio River Valley.” Another was the Monroe Doctrine:

We've been mentioned the war of 1812. And oh the Monroe Doctrine. Where we basically stood up to the world, or Europe and said, you know, we're not going to, you're not going to bother the people in South America or we'll take care of you. So the Monroe Doctrine is a big global issue.

Another was the American Revolution:

When the shot heard around the world took place, we were kind of on our own. And as time went on, France kept watching, Spain kept watching, and we were able to actually pull, after the Battle of Saratoga, we were able to get the French and the Spanish to come in and help us. That put it on a global scale more than us just doing this war by ourselves.
Though later in our interview Alex lamented the quantity of content standards he is responsible to each, here in our conversation he speaks of the required content as an opportunity to include global citizenship ideas, namely global interconnectedness.

Complementing social studies content, Alex sees disciplinary skills like geographic awareness and reading and writing to be components of global citizenship education. It is perhaps unsurprising that a social studies teacher would speak about geographic awareness. To Alex, such awareness is necessary to understand one’s place in the world:

Well, you have to know where you are in the world to be able to understand. And you need to know where other things are. And social studies has dropped the ball on showing them where they’re supposed to be or where they are. They have to learn, like in third grade, they have to learn all 50 states and where they're located. They don't use maps as much in fourth and fifth grade, or sixth, but seventh grade they do. So, you basically, any map that you can put in front of them and show them where they are and how they're related to other sections of the world and what their relationship is strategically with transportation and things to get to those countries.

Alex’s comments speak to differing levels of geographic awareness. He first laments the lack of the mechanical skill of map interpretation and rote memorization of place locations, but he also discusses more complex ideas like globalization and time space relationships vis a vis transportation.

General literacy is also a component of global citizenship that Alex mentioned in our interview. Like mapping, Alex lamented that literacy amongst his students is not as strong as he would like it to be. He told me:
If you can write and tell what you know, then you know it. If you cannot write about it, there's a good chance you're not very solid on what you're talking about. And we are really the curriculum in language arts doesn't push writing like it used to.

He went on to say:

I just got through with my first set of kids for the first 45 days. And out of three classes there were maybe two or three kids that were on grade level. And so my belief is the more you can get them reading, the more you get them writing, the more they can grow in their knowledge of what's going on in American history.

Though Alex does not necessarily speak of disciplinary literacy in terms of historical contextualization, source corroboration, and argumentation, he does frame reading and writing in service of learning content. This content and awareness of such global issues, as his previous comments on global connectedness make clear, are part of global citizenship education for Alex. By serving content instruction, literacy serves global citizenship.

Work and Job Opportunity

Finally, Alex thought it important to mention that preparation work is an aspect of global citizenship. When I asked Alex about skills that might be necessary for global citizens, he spoke of communication and bilingualism as preparation for the workplace and worth ethic as a necessary to exist and thrive in a job market:

Me: Are there any skills that you think the school citizen should have?


I followed up about each of these responses. Regarding communication, Alex said:
Well communication, not just communication, multi-language. You have to communicate with so many different types of people nowadays. You know, when I was growing up, as I said already earlier, it was a White Baptist community. And now it's not. And you need to be able to put yourself out there language wise, especially for the younger kids coming on. And learning Spanish, for example, can help you if you can become bilingual. You can have your job opportunities wide open.

Interestingly Alex connects the ability to express oneself with the reality of a diversifying work force. The skill of communicating one’s thoughts and intentions in spoken language, though perhaps an assumption, is not as pressing as the ability to interact with diverse employers or coworkers. Though I had expected Alex to talk more about this communication piece, he instead spoke of the knowledge and skill of bilingualism and how it might provide job opportunities.

I then followed up on work ethic and why it would be important for global citizens. Alex told me:

Well, you're not going to get hired if you don't have a good work ethic. Or you're not going to stay employed. You might get hired but if your work ethic is pitiful, then you're not going to be able to work long term.

Though Alex’s response and characterization of work ethic was very direct, it speaks to his conceptualization of global citizenship as tied together with work preparation. Good global citizens, to Alex, are effective workers.
Gatekeeping GCE

Gatekeeping to Avoid Controversy – “It's a fine line to walk”

One of the more contentious aspects of instruction for Alex is awareness of community attitudes and his consequent desire to avoid creating controversy in his school and the community. In both of our interviews, Alex made clear prevailing community attitudes that might influence his instruction, including prejudice resistance to certain classroom topics that deal with sensitive issues like race. To avoid creating controversy, Alex mediates his curriculum. One way he does this is by avoiding historical judgements. When discussing the international slave trade and the Middle Passage, Alex told me:

When we're studying the Middle Passage, I try not to act like that it was bad. Even though terribly it was, it was a horrible situation, but I don't go in and go [pause] I don't do critical race theory because I'm in a rural community and there's a lot of people that. I told you the last interview that I had a dad that came in and said, “you better not be teaching critical race theory.” And I didn't think anybody in [Rural County] probably even knew what critical race theory was, but you try to lean easier on those key button points.

Both parents and students, Alex worries, may resist instruction when it comes to such issues. He continued:

I don't want to set off a debate in my room about whether slavery was right or not right, because I'm going to guarantee you I have students that would argue [with exaggeration], “well it wasn’t that bad.”
Alex comments suggest conscious gatekeeping to avoid controversy with his students and in this community. As a veteran history teacher, he is aware of the horrors of the slave trade and slavery in the United States, yet he downplays those horrors to protect himself from community responses driven by prejudicial attitudes:

Right, I'll leave it as neutral. Even though in my heart of hearts, I know it's a horrible experience that those African Americans went through, but you have to be careful in a rural community because there's a lot of prejudice in the community.

Again, these attitudes trickle down to his students, which leads to Alex mediating his instruction based on the given attitudes in his classroom.

It's a [pause] it's a fine line to walk. [pause] To me and [the other 8th grade teacher], which you also interviewed. We're careful. And you have to take a reading of the room. If you start here to mention negative comments back, you know, like. Then you watch what you say. But I've had classes before to have a good open discussion and not get into the “Oh all Black people are bad!” Or you know, “the White people were better than the Black people”, whatever. So I don't. I really don't know. I guess it's a fine line to walk. That's the best way to say it.

Sometimes, class attitudes allow for discussion of hard topics. Other times, Alex demurs. In either instance, Alex is making a conscious decision to adjust his content as a curricular instructional gatekeeper. As gatekeeper, Alex enacts contradictory stances by both teaching slavery and race, despite community resistance to racial topics, while also whitewashing slavery and acquiescing to and reinforcing misrepresentation of CRT.
Another area of gatekeeping for Alex related to race is politics. Like topics that involve race, Alex is careful to avoid controversy or stoking partisan attitudes among his students. He told me:

“Let's Go Bradon.” And I'm sure you've heard that or whatever. You have to be careful or the [laughs] kids will start chantin’ “Let’s Go Brandon!” So I don't, politics for historical purposes, yes. Politics for my president day thinking I try to stay away from as much as I can.

Modern day issues like the contemporary political environment in the United States is something Alex is quick to avoid. Another area that he avoids is discussing anything related to LGBTQ+ people or issues. He told me:

I'll be honest with you I steer away from LGBTQ stuff because that is [pause] That is not acceptable in [Rural] County. Even though there are kids that come out and say, you know, they are gay or whatever. But I would never bring that up in class. And we would. I would not allow it to be talked about because there are so many, you talk about religious aspects, you've got all the religious aspects that go behind that. So you have to be careful what you let go on in your classroom.

Though there is no direct LGBTQ+ content in Alex’s content standards, Alex is conscious to prevent any LGBTQ+ topics or indeed the mere discussion of the existence of gay people from coming up in class. He told me:

Well, there was a teacher that I'm not going to mention any names that openly said they were okay with there being gay people. And it caused her a lot of trouble. Parents came in and complained. Tried to get their kid out of her class. And things of that nature.
The simple act of acknowledging gay people exist and should be afforded the same existence as straight people is, to Alex, a subversive act in the community. If Alex were not initially clear enough about community attitudes, he shared the following example of an openly gay teacher in the county:

When we had last year an openly gay teacher. Which was huge for [Rural] County because that ain’t never happened. And he had trouble all year long. They pushed to get kids out of the room. They pushed to get him fired. So. He actually left and went to another school. Which probably, he went to [school in nearby city]. So that's probably a little more accepting maybe. But the pushback from the community is huge.

Alex is also wary of students independently researching such issues in his classroom. Part of Alex’s lesson that he shared with me is a research component where students connect modern notions of citizenship to historical events. When I asked Alex if he would be comfortable with a student connecting gay rights with the Declaration of Independence and Constitutional amendments, he offered the following:

Alex: [Grimaces] Egh. I probably would steer away from that.

Me: Even if it was just individual research work?

Alex: If they were turning into me just for me, but if they're having to do a presentation on it, I probably would steer away from it.

Clearly, to Alex, community attitudes discourage discussion of LGBTQ+ topics and issues. Alex responds to such attitudes by gatekeeping to ensure no such open discussion emerges in his classroom.
**Procedural Barriers to GCE Instruction**

Alex also sees his school’s scheduling procedures, along with mandated content standards as barriers to including global citizenship instruction in his classroom. In our first interview, Alex characterized his school’s schedule as being a frustration to rural teaching. Without prompting, in this interview he linked that frustration to including global citizenship education in his classroom. He reminded me of his course schedule:

I don't know if you know how my classes play out, but I have, for 45 days I have the same kids. Then when we go back from fall break, I'll have a different 45 kids, and I got to start all the way back over at Jamestown and go all the way through. Then in January, I'll pick up the first group, and then in March, I'll pick up the second group, and I'll have them twice. It's not enough time to teach. We've got more curriculum standards than anybody out there, and I'm very stressed.

When we discussed the lesson plan that he provided to me, Alex spoke about doing such a lesson both optimistically and pessimistically. He was optimistic about the ability to draw students’ attention to and foster an awareness of global interconnectedness, but he was pessimistic that his school schedule and classroom pacing would not allow the opportunity to deliver such a lesson.

He told me:

I think it's a good lesson. And we may actually try this in the next 45 days. I've showed it to [the other 8th grade teacher]. And we've talked about putting it into a different perspective. I think it's a good lesson. Our problem is class time. There’s so much we have to cover. I’m sure I’ve mentioned this. We have 95-100 standards and we have 90 days to teach in a year. And it is very difficult to spend more than a day on a topic. We
did spend, I talk about the [England on trial] court case, we did spend more than a day on the court case. But we don’t have that luxury like language arts and math do that you can spend more than one or two days on a topic. It’s pitiful really.

Alex’s comment of the state of his school schedule as “pitiful” speaks to the frustration of the place of social studies in education more broadly. It also speaks to the nature of global citizenship education as something separate or a supplement to curriculum in the United States, or at least Tennessee, and predicts the obstacles social studies teachers may face if they want to include global citizenship instruction in their curriculum. If global citizenship education is one more thing to do when teachers already have so much on their plate, teachers might not do it. For Alex, there is a real tension between the content standards providing opportunities for global citizenship education vis a vis global awareness and interconnectedness and the content standards providing a barrier to GCE through their sheer quantity.

**Creating Opportunities for Global Awareness**

Despite these potential barriers to global citizenship education that Alex identifies, Alex suggests that he tried to inculcate global awareness in his lessons as much as possible. Certainly, there are fewer organic opportunities for such discussion given the U.S.-centric nature of his content, but Alex’s comments suggest he looks for opportunities where he can find them. He told me:

I guess the best way to sum that up is just to say every chance we get, we try to include the world in our classroom, whatever the lesson is. Now, I'm not saying that it happens every time we teach or every time lecturing or whatever, but there are times that you pull the world in.
Drawing on his content like when conceptualizing global citizenship, he offered the following example:

And you know, you could talk about how that impressment was happening during the War of 1812 and the impressment of American sailors into the English and French armies affected us globally because it was attacking our people. And so you had to, you know, the United States had to deal with that concept of what they needed to do to fix that problem.

He also described a multi-day lesson where his class put England on trial for their treatment of the colonies prior to the American Revolution as an example of global citizenship instruction:

Oh! We put England on trial. And we had a court case. And we had a judge and we had a jury and we had lawyers and everything. And they argued that England was not in the right to put the taxes on with no taxation representation. And that went over really well.

Another more potentially fraught example is slavery and the international slave trade.

Though Alex attempts to avoid any moral judgement of the slave trade, despite his recognition of its horrors, he draws on slavery as an example to promote global awareness in his classroom. He told me:

Well, slavery through the whole process, slavery was internationally [pause] it was a pretty strong thing during that time. And of course, the issue of slavery, I know it's all about state rights [with sarcasm], but slavery was the state's right that they were trying to use. And that globally affected the United States in the process, triangular trade and mercantilism and all those key button things that were affecting England, were affecting
France were affecting, Europe in general. Those are all important global citizenship ideas.

Interestingly, unlike the Middle Passage where Alex is careful to avoid controversy and historical judgment, he does feel comfortable offering historical critique about his students’ attitudes to the Civil War and southern secession, telling his students, “as you fly your rebel flags [laughs]. Just remember, you weren't a part of Tennessee that did not really support the union.”

In a similar vein, he expressed confidence in making students aware of historical inequality, at least prior to modern times. In the lesson he shared with me, his objective requires students to explore “how historical events can shape modern concepts of citizenship and global responsibility (Appendix F).” Given his trepidation to discuss what he deemed “controversial issues” I asked if he would feel comfortable with modern examples citizenship and global responsibility:

Me: In your lesson you’re looking at modern citizenship and modern issues. Earlier, you mentioned being a little wary of that. If you were to do this lesson, would you include that modern part?

Alex: Well, I might include the “all men are created equal” of the Declaration of Independence and how it was really only White males over the age of 21 that owned property that was equal. That women were not considered equal. African Americans, we're not considered equal. Native Americans were not considered equal. And I might approach it from that aspect.

Me: Just to be sure I’m hearing you, that would mean looking at the modern issues that would be involved. And you would feel comfortable doing that?
Alex: Yeah, I think I would be comfortable by saying, you know, we fixed the problems later on. You know, then go into the 19th Amendment. I think it's the 19th Amendment. And, you know, try to show them that through the civil rights the African Americans had to fight for their equality. Once again, you have to be careful how you approach that with the critical race theory on the table nowadays.

Alex’s comments suggest a tension between his responsibility and confidence as a history teacher with the reality of this community dynamics. He wants to foster historical awareness and communicate historical realities. Yet, he also suppresses some content to avoid controversy. Which of these impulses win out requires Alex to “take a reading of the room” and monitor his students’ opinions and reactions.

**Participant 3 – Kelci**

*Conceptualizing GCE*

*Glocal Issues*

When I first asked Kelci to talk about global citizenship, her immediate response was to point to current events and important issues of which she thinks her students should be aware. Some of these issues, like war, remained far-away events or ideas in her responses, while other issues, like hunger and poverty, she spoke of as existing on local, national, and international scales.

The first issue Kelci brought up in our conversations was climate change. That Kelci would mention climate change is unsurprising given the increased awareness of it as a global issue. However, rather than discuss the impact of climate change on the planet, United States, or
her community, Kelci instead framed her discussion of the topic through the culpability of governments and policy makers in the crisis, namely China. She told me:

Well, when we're looking at [global citizenship], I hate to use climate change, but I will. If you’re looking at climate change, China isn't going to be a very good global citizen because they have not produced anything. They're not willing to do a lot of reduction, I should say. Maybe they have reduced them, whereas other countries are trying to [pause] move forward to consensus.

China’s role in the climate crisis came up later in our conversation when I asked Kelci to clarify a distinction she was beginning to draw between citizenship and global citizenship.

Me: You’ve talked a lot about political participation. Is that a difference that you see between being, like you said, a citizen first and then being a global citizen? What is the difference between the citizen and a global citizen?

Kelci: I think politics plays a large part in it because you’ve got to make change. You can't like, I may decide I want to be a global citizen and I'm going to [pause], and my focus is going to be on I believe that we should recycle. Well, I'm recycling, that's just me, but if I get my government to [pause] change the way it’s doing it and start a recycling plan for the country or that state or the whole entire nation, then we're helping globally with what we're doing.

Here, Kelci again prioritized the role of policy makers and governments, creating a conceptualization of government driven from the top down. She did acknowledge the “small part” that individuals can play, but she quickly dismissed individual action alone as ineffective. She went on to say:
I mean, I can be a good global citizen and start trying to look at matters that affect the
globe and try to do my own small part that I think, again, that would just be a small part
and would not really be affecting that much, wouldn't be changing that much.

Another global issue that Kelci mentioned was the war and Ukraine. Unlike her
description of climate change, Kelci did not connect the invasion of Ukraine to individual action,
nor did she speak of policy responses or culpability. She told me:

Well, right now, the Russia war with Ukraine, despite how you come down on that, it is
going to affect everyone. So everyone should be aware of it because it's affecting them.
And they may whether you're someone who thinks that we're giving too much to the
Ukraine and we need to take care of our own people in Hawaii and elsewhere, or you’re
someone who thinks that we can't let Russia get such a big foothold that they'll go after
everyone else.

Her mention of the war here is largely descriptive—a reference to an incident that people should
simply acknowledge as an event. She does acknowledge the difference in perspective, a theme
that came up throughout our interview and that I will touch on in a subsequent section.

A final issue Kelci brought up when discussing global citizenship was poverty and its
connection to food scarcity. The tone of her response discussing hunger was somewhere between
incredulity and outrage. She told me:

Global issues – health care, war, poverty, making sure people have food. I mean, in our
world today, there should be nobody who’s hungry. There just shouldn’t be. And I am
talking about people in the furthest reaches of the continent, like people in South America
who are in the Amazon. I mean, just that everybody should have access to affordable food.

Kelci mentioned she did not want to get too political, a theme I will discuss in a subsequent section, but I wanted to clarify where she placed the responsibility in addressing poverty and hunger.

Me: Do you think the government should play an active part in that

Kelci: I don't know of an active part, but at least make it known that the bigger governments believe [pause] I guess they would have to really [be active]. I mean, say, “hey, we're taking too much here, we need to make sure that other people have access to food.” We can’t keep burning down the rainforest and not at least doing something to make sure that the people who live there have a way to get food later.

As with climate change, Kelci frames hunger and food availability through the lens of government action, or inaction.

When I asked Kelci what issues might be most relevant to her and her community, she returned to the topic of food availability, telling me, “Food [pause] because poverty is such a high problem issue” and that “[children] should have access to food, period.”

“Getting Political”

Much of Kelci’s discussion of global citizenship was infused with the language of politics and policy making. Throughout our interview, there was a tension between, on the one hand, her knowledge of policy issues and her desire for policy makers to address issues in accordance with her values as a citizen, and on the other hand her reticence to discuss politically
charged topics like health care or the place of values when it comes to teaching for global citizenship.

Kelci is very much aware of global issues, and she wants her students to be aware also. She also wants her students to recognize their ability to drive political action. She told me:

[Students] don't realize that they [pause] they come to me not realizing that they can have a role in their government, that they can speak out to their government, that they can write letters, that they can talk to them and influence them and that they can run for office. I think they think that only a few people can run for office because they keep seeing the same two people run for office constantly in their whole life.

Her comments here suggest space for political action within global citizenship. At the same time, she was quick to abdicate her own political beliefs, which she connected to values, in our conversations. Discussing health care as a global issue, she told me:

I'm not talking about health care for everyone in the sense that socialists do, but I do think that everyone should be entitled [pause] to receive, without getting political, [pause] I'm going to end up getting political. I don't want to go down that route, but I think everyone should be entitled to have health care at a basic level, at least that is accessible.

I will return to Kelci’s political sensibilities in a subsequent section on her gatekeeping, but it is relevant here as a driver of her conceptualization of global citizenship education. To Kelci, politics and values are connected to global citizenship. At the same time, she holds complex views on the place of values in day-to-day instruction. Citing an example of inappropriate values in the classroom, she shared:
I know a teacher who got in trouble in my old community because she made the kids sing a song. She was singing a song or doing a chant where she was saying that Barack Obama was the better candidate and making them only talk about Barack Obama in her class. And so that I disagree with.

Kelci’s description and disapproval of this incident are not exceptional. It is inappropriate for teachers as custodians of future citizens to prime students to endorse or reject a candidate. However, I wanted to further tease out Kelci’s thoughts on values in a classroom. Elsewhere in our conversation, Kelci mentioned topics like racism, equality of opportunity, and peace and diplomacy as preferable to force and war. I wanted to know how she might square these more universal values with her skepticism of political values:

Me: To make sure that I understand what you're saying when you talk about teachers bringing in their belief systems or values inappropriately, there are some universal values that you mentioned like kindness and peace. What are the values that you're saying that are inappropriate?

Kelci: Well, if a teacher is talking about [pause], I'm just going to go with slavery and they say, “all Whites were bad because slavery existed.” That’s bringing their own values, and that's the one that comes to mind right now because I know that's the one that's controversial. Like the state of Florida having a standard that says you have to teach how slaves benefited from slavery, that some slaves benefited from slavery. It was worded differently because when I read it, I was like, well, it's not quite what they're saying, but it's still. That to me, that's kind of bringing a value of that state.

Elsewhere in our interview, she told me:
I'm all about teaching kids to be kind. I see no problem with teaching kids to be can
teaching kids that peace is better. Even if war is necessary, sometimes peace is better, I
don't have a problem with that.

In these responses, Kelci begins clarifies that inappropriate values for teaching global citizenship
are she means political values. While politics and personal values are inappropriate, other values
that are more universal like kindness and peace, to her are appropriate. Furthermore, in the
context divisive issues like the ones mentioned here, Kelci broadens her conceptualization of
global citizenship beyond globalization and historical awareness to include a civic-political
dimension.

**GCE as Globalization**

Throughout our conversation, Kelci spoke of global citizenship education in terms of
globalization and its impacts. Most often, she referenced GCE content and skills in terms of her
curriculum and content knowledge Kelci expects student to learn in her classroom. Speaking to
how she might include GCE content in her curriculum, she brought up a specific topic, triangle
trade. She told me:

> Triangular trade is how we traded with the rest of the world and how we were involved in
their economies and how we [pause] changed things for them indifferent ways, the slave
trade coming from Africa. Now, while the US only had about 12 percent, I believe
[pause] I have to go back and check and South America [pause] have the majority in the
West Indies, but we still affected their economy.

Kelci herself was aware of the way she framed global citizenship in terms of globalization
throughout our conversations. She finished this exchange by telling me:
I don't know if that really fits the definition of global citizenship that you're talking about. But for me, any time we affect the world in a different way. I'm just I guess I'm thinking more of globalization.

Throughout our conversation, Kelci kept referencing globalization as she mentioned global citizenship topics and issues. Early in our conversation, Kelci mentioned global citizenship would require awareness and consideration of other viewpoints. When I asked how someone might accomplish this, she spoke of climate and natural resources, telling me:

I hesitate to say this because [pause] Globalization, I do think, you know, you want to take other countries to a certain extent, but I also think that you need to look at what's best for your country and your people as well. You can't [pause] throw your country under the bus to do something that just because everyone else thinks that it's a good idea.

In this comment, she ties global citizenship and globalization to the interests of a nation-state. Later in our conversation, she came back to this idea of resource allocation and government policy:

Well, you would not want one country to use 99% of the world's resources. You would want other countries to be able to have a slice of the resources, especially if those resources are coming from their country. There are some countries in the world who [pause] they work very hard and they have all these resources, but their government sells them, sells them to other people, they don't get a share of the resources as their citizens. And so I think other countries need to look at that and say, well, wait a minute, we need to maybe put some pressure so that they also have a share of these resources.
It was clear from our conversation that, to Kelci, global citizenship education involves knowledge of the way countries interact with one another and the impact of those interactions on members of the nation-states involved – globalization.

Kelci’s curriculum, United States history from colonization to Reconstruction, provides obstacles to developing this knowledge in students. Though there are some opportunities to build global awareness, but, in her opinion, the structure of her course does not allow for the same type of global discussion as world history or contemporary U.S. history course. She told me:

[My curriculum is] more focused on America's role with America. I mean, you have the X.Y.Z affair and you have other things, but I don't think that’s actually [pause] that's our role in the global world, but I don't think it really talks about how to be a good global citizen. In that role, whereas later on the second half of American history, you could definitely have more about globalization and how we can [pause] and our place in the world.

Since global citizenship is tied to globalization, for Kelci, there are limited opportunities in her curriculum to build global awareness between the colonial period and the Civil War.

*GCE as Perspective Taking (and Giving)*

In addition to and complementing globalization, Kelci defined global citizenship in terms of perspective taking and awareness of other perspectives and ways of life across the globe. This perspective taking was somewhat political in her descriptions. At times Kelci acknowledges that the actions of citizens can ripple across the globe, as in our exchange below:

Me: When I say the words global citizenship, what does that mean to you?
Kelci: Well, it means that you take into consideration other viewpoints rather than just your American viewpoint, you take into consideration. You know what, English people might have to think about it, and you also. Frame what you do in reference to how it can affect the entire world rather than just how it would affect you at home and your country.

It is worth mentioning that when conducting my member checking protocol with Kelci, she was unsure of what she exactly meant by “what, “English people might have to think about it.” I told her that in the context of our conversation, it appears she is referring to citizens of the nation-state of England as part of Europe, as opposed to, for instance, citizens of the nation-state of the United States. She agreed to reporting her response given this context.

Kelci also connects knowledge of perspective to political action via contacting one’s political representative:

I mean, there are many different thought processes that you have to think about, it’s not necessarily, I think to be a global system doesn't mean everybody has the same idea. I think you have to look at all perspectives and then you need to let your legislature know how you feel or your legislator, not legislature, how you feel about it. I often let them know how I feel to the point where they probably hang up on me [laughs]

This understanding complicates Kelci’s views on politics in the classroom. While she is wary of infusing her own political ideology in her teaching, she acknowledges action she takes outside of the classroom. Furthermore, she hopes her students will also take such action via contacting their legislator.

At the same time, Kelci is not sanguine about the ability of the individual alone to effect change, even with perspective taking. Nor is she optimistic about channels of communication
outside of formal contact such as social media. When I asked her what it would mean for a
person to be a good global citizen, she told me:

It's a very hard question. Like I said, just thinking of perspectives of other countries, I
mean, I can't really do a lot as a teacher as far as our policies, but I can let my
representatives know how I feel about things and I can maybe try to change the narrative
so that people can see bigger issues than small issues, not with my students, but as a
citizen, maybe through social media. Not that that ever changes anybody's mind, but
something like that.

Here again, Kelci is quick to maintain her political neutrality in the classroom and avoid
addressing sticky narratives with her students.

Kelci does, however, see opportunity to broaden perspectives in an appropriate way
through class discussion. As we were discussing her lesson plan, she told me:

They learn like today during my debate, it's kind of the same thing in this discussion.
They learn that different people have different perspectives. It doesn't make them bad. It
makes them somebody you need to sit and listen to what they say rather than just
preparing what you’re going to say in response to them without ever hearing what they're
saying. We saw a huge example of that in the world in 2020. Very few people listen to
understand rather than listen to respond, and I think that is one thing that I try to work on
with my kids is that they listen to understand what the other person saying before they
listen to respond.

Importantly she sees this discussion and perspective-taking as an antidote to the political
divisions in the country. Elsewhere in our interview I asked:
Me: It sounds like you think the country being divided so much is trickling down to your community.

Kelci: Yeah, I think so. I think that [pause] we need to start trying to look at it from seeking to understand what other people mean before we judge them for it.

**Obstacles to GCE**

Like the other participants in this study, Kelci identified several obstacles to the possible inclusion of global citizenship topics and issues in her curriculum. Notably, like Alex, she anticipated community resistance to the presence of global citizenship issues in her classroom. Part of this resistance has to do with politics and the state of the partisan divide in the United States. She told me:

Both of our political parties in our country have made people [pause] hate certain words, certain phrases and have kept them from really figuring out what those phrases mean, and I think a lot of the rural community is not as [pause] they don't like certain words [pause] They've made it to where we are so divided that there are certain words that just don't [pause] work in rural communities.

Kelci is quick to hold both sides of the political divide accountable for divisive language, perhaps reflective of her desire to stay politically neutral in her discussions with students and her interview with me.

To identify how Kelci connects taboo words or concepts with global citizenship, I made sure to immediately follow up on her line of thinking:

Me: Can I ask you what are some of those words?
Kelci: Climate change is one. The war in Ukraine is another you know, just [pause] health care for all if it’s said that way is another trigger word, because there are people who work really hard and they say that their money would be going to other people, that they may not be working at all. And so they just don't want to participate at all in that.

Politically charged issues like war and universal health care are clearly taboo or require a delicate touch to be talked about in Kelci’s community. At the same time, Kelci made clear that she does not avoid controversial issues if in her curriculum if the state standards mandate the teaching of those issues:

Me: Does being in a rural community affect the way that you think about teaching with citizenship and mind global citizenship?

Kelci: It's not really affected me and how I teach global ideas, because, like I said, I have to keep to certain standards and there's not enough time to even teach those because they're so broad. I don't have time to be going and talking about things that are not in relation to my standards, except on special days like Constitution Day and things like that.

Kelci’s response here speaks to another obstacle she might face to including global citizenship education in her curriculum: the state standards. While the standards offer guidance and, like Brittany mentioned, a backing for Kelci’s content, the quantity and breadth of the standards make it difficult for Kelci to include extra topics. To Kelci, global citizenship would often be an extra topic. When I asked about global citizenship in her standards, she told me:

I mean, there’s not like with global citizenship today. I mean, I can talk about global citizenship in the past, like how we fit in with England and France and Spain and Africa
and triangular trade routes and the shot heard round the world and our effect on the entire world. But I can't talk about global citizenship as it pertains to today very often.

Kelci’s response here suggests her conceptualization of global citizenship includes a contemporary dimension. While she recognizes opportunities to do discuss global citizenship vis-à-vis globalization in the past, she suggests that the fact her standards are centered in the past, her class being a U.S. history course, precludes elements of global citizenship from coming up organically in the curriculum.

Following up this thread, I asked how Kelci might shape her curriculum to include global citizenship. She told me:

I do not. I mean, I do talk about how our impact on the world in that way. Like I said, when you have over 90 standards and you have less than 90 days to teach all those standards, it's very hard to fit in extra stuff. So if it doesn't already fit into what I'm talking about. I just don't have time to include extra information.

Again, Kelci points to the curriculum making it difficult for her to include “extra” topics.

A final obstacle that Kelci uniquely made explicit was her own ignorance of the term global citizenship and what global citizenship curriculum might look like. This is not to say other participants did not have the same thoughts about the elusive nature of defining global citizenship, but Kelci was the only participant to make such misgivings explicit in our conversations. This attitude came up when she likened global citizenship to globalization:

And I don't know if that really fits the definition of global citizenship that you're talking about. But for me, any time we affect the world in a different way. I’m just I guess I'm
thinking more of globalization than global citizenship, so maybe I need your definition of

global citizenship so I can answer the questions better.

The last part of her reply here speaks to her positioning herself as lacking knowledge and me, as
researcher, as holder of knowledge she does not possess. Elsewhere in our conversation,
speaking about the appropriateness of teaching global citizenship to younger students, she told
me: “I don't know that [6th graders] would get the big concepts that come with it. Heck, I'm
having trouble coming up with a good definition of it.”

Though Kelci was able to offer a complex conceptualization of global citizenship in our
conversation, she is not confident in her knowledge of global citizenship as a concept. This lack
of confidence is unsurprising given the complex nature and conceptualizations of GCE in
scholarly work, to say nothing of the research to practice gap between academics and teachers.
Again, it is entirely possible and perhaps even likely that Alex and Brittany harbored similar
misgivings, even if Kelci was the only participant to call attention to her (mis)conceptions of
GCE.

*Gatekeeping GCE*

*Gatekeeping to Avoid Politics*

Importantly, the politicized nature of global citizenship, in Kelci’s conceptualization,
affects the way she structures her discussion of historical issues in her classroom. GCE, to Kelci,
is potentially thorny, and certain issues, especially those with a political component, require a
delicate touch. While on the topic of slavery in U.S. history, I asked Kelci about how she
negotiates teaching for historical awareness and universal values like kindness while avoiding
partisan values. She told me:
I don’t teach any judgment or value system around it. I tell them this is what happened. You need to look at it and see based on [pause] and then I tell them that we don't put our morals today on people in the past. We need to look at what they did based on what their morals were at the time and I'm sure they know that my views are slavery that it was appalling and horrible. But I don’t say, okay, today I'm going to teach you about something that was appalling and horrible and our country sucks because of it. I don't say that.

Continuing this theme and reflecting on her political identity vis a vis her position as teacher, she went on to say:

And I don't I don't teach [students] values. I let them come up, they always want to know my politics. I tell them I'm not going to tell them because they’re one of two things will happen. They believe it or they’re not care. They’ll either vote based on what I say or against it, just because they either like or dislike it.

Kelci is intentional about bracketing her political identity in the classroom. Much of this process is due to her self-conceptualized duty as a social studies teacher to avoid imprinting her beliefs on her students. Part of this duty is to also teach the official curriculum, as revealed by the following exchange:

Kelci: I keep to the standards mainly to avoid controversy, but also because that's what the state of Tennessee expects me to teach and that's what I'm going to teach.

Me: So it sounds like, obviously, you have these identities as a human being, right, but you kind of, if I'm hearing you right, leave those identities at the door and you don’t bring them into your classroom.
Kelci: The closest thing that I [pause] I try to avoid bringing a lot of personal stuff in anyway. Occasionally I’ll say stuff to them like today to explain the word resentful I used a situation where I felt resentful and but it was it was a joke and they knew it. So, you know, but they got the idea. But that’s about as far as I can with anything that’s not in my curriculum now.

In addition to her duty as social studies teacher, part of Kelci’s gatekeeping for politics derives from her self-preservation instincts. She told me:

I don't want to [pause] I don’t want to set off a powder keg. I mean, I think there is a lot of risk because people see, some people see global citizenship as taking away from internationalism and I think there would be more controversy [pause] I don't know that for a fact [pause] nor do I ever plan to [teach world history] because I like what I teach. But I think there you probably be a lot more room for controversy.

This powder keg, beyond causing controversy in her classroom, could threaten Kelci’s employment and retirement. Though the standards can provide a shield for teaching sensitive historical issues like slavery, they cannot, to Kelci, protect teachers completely. She told me:

There, in our culture today, there are people looking for things to be angry about, and if you look for stuff, you're going to find it. So I just wouldn't want to be in that position. And I think if I was in that position, I would do exactly what I've been saying I do – whatever was the standard is what would be taught. And if there were parts for global citizenship to be talked about, I would talk about it in terms of the standards, protect myself. I'm not going [pause] I’m too close to retirement. I don't want to do anything to jeopardize that.
Teaching in terms of the standards aligns with Kelci’s duty as a social studies teacher and her desire to avoid compromising her job and retirement plans. However, the standards do not prescribe a specific curriculum for when and how values should be taught. The Tennessee standards are largely descriptive. For example, an 8th grade standard regarding slavery asks students to “Identify the conditions of enslavement, and explain how slaves adapted to and resisted bondage in their daily lives, including Nat Turner’s revolt,” while a later standard on Reconstruction asks students to “Explain the restrictions placed on the rights and opportunities of freedmen, including: racial segregation, black codes, and the efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau to address the problems confronting newly freed slaves” (TN 8.36 8.72).

The work of identifying and teaching values is left largely up to the teacher when language from the standards is descriptive and neutral. To be sure, chattel slavery was a horrid practice, given that we value individual liberty and equality opportunity and abhor the type of physical and emotional violence to which owners and society subjected enslaved persons. However, short of language identifying those horrors and values in the standards, teachers are on their own. A previous quote from Kelci reveals this reality:

I'm sure [students] know that my views are slavery that it was appalling and horrible. But I don’t say, okay, today I’m going to teach you about something that was appalling and horrible and our country sucks because of it.

In this instance Kelci recognizes the horrors of slavery but avoids adopting a values-based approach to teaching it. At the same time, elsewhere in our interview Kelci acknowledged that some values are appropriate to teach, for example, to “strive for peace instead of war” and “trying to be fair and equitable.” She told me:
I'm all about teaching kids to be kind. I see no problem with teaching kids to be can
teaching kids that peace is better. Even if war is necessary, sometimes peace is better, I
don't have a problem with that. I just don't think people should be bringing labels into a
classroom are their own value system into the classroom, whether it’s either side of the
opinion, I'm not [pause] it's not a political issue for me. It's a let's be fair to our kids and
let them form their own opinions. We can’t mold them into little creatures that we want
them to be.

Kelci is intentional about bracketing her political identity and values while teaching, and
she is vigilant to avoid any partisan reading of the past or present. She is also intentional about
focusing the historical narrative on progress and optimism. She went on to say:

I tell my kids that every single time that our country did something wrong, there were
people who were working to make it better. And we can focus on the stuff we did wrong,
or we can focus on the fact that we always had people who try to make things better. And
I say you get to decide what you want to do.

Kelci’s framing of the narrative here reflects her desire for students to forge their own civic path
in life.

**Gatekeeping for Global Awareness**

Kelci’s gatekeeping largely took two forms: avoidance and inclusion. Within avoidance,
she gatekeeps by excluding politically thorny issues. Within inclusion, she gatekeeps by GCE by
seeking examples of globalization, her preferred conceptualization of global citizenship, within
the state standards. When I asked how her lesson plan exemplified GCE, she told me:
Okay, well, it’s talking about how different regions of the world were connected by these events. First of all, globalization and how they were connected and dependent on each other. And then it helped explain why cultures where change cultures were changed because of this, I mean, different fruits going to different countries that had never experience those fruits before, different diseases wiping out 90 percent of the Native Americans within the first one hundred years of them being exposed to the Europeans [pause] and explain to them that it’s not always a good thing because look at what happened to Squanto’s tribe.

Though the Columbian Exchange, the concept discussed here, occurs slightly chronologically before the beginning of Kelci’s official curriculum, she draws on instances of cross-cultural exchange to highlight the globalization aspect of GCE that she prioritizes. She also connects those exchanges to her curriculum with the example of Squanto.

In addition to historical awareness, Kelci sees building geographical awareness as a component of GCE that she seeks to include in her curriculum. One way she does this is through mapping exercises:

Just being exposed to maps, though, you see where your country is in relation to the rest of the world. It makes you feel more connected to the rest of the world. I think it’s just a subconscious thing that the kids are able to pick up on that. Oh, okay, I'm here, but I’m also close to these two areas. And look how close we are to Russia. My kids are fascinated when you tell them, listen, one hundred miles to Russia from America and they're like, what?
In this exchange, Kelci explains how geographical awareness can build global awareness and perspective taking.

Most of Kelci’s inclusive gatekeeping revolves around building historical and geographical awareness aligned with the official curriculum. In our conversation though, she did point to an example of how she draws on her personal history to help build awareness and perspective taking. As we were discussing her lesson plan, she told me:

I do tell [students] that I had family members that fall on both sides of Civil War because I did. And I think sometimes now that is important to kids, because when they can go back and see what their family was doing during that time frame, it makes history come alive to them. That’s different than me talking about current issues around those ideas. I don't have a place for that in my curriculum.

Kelci makes it clear that while her own identities are out of bounds for including in the classroom, there is something students can gain from thinking about the identities of historical figures. She went on to say:

But talking about the different identities that the Confederate soldiers may have had, you had Confederate soldiers who were only fighting because they were loyal to the South. They weren't fighting for slavery. You had Confederate soldiers that were definitely fighting for slavery. You had different values across the whole spectrum. But that's within my curriculum.

Importantly, this example continues to function within the framework of the state standards, and, unsurprisingly, given her emphasis on being value-neutral, her examples are apolitical. Even
within the example of a relative fighting, either directly or indirectly, to maintain slavery in the Civil War, Kelci avoids any discussion of politics or values.

**(In)appropriateness of GCE**

While discussing global citizenship issues that she avoids (politics) or includes (globalization), Kelci uniquely spoke to the appropriateness of global citizenship as a topic at all for her 8th grade students and students in her middle school setting. Though this theme is somewhat related to obstacles, specifically when Kelci talks about state standards, it is unique in that while the obstacles theme presumes the possibility of teaching for GCE while needing to overcome barriers, considering GCE as inappropriate might preclude its inclusion from the curriculum entirely.

One reason Kelci considers GCE potentially inappropriate for her is the content and bounds of her curriculum. Though issues like globalization come up, most of her course includes domestic U.S. history. She told me:

[Global citizenship is] not something I focus on so much as an American history teacher. I do talk about the real world but we [pause] I do the first half to 1877, and so there are certain things that we did that affected, like the Monroe Doctrine and other things, but it's more focused on America's role with America. I mean, you have X,Y, Z [affair] and you have other things, but [pause] I don't think actually that's our role in the global war world, but I don't think it really talks about how to be a good global citizen.

Apparent from this comment is Kelci’s belief that her state standards do not explicitly connect to her conceptualization of global citizenship. Other courses, such as world history, she feels may be more appropriate, as evidenced by the following exchange:
I think world history that they teach in high school would be a great place to start with global citizenship or a civics class where they also have a portion where they can talk about global citizenship. I think those would be better suited than my social studies, 1877. Now I can start kids thinking about globalization and our impact on the world but I can't really be talking about the United Nations and big ideas like health care for everyone in 1877, though.

Kelci sees limited opportunities to include globalization in her curriculum, but largely, she believes global citizenship would be better suited in other courses.

At the same time, Kelci is wary of including global citizenship in curriculum for students younger than her 8th graders. Speaking about social studies in different grade levels, she told me:

It's not like the world history in ninth grade where they can go on to the current day and think [pause] in fifth grade, they do all the way up to present day. I just I don't know if they're old enough to understand the concept, and I could be totally wrong. I don't teach fifth graders.

When I followed up on this thought, Kelci clarified GCE may not be appropriate for younger students:

Me: Do you think you need to be at a certain age to kind of understand these issues or be a global citizen?

Kelci: I do. I mean, I think they can understand doing their part to make the world a better place in fifth and sixth grade. But I don't know that they would get the big concepts that come with it. Heck, I'm having trouble coming up with a good definition of [global citizenship].
A final issue Kelci has with teaching for global citizenship is the need to teach for citizenship first. Kelci believes it may be inappropriate to teach for global citizenship with a solid foundation in civic knowledge and virtues. She told me:

Well, I think you have to teach them to be good citizens to begin with. You have to and I'm not sure at eighth grade that I would be pushing global citizenship as much as learning what it means to be a good citizen to begin with.

As we discussed the appropriate time and place for global citizenship instruction, she clarified:

I think the standards are not done correctly. I really think that you need to start small and move to the big picture so that maybe American history should be fifth, sixth or seventh and then they could talk about globalization and world history later when they have it in their head, how to be a citizen of their own country first.

It is clear Kelci is wary of diving too deep into global citizenship with students at the middle school level or younger.

Unexpected Findings – AI and Lesson Planning

While designing this study, I had not anticipated the way that artificial intelligence (AI) and language-learning software would impact education. From the college level down, AI platforms like ChatGPT have brought both opportunities and frustrations for teachers and students (Bogost, 2023; Elgersma, 2023). In my research design and recruitment, I did not specify that my participants could not use AI to help create a lesson. I was surprised to find, upon sitting down for my interview with Kelci, that both Kelci and Alex had used ChatGPT to help create the informal lesson plan they submitted for our interview. Both Alex and Kelci are veteran teachers with a deep level of content knowledge and experience crafting and implementing
lessons. I was not worried there would be factual inaccuracies in their lessons, but I was interested in how the process of creating a lesson using AI would go, as I did not have experience myself using AI at the point of this study. Kelci enthusiastically summarized the opportunities that AI provides:

Well I love it. I’ll just be honest, because each of my standards have five ways that they can be taught or tested, so I can have I can give it the parameters until I want to talk about the economic, political, geography, geographic and social or cultural impact that that event had and then also tell it what grade level I want it written on, I can tell it that I want it to define the following words within the context. I can have it write questions that are analytical. I can have it right, questions that are integrative. I would just tell it what to do. And the more you use it. I don’t know if you have any experience with it starts to learn what you're looking for.

In addition to creating social studies themes and questions, Kelci uses AI to help structure discussion:

I did a debate. I always do a debate. At this time of the year. I got it to read a script, not a script that the kids read were for, but a format. So it was so much less than just screaming at each other, except my third period. They're all high level and they were really into it. So they screamed at each other anyway and my moderator couldn't control them. So I had to step in. But the fact that it told them what the role is and how they were supposed to act without me having to sit there for 30 minutes and think they did it and listen to. So it’s very beneficial.
While Kelci is enthusiastic about the opportunities AI provides, she is also realization about potential pitfalls that might come from over-relying on AI:

Now you have to read everything because I actually told it the other day and I don't think this is correct. And it came be like, oh yes, you're right. It is incorrect. This happened. And so you have to you have to know your stuff to use it. You can't use it as a crutch for not knowing your stuff. But if you know your stuff and you can put it in, it’s amazing. And I love it.

Alex was not as verbose in his discussion of using AI, but like Kelci, he sees great potential in using platforms like ChatGPT to lighten his workload and refine his lessons. He thinks AI is “amazing.” Talking about the lesson he shared for our interview, he told me he was excited about the prospect of actually using it in class: “It’s amazing. We actually have talked about using this one.”

**Question 3: What relationships, if any, exist between these teachers’ identities and their global citizenship education gatekeeping?**

With this question, I structure my results by identity and gatekeeping relationships that I identified as being aligned (for instance, suppressing political identity and gatekeeping to avoid politics) as well as relationships that are unaligned (for instance, emphasizing the need to address racism and gatekeeping to avoid talk of racism). Through this section, I revisit and utilize powerful quotations from question 1 and question 2 results but in the context of the relationship between identity and gatekeeping.
Participant 1 – Brittany

Aligned Relationships

Curricular Representation

One area of alignment between Brittany’s self-reported identities and her curricular instructional gatekeeping has to do with her intentionality in making her curriculum representative of the many voices in history, particularly those like women that have been historically marginalized. The connection between her identity and gatekeeping emerges from her self-proclaimed positionality as a female history teacher and her resulting desire to make her curriculum inclusive of many voices. Connecting her identity to her gatekeeping, she told me:

I think being a woman definitely makes me think of the minority situations better. Definitely from a different I guess [pause] we have one Native American student in our school. And I think even though I'm a White, I say basic woman because my kids call me basic. I am very basic. But I think being a woman and knowing what women have gone through in history and knowing that history, it does help me put into perspective maybe what other people not.

While Brittany leverages this experience to highlight historical perspectives, she also recognizes that her experience and background is not universally applicable. Part of this awareness comes from teaching in very different contexts. She went on to say:

I don’t want to say I know what [non-White students] experience because I definitely don't. But I, I empathize with that. And I think being a history person helps me with that, too, knowing that women had to fight for so many different things and different rights.
and still are fighting for some rights in some ways, I think that that's definitely probably pushed me towards being an advocate for the underdog, I guess.

Brittany’s lived experience and resulting advocacy for the underdog leads her gatekeep her curriculum to be inclusive, even when non-White students are not in her classroom:

And so with the curriculum there is [pause] I do have to emphasize what other minority groups have gone through in our history and emphasizing how important it is to note that even though you don't have an African American a Mexican American sitting next to you, this is something that you need to be aware of [pause] that it has happened. It is part of our history.

Interestingly, Brittany stops short of calling what she does advocacy, even as she advocates for historically marginalized voices. Though she sees a connection between her lived experience and gatekeeping an inclusive curriculum, she is hesitant to accept any political connation between what she does with gatekeeping and modern forms of advocacy. Notably, an emergent theme in my conversation with Brittany was her desire to suppress her own political identity. Hesitant to claim advocacy, she told me:

I don't know about advocacy. I think I don't leave the underdog out and I definitely want people to see that perspective. So when we do talk about, you know, the Native Americans or the Homestead Act and things like that, I don't want to just show, you know, the typical White perspective. I also want to have students think of, well, so this is one perspective. They're getting land, they're moving, they have opportunity. But who else is involved and what is their perspective? So I don't think that I'm like trying to push my own self and advocacy for that on them. I think I'm just trying to show everything I possibly can. I want you to just get all the facts.
Building Perspective

Related to Brittany’s gatekeeping for marginalized voices is her desire to gatekeep to build perspective-taking capacity in her students. Much like her gatekeeping for curricular perspective, her gatekeeping for perspective seems very much connected to her lived experiences. Interestingly, she explicitly names her Christian background as direct influence on her desire to build perspective. Speaking of this background, she told me:

I grew up in a pretty Christian home and a very conservative home, and so it was always about other people and putting others first. And so I think that that's probably why I always want to teach that to others. And I think that's probably why I like history, because you can definitely look at several different perspectives.

Brittany names this identity and reasserts its connection to her curricular instructional gatekeeping. She continued:

I always have that one student that’s like “I'm never going to need to know this. I'm never going to know that.” I'm like, but you're learning things so that you don't vote for the people who are going to make the same mistakes that these people do. So I just I like that. But anyway, it definitely shaped, I think my parents and the way that I grew up definitely shaped that perspective of putting others first and wanting to constantly push towards the better and to keep in perspective for sure.

Brittany also connects her advocacy for perspective taking with her the context of her rural community and school. Though she does not connect perspective with her experience growing up in a rural area like she does her religious identity, she identifies a need to build perspective in her students precisely because they live in a rural community. She told me:
I think especially in the world we live in today, just exhibiting kindness and understanding perspectives of others. That's really big here in [Rural] County. I have taught in several different types of schools. I'm not gonna say every type of school, but several different types. I have gone from a predominantly Black community to a predominantly White community. And one thing that I have a hard time with in [Rural] County specifically is seeing things from another point of view.

Elsewhere in our interview, she reasserted this need for her students:

I think that that's the as a teacher, that's what I want to get across to these kids constantly, that, yes, your world is right here in [Rural] County at the time, but you are not the only one in the world. And we have to think about the things that we say. We have to think about the decisions that we make.

**Building Knowledge**

Beyond her internal personal identities as a Christian woman, Brittany’s identity as a social studies teacher and the relationship between her duty as a professional with her curricular gatekeeping manifested in our interview. In our conversation about teaching, Brittany spoke of the importance of social studies and building historical knowledge for her rural students: She told me:

Well, I tell my kids all the time, and this is this is me being funny to them, I tell them at my first job is to make sure that they're not the idiot on a YouTube channel saying that the first president was Abraham Lincoln. And if they can come out and answer basic United States history questions, I feel like I've done half my job, especially in the world that we live in today, where people don't know history at all.
For Brittany, knowledge of the past and how our country and other countries interact is important for students. She went on to say:

I think as a social studies teacher, having taught world history and U.S. history, you're teaching students what the interactions of governments have been in the past positively and negatively, and showing them like this has worked or this has not worked.

As Brittany connects this knowledge to her students’ rural experience, she identifies a role for herself complementary to social studies teacher of rural students: advocate for rural students. She told me:

As a rural teacher, I think I view myself as an advocate for these kids. I think that rural kids like we talked about earlier, they do get a bad rap. Sometimes when you're out and about in the social world and pop culture and all of the places and I sometimes I feel like I do have to be an advocate for these kids as a teacher when I'm talking to people who aren't from [here].

**Unaligned Relationships**

**Rural and Non-Rural Gatekeeping**

Throughout our interview, Brittany spoke about her students’ unique experience as rural dwellers as well as her own unique experience growing up and currently teaching in a rural community. She identified specific differences between rural students and students elsewhere, from demographics to lifestyle, to educational needs and priorities. To me, it seemed clear from her responses that Brittany recognizes rural students are uniquely situated and, subsequently, in need of unique curricular instructional gatekeeping. However, she equivocated throughout our interview between seeing rural teaching as unique and standard. One way this manifested was in
discussion of classroom behavior. Though she recognizes students in her current rural community have different lifestyles than students at her previous schools, she acknowledges that in-class behaviors are largely universal. She told me:

So there is there’s a difference in that sense from the classroom perspective and making connections. When it comes to the way that kids act and behave I don't think that there's a huge difference. I think kids are kids and you have to use the same [behavior] strategies everywhere you go.

Another similarity she identified between rural and urban students was wealth, as she told me that, “I see some of the same poverty here in [Rural] County that I saw when I worked at [urban middle school]. So I don't [pause] even though it might look different, it's still pretty rough here too.”

Interestingly, when discussing her gatekeeping, Brittany acknowledges differences between her current and former students and identifies differences in her approach to teaching. Following up on her discussion of being a White, female teacher, I asked how those identities might manifest in her teaching:

Me: In what ways do you consider that in your own teaching or preparing for class?

Brittany: I would definitely be answering that question differently, if I were talking about [urban middle school], because I definitely noticed that a lot more when I worked there. Honestly, I don't think that that has ever even crossed my mind being in a rural environment. I teach to kids who most of the time they look like me and have the same experience as me. So I'm able to make those connections easily because, I mean, our cultures are very similar.
She also acknowledged her presentation of content varies with her rural students. She told me:

> When I taught in [urban middle school], for instance, the connections I was making with those kids were extremely different than what I would make here in [Rural] County. I can easily [pause] we talk about agriculture, and we just finished up the Great Depression in my U.S. history class right now, and so when I talk about the Dust Bowl and agriculture, these kids probably know more than I do about that stuff.

Brittany’s responses here seem to suggest an intentionality about gatekeeping specifically for her rural students. However, when we discussed the global citizenship lesson she shared for our second interview, she acknowledged the lesson she created did not feature any considerations for rural students. Her lesson, she claimed, was largely universally applicable:

> Me: Do you think this lesson would look different if you were at another school, let's say, [urban middle school] or anywhere else?

> Brittany: I don't think so. I think that this was a lesson that could be picked up from [Rural County] and put in to [urban high school]. I don't I don't think that this was specific to a rural community.

Furthermore, she denied any impact of her rural identity on the construction of the lesson:

> I don't think I actually was thinking much about my identity when I prepared this. I think maybe connecting it into current events, it was sensitive to me. And so maybe [pause] I'd heard other students talk about it. So maybe adding that was my identity. But for the most part, I just felt like, you know, you need to, you have to know NATO, you have to know the Warsaw Pact.
There could be any number of reasons Brittany created and shared a lesson that did not acknowledge her students unique lived-realities and rural dwellers and her unique position as a rural teacher. The important takeaway for this research question is that that discrepancy exists in the first place.

**Participant 2 – Alex**

**Aligned Relationships**

**Avoiding Controversy**

One significant alignment between Alex’s identity and his gatekeeping his is desire to avoid controversy in his classroom. Unlike Brittany, Alex did not delve into biological aspects of his identity like race or gender. More salient for Alex was how he navigates his political and professional identity as social studies teacher and transmitter of historical facts, like slavery, with a community that might be respond poorly to addressing the history of racism in the United States. For Alex, this means navigating political discourse around topics like critical race theory. He told me:

I had a parent last year that I was in a meeting, and the first thing he said to me when he found out I was a social studies teacher he said, “you better not be teaching any of that critical race theory.” And I said, well, I don't, but you have to teach slavery. You can't get around that, you know, and you're not going to go and say the Middle Passage was this wonderful trip for the African Americans, I said, you've got to have some of that in there, but they don't want you to [long, thinking pause] African American stuff [pause] I’ve been called on the carpet, not by the principal, but by parents more than one time over teaching slavery.
In response to community attitudes, Alex acknowledges that he attempts to avoid controversy in the classroom, even if that controversy would derive merely from communicating historical fact, like the conditions of the Middle Passage. He told me:

> When we're studying the Middle Passage, I try not to act like that it was bad. Even though terribly it was, it was a horrible situation, but I don't go in and go [pause] I don't do critical race theory because I'm in a rural community and there's a lot of people that. I told you the last interview that I had a dad that came in and said, “you better not be teaching critical race theory.” And I didn't think anybody in [Rural County] probably even knew what critical race theory was, but you try to lean easier on those key button points.

To Alex, discussion of race in his curriculum can be conflated on parents’ behalf with promotion of critical race theory. To avoid these pressures, he sanitizes potentially thorny historical topics like slavery. Acquiescing to this community pressures leaves students room to reaffirm a sanitized narrative race in U.S. history:

> I don't want to set off a debate in my room about whether slavery was right or not right, because I'm going to guarantee you I have students that would argue [with exaggeration], “well it wasn’t that bad.”

**GCE as Curriculum Support**

At the same time, Alex does acknowledge room for GCE issues in his classroom, when it supports his content and role as social studies teacher. There is some tension between this theme and Alex’s desire to avoid controversy, for while part of his teacher identity leads him to suppress issues that his community might wish would go undiscussed, Alex’s teacher identity
also leads him to see any GCE as a content support as a desirable thing in his classroom. He does this by conceptually linking GCE to geographical awareness and disciplinary skills like reading and writing. He told me:

Well, you have to know where you are in the world to be able to understand. And you need to know where other things are. And social studies has dropped the ball on showing them where they're supposed to be or where they are. They have to learn, like in third grade, they have to learn all 50 states and where they're located. They don't use maps as much in fourth and fifth grade, or sixth, but seventh grade they do. So, you basically, any map that you can put in front of them and show them where they are and how they're related to other sections of the world and what their relationship is strategically with transportation and things to get to those countries.

When it comes to apolitical concepts or skills, things like simple mapping, Alex conceptualizes and implements GCE as an appropriate content support. Importantly, Alex connects geographic understanding with general knowledge of global issues. He told me:

Globally, I guess the best way to say that is to say [students] all need to know what's going on. It's not just a rural issue. It's not just an urban issue. It's a community issue [pantomimes a circle] that they need to be watching and trying to understand what's going on in the world.

Alex also connects the ability to read and write with expression of this knowledge, telling me, “If you can write and tell what you know, then you know it. If you cannot write about it, there's a good chance you're not very solid on what you're talking about.” When it is in support of non-controversial skills and content knowledge, Alex gatekeeps for inclusion of GCE.
**GCE as Exposure**

In a similar vein to general knowledge of global issues, Alex wishes for his students to be exposed to different ways of life in the United States and worldwide. In our conversation, Alex dubbed this exposure, “cultural collateral” and lamented his students limited exposure to lifestyles outside of the immediate community. Speaking of their class’s annual field trip to Washington D.C., he told me:

[Students are] amazed at the subway system because they've never been to the subway, they've never seen anything like that. And so we always take them on the subway and we take them to, you know, we go on a dinner cruise and let them dance and carry on and eat or whatever. So that's the difference in my opinion, is they. They don't have the advantages of seeing the world like suburban, and I wouldn't say urban because a lot of urban cities, kids don't get a lot travel time either. They don't get to go out and do things.

Alex’s gatekeeping for exposure is very much tied to his identity as a rural educator. Speaking on exposure through the curriculum, Alex recounted:

I really enjoy getting to show rural kids things that are not in their everyday lives, and you can do that in social studies probably as well as or better than you can in any other subject. Math is math, you got to learn it. Social studies [pause] You can take and go above and beyond what the curriculum says and show them different things.

Both he and his partner 8th grade teacher relish the opportunity to expose students to new ideas and ways of life. He went to say:

We try to bring in things and like the other teacher, my teaching partner at school, and she teaches eighth grade history just like I do, she [pause] she travels worldwide and she
brings that into her classroom. And just I guess [pause] I keep repeating myself, but just knowing that the kids are getting something besides just basic history is important to a lot of teachers.

Unaligned Relationships

Dealing With Prejudice

Alex clearly desires his students to be knowledgeable and the state of the country and world historically and currently. While this aligns with his identity as a social studies teacher, it conflicts with his identity and rural teacher through his gatekeeping to avoid controversy. Alex wants his students to be knowers, but he is reticent to share or empower his students to discover knowledge if that knowledge might compromise his position as rural teacher. In dealing with prejudice at his school, this misalignment of identities and priorities is laid bare. Speaking about prejudice, he told me:

Well, I've had [pause] jokes. I’ve heard jokes about, anti-Semitic jokes, about the Jewish people. And I always try to correct that and say, you know. not everybody's a White Baptist. You know. And I try to stop that. And it's not been horrible. It's not been frequently, but we do have some people that are not Jewish appreciative.

Alex is quick to put a stop to anti-Semitism in his classroom. His school is also supportive of dealing with racial slurs:

We now have several mixed students. And the N-word gets thrown out there a lot [emphasis in interview] to those students so we [pause] that is a contentious part of our school. Matter of fact, I had a boy suspended today that said the N-word to one of the African American kids.
However, while Alex is willing to address prejudicial behavior that he witnesses in his school, he does not go out of his way to address these issues when they occur in his curriculum. As it is inextricably linked with race, Alex admits to downplaying the issue of slavery:

Right, I'll leave [slavery] as neutral. Even though in my heart of hearts, I know it's a horrible experience that those African Americans went through, but you have to be careful in a rural community because there's a lot of prejudice in the community.

Such choices are tied to his awareness of community pressures and his own (mis)understanding of CRT:

Most of my parents don't even understand critical race theory. But the ones that do you have to make sure you're not trying to indoctrinate them with, you know with White people were horrible, they've always been horrible, etc.¹

Alex does teach his standards, telling me he does not avoid slavery or similarly sensitive issues, but he sugarcoats the narrative to maintain peace.

As with controversial issues in his curriculum, Alex is reticent to discuss controversial issues that are not explicit in his state standards. One such issue is LGBTQ+ rights and acceptance. He told me:

I'll be honest with you I steer away from LGBTQ stuff because that is [pause] That is not acceptable in [Rural] County. Even though there are kids that come out and say, you know, they are gay or whatever. But I would never bring that up in class. And we would.

¹ It is worth reminding readers unacquainted with critical race theory that this is not a tenet of CRT. For a brief internal review of CRT in this paper, refer to pages 113-115.
I would not allow it to be talked about because there are so many, you talk about religious aspects, you've got all the religious aspects that go behind that.

Though Alex might address homophobia as he does with anti-Semitism and racism, it is clear from this response that does not want to include LGBTQ+ issues in his classroom, owing to attitudes in the community. As with race, Alex’s reticence conflicts with his desire for students to be knowledgeable of ways of living outside this community.

Participant 3 – Kelci

Aligned Relationships

Avoiding Politics

Like the other participants in this study, Kelci was forthcoming about her role in not influencing the political beliefs of her students one way or another. Kelci was perhaps most intense in this belief, and her gatekeeping to avoid politics reflects her desire to bracket her political identity in the classroom. This bracketing reflects a strong alignment between her political identity as teacher, or rather her suppression of it, and her gatekeeping to avoid politics not mandated in the official curriculum. She told me:

My kids tend to know I love history and they tend to trust me to teach them the facts because mainly because I won't tell them what political, you know [phone rings, pause] I'm really passionate that is not my job as an educator to make kids believe one way or the other. It's my job to give them the facts, give them the background and let them come up with their own theory of what [pause] what happens.
Kelci is adamant about monitoring her politics, even when a student says something politically dubious:

I do think about [politics] because it's hard when you hear a student saying something and you're like [sighs] They haven't really looked at the whole issue, but I never say anything. All I tell them, I'd rather them be the total opposite of me and be politically involved than to be on the same side as me and not care at all, you know. That's what I tell them. but I don't tell them what I am.

For Kelci, there is a strong connection between a person’s values and their self-expressed politics. She wants to avoid both her personal politics and values in her classroom:

And I don't I don't teach [students] values. I let them come up, they always want to know my politics. I tell them I'm not going to tell them because they're one of two things will happen. They believe it or they're not care. They'll either vote based on what I say or against it, just because they either like or dislike it.

Importantly, this desire goes beyond daily informal conversations with students and extends to her gatekeeping of the curriculum. As we discussed global citizenship, Kelci expressed wariness including global citizenship concepts in her curriculum. She identifies the partisan divide and one driver of this wariness:

There, in our culture today, there are people looking for things to be angry about, and if you look for stuff, you're going to find it. So I just wouldn't want to be in that position. And I think if I was in that position, I would do exactly what I've been saying I do – whatever was the standard is what would be taught. And if there were parts for global
citizenship to be talked about, I would talk about it in terms of the standards, protect myself.

Kelci acknowledges that, if included in the official state standards, she would discuss global citizenship with her students. Absent such a mandate, though, she gatekeeps to avoid thorny issues.

**Barriers to GCE**

While the state standards might offer an opportunity for Kelci to include global citizenship in her curriculum, they also prove to be a frustration for curriculum preparation. For Kelci, the standards function as a barrier to her inspiring students through the teaching of meaningful history. In this way, the standards as a barrier reflect her identity as a social studies teacher. Lamenting the standards, she told me:

I think that they have given us too many standards. I think if they would lower the amount of standards, we could go deeper and kids would have an appreciation and a love of history like they used to. Kids used to leave my and [Alex’s] room and they liked history. They would talk about it. And now it's just it's not as [pause] There's not the love there because they're learning about the X, Y, Z affair instead of the bigger ideas.

Even though Kelci acknowledges the standards could provide a backing for GCE, the reality for her is that GCE one big one more thing to do:

I do not. I mean, I do talk about how our impact on the world in that way. Like I said, when you have over 90 standards and you have less than 90 days to teach all those
standards, it's very hard to fit in extra stuff. So if it doesn't already fit into what I'm
talking about. I just don't have time to include extra information.

Another barrier to teaching GCE, and education more broadly, that Kelci discussed in our
interview was the attitudes around education of members of the rural community. Of those
attitudes, she told me:

In the rural areas, you still have pushback from parents that don’t think education is that
important. And, you know, you've got to be the support for that kid because they don't
have educational support at home.

One component of that dubiousness of education may be the political culture and partisan divide
in the United States. While mentioning certain trigger words like “health care for all” Kelci
spoke of community political attitudes:

Both of our political parties in our country have made people [pause] hate certain words,
certain phrases and have kept them from really figuring out what those phrases mean, and
I think a lot of the rural community is not as [pause] they don’t like certain
words…They’ve made it to where we are so divided that there are certain words that just
don't [pause] work in rural communities

The combination of standards and community attitudes suppresses inclusive gatekeeping of GCE
and leads Kelci to avoid seeking “extra” opportunities to discuss global citizenship.
Unaligned Relationships

Rural Gatekeeping

Though Kelci described the unique attitudes and lifestyles of rural dwellers in the community in our interview, she, like Brittany, also downplayed her rural context when it came to gatekeeping via her lesson. On the one hand, she acknowledges that her students share a common identity by living in a rural community:

I mean, they may it's kind of like inside a family. You may pick on your little brother or sister, but somebody else does. [pause] They [pause] Even though they're not all in the same groups, they're all from the school and they may find they may have arguments, but they all have a shared identity.

Awareness of this identity leads her at times to frame discussion of content in ways that might be meaningful to her students lived experiences, as with the Bill of Rights:

I know with the Bill of Rights I have scenarios and I look [pause] some of them I’ve altered because religion is part of the rural area. For the most part. Kids understand that -- freedom of religion. And so there's a scenario about religion because they are from the area, religion, and even kids who aren't religious, they understand that their friends are

At the same time, Kelci acknowledges that wealth and socioeconomic might be a more salient driver of lived experience than the geographic context of rural:

Me: You mentioned there can be some differences between an urban community and a rural community. Do you think global citizenship would be different for somebody living in an urban community than rural community?
Kelci: I think it would be dependent upon what echelon of society that they are in that urban community. If they are in poverty, I think they would be more along the lines with the rural community as rather their upper class. They’re probably going to be a different thought process.

Furthermore, Kelci rejects the idea that being in a rural community has impacted the way she goes about teaching, or does not teach, for global citizenship. When I followed up on these differences, she told me:

Me: Does being in a rural community affect the way that you think about teaching with citizenship and mind global citizenship?

Kelci: It's not really affected me and how I teach global ideas, because, like I said, I have to keep to certain standards and there's not enough time to even teach those because they're so broad. I don't have time to be going and talking about things that are not in relation to my standards.

**Teaching for Global Citizenship**

A final area of misalignment is the way Kelci thinkings about her teacher identity vis a vis her community and her gatekeeping for citizenship, rather than global citizenship. In our conversations, Kelci expressed pride in her country through people in our past working to solve the problems of the country. She connected this pride to students being proud of their rural community. She told me:

I don't think anybody should be embarrassed about their country or feel that or embarrassed about their race, any child. I don't think any child should [pause] they should feel pride in their shared community. I'm not advocating any negative thing, I just want
them to know that the country is worth doing their best and being an active [pause] and that's part of teaching social studies, you're teaching responsibilities as a citizen and the responsibility is to try to make your country better and leave it better for the next generation.

Kelci sees a possibility for her students to be active citizens improving the world. Importantly, she also conceptualizes a universal notion of community beyond the immediate boundaries of her rural community.

Instead of being a group, we can still be that group, but we can also work together with other groups to be a community. We don't have to be raised just alike to be a community. We can have different cultures, different religions, different thoughts. But if we work together, for common good, we're a community. And I try to teach them that. We can change things that we don't like, I just never tell [students] what the things are. I let them decide what those things are.

Kelci’s conceptualization of community and citizenship might seem to suggest an activist, critical notion of global citizenship that seeks to create conditions for universal human rights and prosperity. However, in our conversations on gatekeeping, Kelci downplays the importance of global citizenship at the expense of learning how to be a citizen of one’s own country. She told me:

Well, I think you have to teach [students] to be good citizens to begin with. You have to and I'm not sure at eighth grade that I would be pushing global citizenship as much as learning what it means to be a good citizen to begin with.

She reaffirmed this position later in our interview. Discussing the state standards, she told me:
I think the standards are not done correctly. I really think that you need to start small and move to the big picture so that maybe American history should be fifth, sixth or seventh and then they could talk about globalization and world history later when they have it in their head, how to be a citizen of their own country first.

Part of Kelci’s teacher identity seems to be empowering students to create a just global community. However, her lesson plan and comments on citizenship are incongruous with such notions. Instead, Kelci prioritizes teaching students to be good citizens of their own country first.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter, I offer analysis of each of my three research questions separately. In the sections that follow, I draw on similarities and differences between participant responses and discuss my findings in relation to research on identity, global citizenship education, and gatekeeping. Most of my discussion highlights alignment between my findings and these areas of research. However, where appropriate, I identify where my findings do not align or where they challenge existing research. Discussion of these findings informs recommendations for future research and drives my discussion of the strengths and limitations of this research project.

In my discussion, I analyze findings in relationship to my conceptual framework, notably the interactions of identity, global citizenship, and gatekeeping. Though Jenkins (2014) conceptualization of identity as an ongoing project situated at the site of internal and external sites is the conceptual driver of this project, I draw on other conceptual components of previous research, notably Grossberg’s (1996) sites of belonging, Gidden’s (1991) idea of the self as constructed through a local-global dialectic, and Hall’s (1992) discursive understanding of identity as located at the suturing point of the self and regulatory discourses. Similarly, though Pashby et al. (2020 global citizenship framework is the second leg of my framework, I draw on other understandings of GCE, particularly Stein’s (2015) GCE discourses, Hanvey’s (1982) themes for global education, and Heiman’s (2008) GCE student capabilities. Thornton’s (1989) conceptualization of curricular instructional gatekeeping makes up the last leg of my framework. Where appropriate, I draw on findings in the field of gatekeeping to discuss my findings.
Analysis of question 1: How do secondary social studies teachers in one rural county describe their teacher identities?

*Rural Place*

All participants in this study conceptualized themselves as rural teachers. Furthermore, when I asked questions about their identities in the first interview, all participants responses made clear that both living in and teaching in a rural community were salient aspects of their identities. At the same time, the participants in this study held complicated views of what it means to be and teach in a rural community, conceptualizing their internal and external identities in multiple, sometimes conflicting ways.

Brittany made the multifaceted nature of rural identity perhaps most apparent with her commentary of the difference between rural areas that she lived in. Brittany’s responses on the differences between “east Tennessee rural” and “North Carolina rural” speak to research by Showalter et al. (2019) that draws attention to the diversity of what it means to be rural. Though rural areas and schools may face similar problems and offer similar opportunities, rural spaces are not monolithic. Geographically and demographically, the rural varies.

Though Brittany spoke to diversity between rural areas directly, all participants created complex identities around rural teaching. One area of alignment between participants was their conceptualization of rural place as different from urban and suburban place. For the participants in this study, rural places are unique not only due to geographic spatial differences, but also due to lifestyles and values of rural dwellers. Kelci, for instance, drew from her experience growing up to remark on how rural dwellers are more connected to the land via agricultural knowledge and practice. Brittany, made a similar identification, drawing on the mundaneness of a rural student interacting with farm animals as compared to a student in an urban area. For Alex, rural
students engage in different recreation and make fashion choices that distinguish them from their urban counterparts. For him, acting and talking “country” is a part of the rural lifestyle for his students. Importantly, talking country for Alex does not only mean speaking with an accent. Rather, it means choosing vocabulary and narratives that reify community positions. Reflective of findings from Groenke and Nespor (2010) Alex recognizes his students manifesting these community positions through using the “N word” and making antisemitic jokes.

These sites of rural identity are largely external to the participants in the study, as the participants framed these lifestyle choices in terms of members of the community as opposed to themselves. However, these aspects of rural identity which the participants identify as distinguishing rural living create sites of belonging (Grossberg, 1996) for members of the community and may affect teachers’ sense of belonging (Gallo, 2020). Grossberg (1996) points out that a sense of belonging can exist prior to or absent identity. Grossberg’s understanding creates potential for sites of belonging to trouble a traditional sense of rural identity. However, through participants’ observations, it seems that through offering a shared space the rural community and school reinforces aspects of rural living, be it recreation, fashion, or reifying language. To belong to a rural community, students manifest some or all of these external identity sites. In this way, the community and school function as sites of belonging for students and teachers. The teachers in this student must navigate these understandings with their own internal and external identity sites. That these sites of identity may align or misalign may challenge or buttress these teachers’ sense of belonging to their school and community (Gallo, 2020)

Importantly, participants were able to name issues surrounding this sense of belonging through reflections on identity sites like race, gender, and their duty as social studies teachers.
Unique among participants in this study, Brittany has experience teaching in an urban middle school in the nearby urban center. Teaching in this urban setting, she noted, is different from teaching in a rural school due to the students she serves. The racial demographic between these schools is similarly monolithic, but whereas in the rural school almost all students are White, in her previous urban school almost all students were Black. For Brittany, the sense of belonging at these schools was/is notably different due to her identities as a White woman. This was apparent from her commentary that she would think about being White and a woman differently at her old school compared to her rural school and that she while she finds it important to include diverse historical voices in her curriculum, she recognizes she cannot totally understanding a Black student’s perspective being a White teacher.

For Kelci, the rural as a place leads her to frame her content to ensure its relevancy for her rural students. Recognizing the importance of religion in rural areas, she notes how, when discussing the Bill of Rights, she leans into understandings of freedom of religion, and how this individual liberty is meaningful to her rural students. Like the teachers in Romanowski’s (1996) study, Kelci’s choice here reflects her gatekeeping with community values in mind.

For Alex, knowledge of his students’ limited experiences leads him to seek opportunities to expose them to new ways of life and broaden their academic and personal horizons. Alex recognizes that due to living in a rural area, his students have limited life experience. Part of this limited experience is ignorance of other ways of life, be they international or city-living in the United States, what Alex calls “cultural collateral.” Another part of this limited experience is either ignorance of or lack of desire to pursue employment opportunities outside the students’ immediate lived experiences. Though some of his advanced students express desire to pursue white-collar jobs like practicing law, Alex notes how “hairdresser” is a major career pursuit for
many of his students and expresses interest in his students challenging themselves to pursue alternative careers. Alex’s desire to broaden his students’ horizon is reflective on research of rural students’ post-secondary choices. Wilcox et al. (2018) notes how students may not look outside their immediate community for opportunities, thereby limiting their academic and employment options. Alex hopes to disrupt such a pattern.

**Backward Storylines**

It is worth mentioning that Alex does not consider cosmetology an inferior calling. Rather, he wants to expose his students to many opportunities. At the same time, Alex does note that backward storylines of rural living do create inferior notions of what it means to be rural. One driver of these storylines, to Alex, is the news media. Alex’s comments that the local news (stationed in the nearby urban area) looks for “the one parent that has no teeth” while intentionally avoiding “good parents” speaks to his mistrust of the news media and the storylines the news can create. Alex’s understanding of “country living” vis a vis these storylines is complex. For while he claims the news media “does it on purpose,” he acknowledges that his community “are country bumpkins, but we got some good things doing up here.” It seems for Alex, an understanding of the rural or what it means to be a “country bumpkin” varies from who is giving the perspective. From someone like Alex who lives in a rural community, acknowledgement of being “country” is not necessarily a value statement. For the news media, which is not stationed in the community, narrating “country” is linked with backward storylines to Alex.

Kelci shares these sentiments about news media purposefully perpetuating negative stereotypes of rural dwellers. She shared a similar story from her time at her old classical school where Channel One news (an educational news outlet designed to be played in schools) depicted
a flooding incident by interviewing “a guy in a wife beater with a stain down the front, two teeth, saying his trailer floated down the river.” Importantly, like Alex, Kelci acknowledges that presentation of this incident is complex. For while she blames the news for seeking someone that presents and reinforces a “redneck” stereotype, she acknowledges that she is “not making fun of him in any way.” The man in questions articles of clothing and hygiene, for Kelci, do not speak to any faults, but when the news media depicts the man, Kelci sees the storyline of backwardness manifest.

Another dimension of these backward storylines is the presentation of rural places and people in popular culture and non-news media. Reflective of research by Johnson & Howley (2015) and Theobald & Wood (2010), Kelci acknowledged that television programs like *The Beverly Hillbillies* helped sustain negative stereotypes of rural living. For Kelci, rural language and dialect, the “southern accent” is bound up with this depiction. Brittany shared these sentiments and reflected on the regulatory power of language in her comment that one might be “looked down on if you don’t speak properly.” Brittany mentions a “slow mentality” in characterizations of rural living that still exist today: rural dwellers are “perceived as toothless redneck or hillbilly that doesn’t know a whole lot…they talk slow, they learn slow, they are slow.” To Brittany, popular culture perpetuates this narrative.

The type of storylines the participants in this study describe are both simplistic and complex. From an outside perspective, such storylines create an unintelligent, unhygienic, and “slow” caricature of a rural dweller. Johnson & Howley (2015) and Theobald & Wood (2010) write about the pervasiveness of this narrative of rural living and how it is unreflective of the multiplicity of experiences in rural areas. These storylines are complex, however, in that such depictions are not necessarily inaccurate or false. The types of people presented by the news
media in Alex and Kelci’s comments do exist. To the participants in this study, the people depicted themselves do not represent wholistic rural values or experience, though. Furthermore, such depiction might not be out of bounds if perpetuated by a trusted source, like someone who lives within the community being depicted. It is this insider-outsider dynamic that the participants in this study find disturbing.

This mistrust and insider-outsider dynamic speaks to the complexity of identity formation by individuals and groups. The rural as a site of belonging (Grossberg, 1996) seemingly creates the depiction of rural individual to be fair or unfair to these participants. Furthermore, these participants’ reflections on the power of news media and popular culture speak to research on the power of regulatory discourses in creation of the self (Foucault, 1995) and identity (Hall, 1996). Alex’s comments that “we are country bumpkins” speaks to this power. Alex interacts with the regulatory discourse of “country” in one way by reclaiming “bumpkin” from a pejorative notion to a descriptive or even celebrated one while at the same time acquiescing to the power of the media to backwardly “bumpkinize” rural dwellers. The external identity site of the news media and popular culture creates a negative discourse of the internal identity site of being “country,” but the suturing point of internal/external sites allows for resistance to such backward scripts (Jenkins, 2014).

**Bracketing Political Identity**

Another area of alignment between all participants was their desire to monitor and suppress their political identities. This is not to say that these participants are entirely apolitical. Rather, they acknowledge their personal political understandings in order to bracket them as they enter the classroom and teach students. On a basic level, this means hiding any political identities the participants may have from their students. Alex summarizes this position neatly in his
comment that “I try to keep my political things to myself.” Kelci echoes this sentiment as well, but whereas Alex’s students seem ambivalent about his political leanings, Kelci’s students seem interested to know how her political perspective colors her understanding of historical and current events. All the same, Kelci rejects acknowledging her political identity to her students and hopes to avoid “influencing their politics.”

Brittany feels similarly about not engaging in personal political talk in her classroom. She also notes how community attitudes might influence her to discuss or avoid politically thorny topics. As a default position, she suppresses her own political identity while hoping to empower her students. This is reflected in her comment, “I am not here to tell you what to believe or how to believe or what to think. I’m going to give you the fact.” Kelci said something similar when discussing her duty to teach history without her own political bent: “It’s not my position to influence their politics. It’s my position to just give them relevant information.” This position to stick to the facts may derive from community attitudes about politics, education, and history as indicated by Brittany’s comments that parents and grandparents have political socialized her students, thus leading her to approach political topics “definitely carefully.” Alex held a similar belief, and his comments on politics in the county were more direct. Referencing the partisan divide in the community, he reflected on how to his community, “if you’re not a Republican, you’re going to hell.”

Alex’s commentary on his own partisan identity uniquely illustrates the tension these participants experience between their community attitudes, their own beliefs, their roles as social studies educators. Alex told me that though he has historically voted Democrat, he has grown more conservative over time. Furthermore, he shared that he did not vote in the last presidential election in 2020. Taken with understanding of the community that “Trump's the greatest” and
comments on non-Republicans “going to hell,” Alex’s political identity suggests tension over a sense of belonging with the community (Gallo, 2020). Alex’s historically left-leaning and current politically cool identity clashes with the Trump-supporting conservative majority in his community.

Participants navigate this tension by bracketing their political identities and embodying a social studies teacher identity as presenter of neutral facts. Prioritization of the teacher as presenter of facts both protects these teachers from possible community retribution and helps build trust with their students. For Alex, maintaining neutrality helps him avoid parents’ ire at the possible teaching of critical race theory in schools. Though Alex is doubtful that his students’ parents truly understand the complexities of critical race theory, he can avoid controversy by denying teaching it and, as I have detailed elsewhere in Alex’s teaching of topics like slavery, sugarcoating history. For Kelci, an additional advantage of maintaining neutrality is the possibility of building trust with her students. She summarizes this advantage in her response that “My kids tend to know I love history and they tend to trust me to teach them the facts because mainly because I won’t tell them what political [things to believe].”

That participants navigate political identity with teacher identity in such a way is reflective of the dialect of internal and external identity described by Jenkins (2014). Multiple identity sites inform these participants’ teaching decisions. First, participants understand that they teach in a passionate conservative community. Advocating any political narrative that challenges that community script, or even in Alex’s case fully communicating the details of historical events like slavery, would endanger the participants. Additionally, these participants reflect strongly on their role as social studies teachers and duty to communicate historical facts without political bias. Such a commitment might challenge either a passionate conservative or
liberal community, but for participants in this study, relying on such an identity insulates them from community attitudes. Whether teaching of “just the facts” ultimately leads to the prioritization of a conservative or liberal narrative of the past is an idea left unchecked in these participants’ social studies teacher identities.

**Race**

In addition to politics, racial identities and the way their community thinks about race inform the teaching identities and practices of Brittany and Alex. Brittany and Alex are both White teachers teaching in a predominantly White community. Brittany’s recognition of this fact led to somber reflection on her part based on her shared experience with her current community but very different experience from the urban school in which she previously taught. Reflecting on teaching slavery and her own race, she made it clear that “I would never understand what that child has experienced as an African American in the world.” Brittany’s comments reflect an understanding of race as an internal and external identity issue in her teaching practice (Jenkins, 2014). Brittany recognizes her own Whiteness, the racial makeup of her student, and how she takes up race to inform her teaching decisions.

Alex similarly commented on race as a salient part of his teaching identity. His reflections also point to a shared-unshared tension of identity but in a different way from Brittany. Whereas Brittany reflected on her own internal racial understandings, Alex’s discussion of race focused more directly on his school and community attitudes. Alex acknowledged that racism pervades his school, as “the N-word gets through out there a lot [emphasis in interview] to those students.” By using such racist language, the students at Alex’s school not only reify race as a distinguishing identity factor, but they do so in a prejudicial way. Whereas Brittany’s
ideas on race appear to be well-intentioned perspective taking, the students at Alex school utilize race to express disapproval of non-Whites.

Another racial issue that informs Alex’s teaching identity and impacts his practice is his community’s understanding of critical race theory. How the public takes up critical race theory can be complicated. Critical race theory’s applications aside, understandings of race, gender, the rule of law, history, and partisanship are all ideas that may inform one’s conceptualization of critical race theory and its merits or shortcomings in daily life. Though partisanship and understanding of race appear to drive Alex’s community’s conceptualization, whatever the complexities of that understanding, the community’ attitude appears universal: disapproval. Alex remarked how one part demanded “you better not be teaching any of that critical race theory.”

For both Alex and Brittany, the intersections of racial identity, teaching identity, and teaching practice are powerful, as both teachers monitor their instruction via their understandings of race and their awareness of their community’s understanding of race. For Brittany, this means cultivating awareness and perspective taking in her students. Perhaps in conflict with her community, she hopes to empower her students to think of the consequences of their words and actions beyond their immediate bubble. She hopes to show her students that “your world is right here in [Rural] County at the time, but you are not the only one in the world,” and that “everything that they do affects everybody around them.” The starting point of Brittany’s internal and external racial identities, then, seems to be one of empathy. In contrast, this suturing point for Alex seems to be acquiescence to community prejudices of which he disapproves. While Alex maintains the importance of teaching slavery in the face of community pressure, as I have shown, he whitewashes the historical narrative by downplaying the horrors of slavery. Research by Moffa (2022) demonstrates the pressures of teaching slavery in neo-Confederation
spaces, spaces like the one in which Alex teaches. Unlike the teacher in Moffa’s (2022), Alex is a community insider, and he does not appear to face student apathy regarding slavery as a topic. However, like that teacher, Alex struggles to teach slavery due to his space and feels disillusioned with how he must go about teaching the topic.

Furthermore, Alex acquiesces to pressures from the state’s mandate on teaching issues involving race, gender, and the rule of law (H.B. 580, 2021). While he continues to teach issues in his curriculum, he does not challenge state guidance: “Nobody wants central office called on them, you know, because they're teaching this or that or whatever. So if the state says don't teach it, we just don't teach it to you.” While race, at least partially, seems to animate Brittany’s instruction, it confounds and hand-ties Alex’s. One wonders how the increasing diversification of rural communities will impact teaching practice given such understandings of race (Mathema et al., 2018).

Interestingly, racial identity did not seem to be a salient issue for Kelci. This is not to say Kelci advocated color-blindness or that race went unacknowledged by her. She reflected on the differing racial demographics of her current and previous schools in our discussion, noting how “at my previous school, my Caucasian children were a minority.” However, Kelci does not seem to adopt any perspective when it comes to instruction with these differences in mind. Nor did she explicitly acknowledge community attitudes about race in her current or previous community. There may be intersections between politics and race that my questioning and Kelci’s responses did not uncover, but from the data I collected in this student, it is not clear if Kelci’s understanding of her own or her students’ race informs her teaching.
**Community Strengths**

Though not as salient as issues like race or politics, it is worth mentioning that all participants in this student identified that rural communities have strengths. Furthermore, as previously discussed, participants were quick to bemoan backward narratives of rural living (Johnson & Howley, 2015; Theobold & Wood, 2010). Importantly, however, participants left this recognition largely vague, and they were unclear about what specifics strengths the rural community possessed. Alex for instance, recognized “we got some good things going up here, too, just because we’re rural doesn't mean that we don't have positive things happening on a daily basis.” However, when I followed up on these good things, he did not have much to say and actually began to speak about difficulties finding teachers, a notable barrier to rural teaching (Provasnik et al. 2007; Showalter et al., 2019). Brittany similarly did not mention much about community strengths. She noted her willingness to advocate for her students because of backward storylines about rural living, indicating a conceptualization of strengths in terms of weakness much like Alex.

Kelci was more direct in her discussion of community strengths. The main strength Kelci identified was the sense of shared identity her students possess. Though Kelci acknowledges it may not be unique to a rural area, the shared sense of identity may lead her students to support and advocate for one another. The other strength she identified was the character of her students, even those who have behaved poorly in the past. Citing an example of a trouble-making student carrying a teacher who had a seizure during fire drill out of the building, she remarked that the kids in the community are “good at heart.” Importantly, Kelci did not identify features of rural living like high civic responsibility (Moffa, 2019) or high parent involvement (Provasnik et al, 2017) as strengths of living and teaching in a rural area. Though Kelci’s comments were more
specific, conceptualization of rural community strengths were largely vague in the data. Furthermore, perhaps due to my questioning, all participants were much more candid and specific when it came to identifying barriers to teaching in the community.

**Analysis of question 2 – How do these teachers conceptualize and implement global citizenship education as curricular instructional gatekeepers?**

“I don’t want to set off a powder keg” – **GCE in a Rural Community**

In addition to analyzing these teachers’ conceptualizations of GCE it is worth mentioning the procedural and philosophical barriers and safeguards to GCE instruction that these teachers recognize. A major barrier to teaching for global citizenship, which is aligned with their positionalities and identities as rural teachers, that these participants named was their school and community climate. When it comes to their rural teaching identities, teachers in this study were clear that some topics like systemic racism and (non-conservative) politics are non-starters in their rural community and schools. Because these teachers identify overlap between GCE and such issues, they worry about pushback from the community if they were to teach for GCE.

Brittany identified limited perspective as one source of tension between GCE and the community. Brittany summarized their perspective in her comment, “The people, their world is so small.” In spite of the globalizing forces of technology and “even though they have the internet,” members of her community have limited perspective, which Brittany says “leans toward racism.” Part of this prejudicial lean and limited capacity for perspective may derive from simple demographics. As Brittany describes, the community is “predominantly White.” Brittany worries, because of this homogeneity, the White community may not understand or care about issues that affect Black people. She surfaces this perspective in one her comments during our interview: “I’ve heard a couple of [students] say, ‘it’s just [Rural] County.’ Well, what does it
matter if it’s just [Rural] County. You know, we need to be understanding of all people.” It is this propensity for limited perspective that Brittany sees as leading to “a clash in the rural communities” with GCE.

Alex similarly identified community values as a potential point of conflict with GCE curriculum. However, whereas Brittany characterized this tension due to apathy, which may tend toward racism, Alex more directly characterizes this tension as antipathy toward talk of systemic racism vis a vis critical race theory. At several points in both interviews, Alex referred to critical race theory and the hostility of members of his community toward it. Though he doubts parents deeply understand critical race theory, Alex is nonetheless aware of parents’ very certain disdain toward it as well as their fervent desire to keep it out of schools. Alex maintains, “I don't do critical race theory because I'm in a rural community.” Calling back to our first interview as he discussed global citizenship and the topic of slavery in our second interview, Alex generalized community attitudes toward this disdain for critical race theory by connecting his comment that “I’m in a rural community” to the “dad that came in and said, 'you better not be teaching critical race theory.'” To Alex, opposition to critical race theory acts as a mirror for community attitudes toward teaching topics that involve race, like slavery, as I have described, Alex monitors how he teaches such topics. Sometimes, he whitewashes history like when “studying the Middle Passage, I try to not to act like that it was bad. Even though terrible it was.” He also told me to navigate teaching such topics, “you have to take a reading of the room. If you start hear to mention negative communities back, you know like. Then you watch what you say.”

Like Brittany and Alex, Kelci recognizes that GCE may not play well in a rural community. Interestingly, though Kelci did not mention critical race theory specifically, she spoke about politics being a divisive force. Part of this division comes from political discourse
and the backage that certain words and topic come to carry through discourse. To Kelci, the “political parties in our country have made people [pause] hate certain words, certain phrases and have kept them from really figuring out what those phrases mean.” In depth understanding of “health care for all” as a policy is superseded by discursive understandings of “health care for all” as a political talking point in Kelci’s community. Words and phrases like “health care for all,” to Kelci “just don’t [pause] work in rural communities. To Kelci, education for global education might be controversial due to the discursive tension between the actual and perceived meanings and substance of words and policies. One way Kelci navigates this discursive tension is by sticking to her official curriculum, which was apparent when she told me, “I keep to the standards mainly to avoid controversy.” Another way, however, is by maintaining neutrality even when teaching topics that highlight apparent and severe injustice, like slavery. Such was the case when she told me, “I'm sure [students] know that my views are slavery that it was appalling and horrible. But I don’t say, OK, today I'm going to teach you about something that was appalling and horrible.” Regardless of the strategy, Kelci is intentional about avoiding stirring animosity in her classroom, which was apparent when she told me, “I don’t want to set off a powder keg.”

The types of pressures these teachers face is reflective of Cornbleth’s (2015) work on school climate. In her (2015) article, Cornbleth identifies six climates of constraint that may mediate teachers’ actions. Of these six, participants’ discussion of community values and their resulting curricular decisions speaks to a stifling climate of conservatism and a chilling climate of self-censorship. Cornbleth characterizes a conservative climate as one where teachers work to maintain the status quo and transmit the cultural assumptions of the school. Importantly, it is not the prevailing attitude of the school administration or personnel that stifles these teachers.
Rather, it is the prevailing attitudes and values of the community. Teachers in this study avoid challenging the status quo and acquiesce to these values by tiptoeing around talk of prejudice. These teachers further acquiesce to a threatening climate of censorship. Cornbleth describes a threatening climate as one where parent efforts to ban content or requests for alternative content leads to self-censorship on behalf of teachers. Teachers in this study acquiesce to this climate by purposefully avoiding controversial issues and presenting material as neutrally as possible. Such decisions and comments by the teachers further align with research that suggest knowledge of community, students, and parents, leads teachers to gatekeep their teaching with community values in mind (Romanowski, 1996).

It may also be the case that these teachers’ gatekeeping to avoid controversial issues reflects a defensive approach to teaching. McNeil (1980) describes four types of defensive teaching that defensive teachers might engage in maintain peace and compliance in their classrooms. Of these types, teachers in this study mystify content like slavery and the Middle Passage. It seems that they may also omit topics that they see as controversial, although specific controversial topics or content beyond slavery did not emerge in our interviews. Importantly, the genesis of these decisions comes not from a desire to reduce cognitive strain. For Alex, defensive teaching may maintain behavior compliance if, for instance, it keeps his students from creating a class disruption about how slavery was “not that bad.” These teachers also make such defensive decisions to avoid controversy and, at least for Alex and Kelci, to maintain job security.

“*What the state of Tennessee expects*” – The Complex Place of Standards

The climates of constraint the participants described certainly influence their desire to engage their students with GCE content. A complimentary constraint that participants also identified was the quality and quantity of their state standards. Both middle school teachers, Alex
and Kelci, were most direct in their complaints about their state standards. For Alex, there are simply too many standards to teach in the limited amount of time he has with his students. Having only 90 instructional days with his students, Alex prioritizes moving through the content: “if you miss one day, you might, that might be the only day I have on that lesson because I’ve got to keep moving to get done.” Time constraints due to the quantity of standards are not ideal for Alex’s planning, as he told me “We’ve got more curriculum standards than anybody else out there, and I’m very stressed.” For Alex, it is the quantity that overwhelms his ability to plan for any topic, let alone infuse global citizenship education in his classroom.

Kelci expressed similar concerns with the standards. She too is upset with the number of standards and echoed Alex’s sentiments about time constraints: “the state has made that hard. I have eighty something standards and being a social studies teacher, I have less than 90 days to teach them.” On one level, the quantity of standards limits her ability to plan, but Kelci also connected the sheer amount of standards to quality of instruction and student appreciate and love of history: “I think if they would lower the amount of standards, we could go deeper and kids would have an appreciation and a love of history like they used to.” For Kelci, the quantity of standards limits her ability to plan and her students’ ability to deeply engage with the material. Furthermore, in her telling, it constricts her ability to teach for global citizenship. Characterizing GCE as “extra stuff,” Kelci told me that “So if it doesn’t already fit into what I’m talking about. I just don’t have time to include extra information.” Recognizing that GCE might me controversial as well, Kelci sticks to the standards “to avoid controversy” an “because that’s what the state of Tennessee expects me to teach.” Kelci’s comment here reflects a technocratic approach to teaching in which she positions herself as the transmitter of sanctioned information created by content-creation experts (Bullough et al., 1984).
Though she did not lament the standards as much as Kelci and Alex, Brittany expressed a similar sentiment. Identifying the state’s role as creator of sanctioned knowledge and her role as transmitter of that knowledge, Brittany spoke of “mastery learning” and the prioritization of “standards, standards, standards.” Her duty to transmit the standards, she told me, solidified in her early years of teaching: “I think that just got drilled into my head in those first years of teaching that you do not [emphasizes] go away from the standards [laughs].”

Research on global citizenship and state content standards reflects these teachers’ concerns about transmitting official curriculum, seemingly at the expense of education for global citizenship (Rapoport, 2010; Reilly & Neins, 2014). These teachers’ responses further reflect a technocratic conceptualization of teaching wherein teachers accept curriculum from sanctioned sources of content—the content experts make the material and teachers teach it (Bullough et al, 1984).

Somewhat counterintuitively, however, at the same time that these participants identified the state standards as a barrier to GCE instruction, they also recognized the standards as a shield that may protect them when discussing controversial or politically thorny issues and topics. Brittany’s rigidity in her approach to only teaching the standards may preclude inclusion of extra topics, but it also solidifies her responsibility to teach controversial issues within the standards. She may not “go hunting for controversial stuff,” but “If it's in our standards, then I, I do not shy away from it. If the state of Tennessee says this is what I'm supposed to teach, that is what I teach.” For Brittany, the standards can function as a shield for potential blowback for discussing thorny topics. Because of the standards, she is not “worried about [parental blowback] because I know that if I’m teaching my standards and what the state requires me to teach, then I’m doing my job.” Conceptually, Brittany recognizes potential space for global citizenship instruction,
even if such teaching for GCE is not apparent in her day-to-day instruction: “I think that you can still teach empathy and global citizenship without being, you know, controversial or without hurting anybody.”

Though Brittany was most clear in her position on the standards shielding her from blowback, Kelci also recognized her duty to teach the standards and how the standards might “protect” her. Speaking about controversial topics and GCE, she told me that “Whatever was the standard is what would be taught. And if there were parts for global citizenship to be talked about, I would talk about it in terms of the standards, protect myself.” Kelci recognized topics that include race, like slavery, as one such area. As mentioned, the state of Tennessee adopted a policy that disallows recognition of structural racism (H.B. 580, 2021). To Kelci, such a policy is potentially at odds with teaching about our nation’s past. She told me that “the state's been making life a little difficult, make you afraid to say things that you're actually required to teach by law [pause] with some of the new legislation that they've passed.” However, because the standards specifically include slavery, Kelci still teaches it “as I’ve always done. I haven’t changed it.” Even Alex, who was most clear in his gatekeeping topics like slavery to avoid blowback, acknowledged “you have to teach slavery. You can't get around that, you know, and you're not going to go and say the Middle Passage was this wonderful trip for the African Americans.”

These teachers made clear they do not go out of their way to include controversial topics or advocacy when it is not listed in their curriculum, but they also do not, in their words, shy away from controversial topics that are in the state standards. Research on the interaction between state standards and GCE is clear in the identification of official curricular mandates as a factor in constraining teacher implementation of GCE (Rapoport, 2010; Reilly & Neins, 2014).
However, what is not clear is the extent to which teachers might identify opportunities to teach for global citizenship in official curriculum that does not explicitly prioritize GCE. Of course, there is research on teacher implementation in nations where GCE is an explicit part of curriculum (Alviar-Martin & Baildon, 2016) Baildon & Bott, 2020; Bourn, 2020; Hameed, 2020; King-man Chong, 2020), but states in the U.S. have not adopted such curriculum.

**Neoliberal Outlooks**

Given the lack of official GCE curriculum in the United States, the teachers in this study drew on their experience and identities as rural social studies teachers to craft their conceptualizations of GCE. Filtering responses through Pashby et al.’s (202) GCE outlooks, I identify neoliberal and liberal outlooks as most common for these teachers.

Pashby et al. (2020) characterize a neoliberal GCE outlook as one that values preparing students to engage in a global economy. This may directly look like preparation for a specific job, or, more subtly, it can include preparation for work via knowledge and skill development. What distinguishes the acquisition of knowledge and skills in a neoliberal order is the direction toward preparation for work and strengthening the nation-state rather than multicultural awareness or advocacy.

Participants in this study characterized GCE neoliberally in a few ways. Brittany spoke directly about job training opportunities that student might engage in at her high school, including “the medical assistant program, the CNA program, construction workers.” Brittany connected the work opportunities to GCE not as “solving the world’s problems in the politics of today,” but through doing “something that [students] are passionate about.” Brittany recognizes the impact that such opportunities have on students, and while sees dual enrollment credit, AP coursework, and preparation for college as an important part of her job, she speaks optimistically
about job training as preparation for citizenship: “when I was in high school, it was go to college, go to college, go to college. And now there's so many more opportunities that they get and that opens up so many other doors where they can experience being a positive global citizen.”

Through these opportunities and college and technical education (CTE) pathways, Brittany recognizes her school producing “positive global citizens.”

Alex also recognized preparation for work as a component of global citizenship. But where Brittany spoke more directly about CTE and specific job training programs, Alex spoke more about the skills students would need to thrive in a global economy. When I asked him about skills good global citizenship might need, he framed his response in terms of work, saying at first “communication” and “work ethic.” When I followed up on these responses, he spoke about the need to communicate with different people in a workplace. Alex recognizes that his students are entering a workforce that is increasingly diverse: “you have to communicate with so many different types of people nowadays. You know, when I was growing up, as I said already earlier, it was a White Baptist community.” To Alex, success in the workplace requires not only communication skills but potentially knowledge of multiple languages. He recognizes bilingualism and speaking Spanish specifically as pathways to success in a competitive job market: “learning Spanish, for example, can help you if you can become bilingual. You can have your job opportunities wide open.”

Kelci did not speak about work and job opportunities as much as Brittany and Alex. However, she did implicitly acknowledge a duty citizens and policy makers of the United States might have toward their own country: “Globalization, I do think, you know, you want to take other countries to a certain extent, but I also think that you need to look at what's best for your
country and your people as well.” Though it is not directly connected to work or economics, Kelci’s nationalistic response acknowledges competition between nation-states.

**Liberal Outlooks**

Liberal conceptualizations of GCE were also apparent in the interview data collected from participants. Liberal conceptualizations manifested primarily via a narrative of perspective taking. Sometimes this theme emerged through a frame of general cultural awareness and depoliticized empathy. For instance, Brittany recognized that teaching in a rural community is very different from teaching “at [urban school] in that predominantly Black community, just like there was a ton of different types of people. We didn’t just teach American citizens. We taught kids that were from Africa, and we taught kids that had come from Venezuela.” These cultural differences prompted Brittany to practice perspective taking herself: “I had to learn from them about their cultures and what they come from.”

Perspective taking is a skill that Brittany values professionally, but it is also something she wants her students to be able to do as a result of learning in her classroom. She tries to “get across to these kids constantly, that, yes, your world is right here in [Rural] County at the time, but you are not the only one in the world,” and she wants her students to “think about the things that we say” and think about the decisions that we make” and consider how “everything that they do affects everybody around them and the world essentially.” Kelci echoed these considerations as she spoke about what global citizenship means to her. Framing her response in terms of perspective taking, she told me “[global citizenship] means that you take into consideration other viewpoints rather than just your American viewpoint” and to consider “what you do in reference to how it can affect the entire world rather than just how it would affect you at home and your country.” Importantly, neither Brittany nor Kelci articulated specific actions this perspective-
taking might lead students to take. Nor did they specify how perspective-taking might manifest in daily life beyond generic thoughts of empathy. Their conceptualization of perspective taking stopped short of a critical outlook.

These teachers also framed perspective taking in terms of global awareness vis a vis content knowledge and knowledge of global issues. For instance, to Brittany, part of being a social studies teacher is “teaching students what the interactions of governments have been in the past positively and negatively” getting students to “look at that person's perspective first or look at history through that, the eyes of the political culture.” Brittany utilizes community connections via asking Vietnam veterans to speak to her class. Brittany noted how the immediacy of a veteran’s perspective can making history come alive and build perspective: “when you actually put that thing in front of them, they definitely feel more empathetic.” Through her content, it is clear Brittany can work to build historical perspective taking.

Alex also framed global citizenship and awareness in terms of perspective taking. When I asked him about global citizenship, Alex immediately started discussing major global events like climate change and the war in Ukraine as topics about which he wants his students to be knowledgeable. Alex connected highlighted the importance of such seemingly far away concerns in our interview: “I guess the best way to say that is to say they all need to know what's going on. It's not just a rural issue. It's not just an urban issue. It's a community issue [pantomimes a circle] that they need to be watching and trying to understand what's going on in the world.” Like Brittany, Alex sees a responsibility for social studies teachers to build capacity for perspective taking. Speaking of geographic awareness, Alex bemoaned how “social studies has dropped the ball on showing them where they're supposed to be or where they are” and identified a
responsibility to “show [students] where they are and how they’re related to other sections of the world.”

Like Alex, Kelci framed her immediate discussion of global citizenship in terms of important global issues. She identified healthcare, war, poverty, and food access as some of those issues. Interestingly, Kelci acknowledged that her definition of global citizenship might be synonymous with globalization, as she prioritized interactions between governments via trade and war in her conceptualization: “for me, any time we affect the world in a different way [is global citizenship]. I’m just I guess I’m thinking more of globalization.” Further, like Alex and Brittany, Kelci recognized opportunities to build perspective taking via content knowledge. In a debate she prepared about the American Revolution, she spoke of how students learn “different people have different perspectives.” For Kelci, an essential component of perspective is listening to hear rather than to respond, as she went on to say, “It makes them somebody you need to sit and listen to what they say rather than just preparing what you’re going to say in response to them without ever hearing what they’re saying.”

Critical Outlooks

Unlike neoliberal and liberal frames, none of the participants conceptualized GCE through a critical lens. In fact, if anything, participants vocalized their disinterest in critical notions of global citizenship. This was most apparent with Alex and Kelci’s discussion of race and politics. Speaking of critical race theory, Alex noted how some parents in the community are wary of the curriculum being taught to students. To Alex, this wariness manifest primary in discussions of slavery. In response to community pressures, Alex gatekeeps slavery by obscuring the conditions slaves faced on the Middle Passage and on plantations in the United States. Though he does not avoid slavery as a topic, Alex notes how “it’s fine like to walk” to have
discussion of such issues. Furthermore, though Alex does not avoid content in his state standards, he is wary of allowing students to make modern advocacy-based connections to his content. He is okay with acknowledging that the Declaration of Independence did not create true equality in the early United States and how later constitutional amendments attempted to realize the promise of freedom to all Americans, but at the same time, Alex would “steer away from” conversation connecting gay rights with the Declaration of Independence or freedoms laid out in the Constitution. In these curricular choices, Alex rejects a critical notion of GCE.

Kelci was equally clear in describing pressures from the community when it comes to teaching thorny issues. Though Brittany did not discuss slavery as much as Alex, she identified GCE and teaching for globalization as something that might be controversial in her community context. Acquiescing to these pressures, she noted how she does not want to “set off a powder keg” and how she keeps to the official standards to protect herself. In addition to a “just the facts” approach to teaching, Kelci also is intentional about monitoring political discussion in her classroom and suppressing any advocacy she might bring in. Kelci’s actions are well-intentioned; she does not indoctrinate her students. However, her curricular gatekeeping does not allow for critical notions of GCE.

Of the participants in this study, Brittany came closest to offering a critical-oriented conceptualization of GCE. Speaking of her curricular gatekeeping Brittany remarked on how she includes as many perspectives as possible in her content, especially those like women and people of color who are often marginalized in historical narratives. However, this choice aligns closer with a liberal notion of multiculturalism than a critical notion of advocacy. When I asked her about including voices and advocacy, she rebuffed, “I don't know about advocacy.” Like Kelci, she does not want to “push my own self and advocacy for that on them. I think I'm just trying to
show everything I possibly can. I want you to just get all the facts.” Though getting all the facts might create space for advocacy, any such would be incidental or unintentional in Brittany’s telling.

**Analysis of question 3 – What relationships, if any, exist between these teachers’ identities and their global citizenship education gatekeeping?**

**Paradox of Identity and Gatekeeping**

One theme that stood out from my interviews was the tension between an identity thread of teachers recognizing rural place and rural teaching as unique with a gatekeeping thread of teachers downplaying gatekeeping for their rural context. Participants simultaneously seemed to name and highlight unique aspects of teaching in a rural community, like community attitudes about race, and the need to respond to aspects via gatekeeping, while at the same time they drew comparisons between rural and non-rural areas, highlighted universal aspects of teaching, or outright downplayed the need to gatekeep based on their rural context. Paradoxically they both recognized and rejected the need to gatekeep for their content. This tension was most apparent in my conversations with Brittany and Kelci.

Brittany had a unique experience of teaching in an urban setting very different from her current rural school setting. One the one hand, Brittany recognized this difference and articulated how she thought about her identity as a White woman differently in that urban setting and how she prioritized both practicing empathy in the urban community where she felt like the outsider. Brittany also recognized unique aspects of rural living and identity separate from an urban setting and acknowledges that these differences lead her to teach “very different than how I taught at [urban middle school].” At the same time, Brittany downplayed the necessity to gatekeep differently in a rural setting versus an urban one. This thread came through when I
asked her about the global citizenship lesson plan that she shared. When I asked if the lesson might look different in an urban setting, she said, “I don’t think so” and that “I don’t think that this was specific to a rural community.” It is possible that Brittany leveraged universal design in her lesson, but her comments make clear that she did not consider rural context in her design of the lesson.

Brittany further rejected the idea that her rural identity might have played a role in the construction of the lesson. When I asked if her identity contributed to the making of the lesson, she told me “I don’t think I actually was thinking much about my identity when I prepared this.” Instead, she prioritized generic content knowledge about NATO and the Warsaw Pact unspecific to her or her students’ rural identities. Rather than gatekeeping for rural students, she seems to gatekeep via her disciplinary belief of transmitting official content knowledge (Thornton, 1989). Brittany’s rural gatekeeping thus seems to be inconsistent.

This tension between identity and gatekeeping also emerged in my conversations with Kelci. Like Brittany, Kelci recognizes unique aspects of rural living and unique barriers and strengths to teaching in a rural community. However, she also acknowledged similarities between rural and urban living via socioeconomic and wealth. When I asked her to speak to being a global citizen in a rural or urban area, she drew on similarities and how being a global citizen would “in a rural versus an be dependent upon what echelon of society that they are in” that members of an urban community in poverty “would be more along the lines with the rural community.”

While drawing on class as a similarity, Kelci also downplayed gatekeeping for her rural community and students specifically. When I asked if being in a rural community might affect teaching with global citizenship in mind, she told me that “it’s not really affected” her, partly
because she keeps to the standards. This comment that the rural community does not affect her is in stark contrast to how Kelci described community pressures elsewhere in our interview. As noted, Kelci specifically avoids controversial topics, identifies global citizenship education as, and sticks to a just the facts approach to protect herself. Furthermore, Kelci named specific instances elsewhere in our interview of how she gatekeeps directly for her rural context. When discussing the Bill of Rights, for example, she frames scenarios in terms of rural life or as she puts it, “I bring it to the country and talk about it in a you know, a country type atmosphere, it's a lot easier for them to understand and relate to.” Paradoxically, Kelci both names how she participates in and downplays rural gatekeeping.

Making sense of this paradox of participants both acknowledging and not acknowledging how rural identities affect and do not affect gatekeeping is complicated. On the one hand, the teachers’ comments speak to the power of a sense of belonging and how community pressures can create stifling gatekeeping climates (Cornbleth, 2015; Gallo, 2020). In one way, teachers might utilize sense of belonging, as does Kelci when she highlights aspects of the first amendment to her students. In another way, they might acquiesce to community pressures on politics, even if they hold different beliefs. This suggests recognizing a sense of belonging shared by the community but not by them, as does Alex when he avoids political talk. On the other hand, Brittany and Kelci seemingly also reject rural identity as a component of their gatekeeping. Both Brittany and Kelci highlight universal aspects of teaching and downplay the need to include or adapt contempt based on their rural context, even while naming specific instances of doing just that. Instead of prioritizing the rural teacher aspects of their identities, they seem prioritize the professional, social studies teacher parts of their identities.
Preeminence of Professional Duty – Gatekeeping for Content

While the paradoxical relationship between naming and rejecting rural gatekeeping reflects misalignment between these teachers’ rural identities and gatekeeping practices, a major area of alignment for them was their prioritization of transmission of content knowledge and state standards in line with their valuing their professional duties as social studies teachers.

All participants spoke of the importance of transmitting content knowledge. Reflecting on this duty in a humorous way, Brittany related that “my first job is to make sure that [students] are not the idiot on a YouTube channel saying that the first president was Abraham Lincoln.” More serious, she shared that “half my job” is making sure her students know basic facts about the history of the United States. Transmitter of content knowledge is a salient feature of Brittany’s rural teacher identity that emerged when we discussed global citizenship as well. Describing her approach to curriculum planning, Brittany stressed that her approach was all “standards, standards, standards,” and that she avoided deviating from the official curriculum. Though she understands that one might teach for global citizenship within those standards, she does not go out of her way to include controversial issues, which she characterizes global citizenship as. All of this is not to say Brittany rejects gatekeeping for her rural context necessarily. Rather, her attempts to build global awareness within her content align more with her sense of duty as a social studies teacher than a rural teacher.

Alex feels a similar duty to transmit content knowledge and disciplinary skills to his students. Throughout our interviews, Alex used content knowledge to frame his discussion of his identity and his conceptualization of GCE. For instance, when he bemoaned his school schedule and how many standards he must cover with how little time he has with his students, he prioritized his duty to transmit the content to his students. Similarly, when he spoke of his stress...
over high stakes testing, it was in relation to his duty to transmit content knowledge to his students. Alex similarly framed discussion of disciplinary skills like mapping, global awareness, and historical writing in terms of his duty as a social studies teacher, not necessarily his identity as a rural teacher. Furthermore, during his discussion of global citizenship, he kept conceptualizing GCE through examples in his own content like the American Revolution or colonization and mercantilism. Importantly, these discussions remained generic, as Alex did not conceptualize or discuss teaching for global citizenship for his rural context. Other than admitting to whitewashing aspects of U.S. history, Alex did not speak to how he might teach global citizenship specifically for his rural students because they are rural students. Instead, Alex prioritized the generic social studies teacher as transmitter of content knowledge aspect of his identity. If it is in the standards, Alex teaches it, and “if the state says don't teach it, we just don't teach it.”

In similar ways to Alex and Brittany, Kelci downplayed the necessity of rural gatekeeping while prioritizing gatekeeping to social studies transmit content knowledge. When I asked Kelci about her identity, she was reticent to share internal aspects of her identity like race or gender and how that might affect her as a teacher, but she was very keen on sharing her love of being a social studies teacher and transmitting content knowledge. Like Alex, Kelci also spoke of global citizenship in terms of her content rather than how it might be applicable to her rural students. Also, like Alex, the little she spoke of global citizenship in context of being a rural teacher was the share apprehensions about teaching for GCE in a rural community. Like Brittany, Kelci was direct in sharing she sticks to content and does not look for “extra” things to include. Also, like Brittany, Kelci emphasized universal aspects of teaching. Kelci even went so far as to say that in terms of her identity, “I don't really see myself differently today than I did
when I taught at the classic school.” From our interviews, it was clear Kelci understands the uniqueness of teaching and learning in a rural space. However, Kelci also made clear that she prioritizes transmitting her content knowledge and state standards more than she does gatekeeping for her rural context.

It is worth reiterating that none of these teachers categorically rejected the idea of teaching uniquely due to working in a rural school. Nor did they categorically reject tenets of global citizenship education or teaching for global citizenship in her content. Indeed, the participants identified aspects of global citizenship like teaching global problems and global awareness that might align with their duty to teach content. They all also identified controversial aspects of teaching for global citizenship that they might avoid due to teaching in a rural community. What matters is their responses indicate that more salient than the rural teacher component of their identity is social studies teacher as transmitter of content knowledge component of their identity. Their gatekeeping aligns closer with their professional responsibility to teach the standards generically than to teach for rural students, even if they recognize their students’ rural lived experiences are unique.

That the teachers in this study prioritize generic content gatekeeping to teach the standards rather than gatekeeping for global citizenship or a place-based approach to gatekeeping is not necessarily surprising. Describing curricular instructional gatekeeping, Thornton (1989) identifies the meaning of, planning for, and teaching of social studies as major components of gatekeeping. With this framework in mind, it is clear these teachers understand the meaning of their profession to be teacher of standards. Subsequently, they plan for and teach social studies to be transmitters of the standards. This approach reflects a technocratic understanding as described by Bullough et al. (1984). These teachers, though perhaps aware of their gatekeeping practices,
do not see themselves as makers of content. Rather, they prioritize transmitting content that other official sources, in this case the state of Tennessee, sanctions. It is possible that standardized testing and accountability in line with the standards might contribute to these teachers’ decisions and gatekeeping (Hawley & Whiteman, 2020). However, only Alex made apprehensions about testing apparent in the interviews.

Moffa’s (2020) article on teacher gatekeeping in Appalachia offers a useful perspective on attempting to understand these teachers’ identity conceptualizations and curricular decisions. Though his article does not deal with identity, it does center the rural as context in which teachers make curricular decisions. Like the teachers in Moffa’s (2020) study, these teachers prioritize transmitting content knowledge. Another area of alignment is the teachers in this study teaching for cosmopolitanism either through teaching for perspective taking, teaching for global awareness, or teaching for “cultural collateral.” Unlike the teachers in Moffa’s (2020), these teachers did not prioritize educating for human rights. Though they wish to build generic perspective taking in their students, these teachers stopped short of advocacy, either on a practical or conceptual level. Further, these teachers claim to stick so closely to the standards that teaching for human rights might be something “extra” or even something controversial in their rural context. Teachers and their gatekeeping practices may vary across Appalachia as no two rural contexts are the same, but the strong alignment of gatekeeping for transmitting content knowledge stands out in the context of rural teaching.

**Strengths and Limitations**

**Strengths**

A major strength of this project was my research design. Qualitative research design is appropriate when the researcher wants to uncover deep insights and describe phenomenon
(Glesne, 2016). The qualitative design of this research study allowed me to deeply investigate and describe the way participating teachers at my research site conceptualize the identities and global citizenship and what curricular gatekeeping decisions they make, or reject, based on those understandings. As I divided my interviews into two sections with focuses primarily on identity and then global citizenship, my questioning helped me focus responses to each of my research questions. My questions further allowed participants to name aspects of their identity, conceptualizations of global citizenship, and gatekeeping for themselves rather than me making assumptions of them.

The case study design of this project was another strength. Instrumental case studies are distinguished by the way the researcher binds the study (Stake, 1995; Yazan, 2015). By binding my research to secondary social studies teachers in one rural community, I was able to refine my questioning and analysis to a specific context. As noted, there is limited research in rural areas, especially with global citizenship and gatekeeping. In my project, I intentionally situated my questions and analysis in terms of rural teaching.

I was also intentional about the trustworthiness of my research (Glesne, 2016; Golafshani, 2003). To reflect on my assumptions about my research topic and site, I journaled before entering and upon finishing interviews. I reread these reflections before I began data analysis as well, not in an attempt to completely bracket my experience, but rather to reflect on myself as the research instrument. I also kept annotations and notes other than codes during data analysis to intentionally capture my thinking about my role as research instrument. This was critical as I possessed both outsider and insider status within my research project. I am both an insider by having grown up in a rural community and being a social studies teacher (at the time of interviews) and an outsider as a researcher and at the time of finishing writing a social studies
district-wide facilitator and no longer teaching. My insider status helped me build rapport and trust with participants, but I was intentional about reflecting on this status to monitor how it might affect my analysis.

A further strength of my research design is my intentionality about asking questions of identity, GCE, and gatekeeping. Separately each of these factors may influence the curricular decisions a teacher makes, and while previous research has looked at each of these topics in depth, there is no established body of research that examines relationships specifically between rural identity and how teachers conceptualize and the extent to which they implement global citizenship education in their classrooms. In this project, I directly asked participants about multiple facets of their rural identities, including topics surrounding internal and external identity (Jenkins, 2014). I also asked them about what GCE means to them and used lesson plans created by the participants to further uncover conceptualizations. Asking these questions helped me understand GCE in relation to rural identity and space (Moffa, 2020).

**Limitations**

An obvious limitation of this study is its lack of generalizability. Of course, I do not attempt to make generalizations. I designed this project not to generalize about all rural teaching but to deeply describe what rural gatekeeping looks like in a bounded site. All the same, my research project is limited to three secondary social studies teachers in one county, in one rural region.

A further limitation is the lack of diversity within my participant pool. Of course, as there are such few participants, diversity would be hard to accomplish. All of the participants in this study were White. Two of three participants were women. All participants had grown up in rural areas. All participants had taught for over five years as well, thus having time to solidify, or
ossify, in their understanding of their roles and responsibilities as rural teachers. Further, all participants in this study were United States history teachers. Though I had both middle school and high school teachers, they all had content that was specific to U.S. history with limited world history coverage. This may lead them to conceptualize global citizenship in ways different from a teacher who primarily deals with world history or world geography.

Another potential limitation with this project was the way I sought to uncover participant identities. Ideally, by asking direct questions, I allowed participants to name specific aspects of their own internal and external identities. However, by limiting inquiry to interview questions, I did not create space for participants to express more hidden aspects of their identities. Identities may be hard to name.

There is also potential for any conceptual framework of identity and gatekeeping to presume a connection between internal and external identity vis a vis teacher identity and curricular instructional gatekeeping. Put simply, that a teacher is a teacher in the first place may necessarily lead the researcher to conclude that any teaching decision is part of the teacher’s identity utilizing this framework. Of course, my framework presumes that identity exists at the suturing point of internal or external sites so such worries may be more semantic than actual. However, I am careful not to assume that any part of a teacher’s internal or external identity is necessarily connected to their teaching practice. For instance, Brittany or Alex talk about living off the land and the connection between rural dwellers and an agrarian lifestyle. Though teachers may gatekeep curriculum with this understanding in mind, such gatekeeping does not necessarily happen merely because prior rural identity understanding exists. I closely monitor any such assumptions in my analysis to avoid conflating identity with gatekeeping.
The inverse is perhaps more complicated. When a teacher identifies curricular instructional gatekeeping practices, it is not clear if such practices are always connected to any internal or external identity factor, especially when identity sites go unnamed. Clearly, gatekeeping is connected to teacher identity. Even if such a connection is not explicated by the participant, teaching decisions cannot be divorced from one’s understanding of one’s role as the teacher, be that understanding one such as teacher as champion of critical thinking and activism or one like teacher as neutral presenter-of facts. What is complicated in dissecting any connection is that participants cannot name all sites of their identities in two one-hour long interviews. Furthermore, it may be impossible to completely name identity sites in a more-protracted ethnographic study, especially considering one either may not be aware of or be able to name all their identity sites in the first place.

For the researcher, this creates a quandary. I do not assume any identities that go unnamed. However, if at the end of the study a participant conceptualizes GCE liberally through notions of multiculturalism and gatekeeps instruction to promote such understanding, but they do not name race, gender, cultural awareness, historical awareness, or any such identity site previously in the study, what might that mean for my analysis of identity and gatekeeping via my framework? Just because an identity goes unnamed does not mean it does not exist. The limited capacity of language and time necessarily limit any study, but that limitation must still be considered in a study of identity.

**Implications of Research**

**Recommendations for Teacher Preparation**

The primary practical implication of this research project is how my findings might provide perspective on teacher preparation and professional development for rural teachers.
Though I limited this research project to a bounded case with a small sample, there are lessons to be learned about how teachers think of themselves and their responsibilities and duties as rural educators in a globalized world. Rural students are not immune from the pressures of globalization and the evolving cultural and economic landscapes emerging in the United States and worldwide. If a purpose of schooling is to prepare citizens to function in a democracy and be productive members of the nation state, then rural teachers must navigate both global and local pressures in their curriculum and instruction. They are and must be gatekeepers for global citizenship.

If teaching for global citizenship is something to be desired, then current research on global citizenship education reveals a need for further training and preparation for pre-service and in-service teachers. Current research (Rapoport, 2010; Siczek & Engel, 2019) reveals teacher conceptualizations of GCE are ambiguous and personal to the teacher rather than formalized or in line with existing global citizenship education programs like those laid out by UNESCO (2015) or aims for global education laid out by the National Council of Social Studies (2016b). At the same time, research shows social studies teachers value citizenship education and can have complex views of what good citizenship means (Patterson & Torsney, 2021; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The teachers’ conceptualizations in this study reflect this theme, as participants spoke of GCE in ways aligned with their conceptualizations of their duties as social studies teachers, primarily as transmitters of official content knowledge.

Internationally, implementation and training for GCE is equally diverse as teachers’ conceptualizations in different nation-states and programs prioritize different outlooks (Tarozzi & Mallon, 2019; Thomas & Banki, 2021). In the United States, implementation and training for GCE is more limited. Despite language from the NCSS (2016b) and calls from research on the
importance of global education and areas of alignment between GCE and the C3 framework (Cruz & Viera, 2020; Myers & Rivero, 2020; Rapoport 2020), there is little headway on integrating global citizenship education in official curriculum (Rapoport, 2020). This is unfortunate given research indicates positive outcomes for explicit global education in teacher preparation programs (Kerkhoff & Cloud, 2020; Ramos et al., 2020).

One recommendation given current research and the findings in this project is for policy makers to prioritize education for global citizenship in the United States. One possibility is for state content standards to reflect this priority via inclusion of language that specifies opportunities for content and skills in line with global citizenship education. For example, social studies standards in the state of Tennessee already include language on social studies practices like “construct and communicate arguments by citing supporting evidence,” “develop historical awareness,” and “develop geographic awareness” (TN DoE, 2019). Global education practices could be integrated into this existing framework. Global education language need not be limited to only social studies either. There are opportunities for integration with other subjects through authentic project-based learning in math and science as well as through literature and in the arts.

Of course, this presumes policy makers value global citizenship education and wish to prioritize its inclusion, which given the discourse around ideas like critical race theory and diversity equity inclusion (Alfonseca, 2024) as well as initiatives to ban certain courses and content catching on in certain states (Meckler, 2023), is doubtful. Furthermore, simply because language prioritizing global citizenship education might exist in state standards does not mean teachers will teach for it. However, given the findings in this study which reinforce the notion of teachers prioritizing standards, this might be a meaningful step in bringing global citizenship education into the United States more broadly.
More narrowly for rural teachers, this project elucidates complexities that might be considered in preparation for teachers of rural students. Teachers in this study highlighted unique aspects of their rural teaching contexts. They spoke of lifestyles, attitudes, and curricular considerations specific to the rural context. Paradoxically, they both admitted to and rejected gatekeeping for this context. Different aspects of their identities emerged at different times in different intensities depending on the topic of conversations. At times, they highlighted universal aspects of teaching and importance of transmission of generic content knowledge. At other times they drew on their rural identities to describe how they make learning meaningful to their rural students. Regarding GCE, they held similarly complex views that ranged from rejecting some tenets of GCE owing to their rural context while also championing the desire to build perspective and global awareness and expose their students to other ways of life outside the immediate community.

Teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities might do well to consider the overlapping and sometimes contradictory aspects of teachers’ identities to refine their offerings to would-be and current rural teachers. This work is critical not only for in-service teachers but pre-service teachers as well. Both in-service and pre-service teachers may be in processes of becoming related to their professional identities, but teacher-preparing programs are in a unique and powerful position to guide and develop PSTs’ professional identities (Hubbard, 2018). Of course, not every pre-service teacher will teach in a rural area. Rather than prepare PSTs for any one specific placement, assignments that highlight the complex aspects of both teacher and student identity as well as coursework that includes elements of place-based education could meaningfully prepare teachers for diverse contexts. Once teachers are in a specific placement, place-based education professional development tailored to specific notions
of place, be it rural, urban, or suburban might help teachers make their content meaningful for their specific context, regardless of subject or grade level. Teacher might be tasked to read Gruenewald’s (2003) work for a conceptual piece on critical place-based education more broadly, while rural teachers might benefit from reading Hoppey’s (2016) on inclusive teaching in rural space. Teacher preparation programs might require students to submit and teach lesson plans that approach learning though the lens of place-based education. Similarly, teacher preparation programs might require students to submit and teach lesson plans that deal with global citizenship education in a specific context.

Professional development providers and teacher preparation programs might also consider how teachers lesson and unit-plan utilizing standards, especially when teaching topics that explicitly involve race, like slavery. Backwards design and lesson planning with standards in mind is certainly not a groundbreaking idea. However, this project has problematized the specific ways in which teachers actually do this. On a course and unit level, teachers struggle to cover the standards due to the quantity of topics the standards require teachers to cover. Training teachers to identify the essence of the standards, the most important parts to teach, and the appropriate thinking skills the standards require might go some way in alleviating this burden. Regarding thorny topics like race, teachers either struggle to communicate the essence of the standard or may face resistance in teaching about structural racism in history. Censoring and/or whitewashing content on the Middle Passage and the “conditions of enslavement,” does not reflect the state content standards, at least in Tennessee (TN DoE, 2019). Teachers need to develop confidence through extensive practice teaching such issues both as PSTs and in-service teachers. To accomplish this will require pedagogical skill and techniques like teaching for controversial issues, group discussion, or Socratic seminar, as well as extensive practice in low-
stakes contexts. Teacher preparation programs might require students to submit and teach lesson plans that deal with controversial issues.

Teacher preparation program and professional development providers might do well to prepare pre-service and in-service teachers, especially those that teach in rural placements, for teaching such issues. Moffa (2022) recommends preparing teachers through instruction in the fundamental aspects of critical-race theory and how its tenets might apply to the teaching of race while Chandler (2010) offers questions teachers might ask to elucidate and challenge historical power dynamics. Findings from this study, specifically parent and teacher preconceptions about CRT, complicate that suggestion, at least at my bounded research site. To safely and meaningful apply principles of CRT, teachers must first learn what CRT actually is and how it might be relevant to their pedagogy. Given the climate on teaching for race and CRT in some states, this might be difficult to accomplish. Kaka and Hollstein (2023) call for training in teaching about race and social justice. This study suggests that such recommendations must be tempered with the reality of the barriers rural educators face in teaching race.

In the realm of gatekeeping, Edmondson (2023) recommends preparing pre-service and in-service teachers to dissect content standards as instructional gatekeepers toward making standards more inclusive, and he offers an assignment teacher-preparation programs or professional development providers might utilize to accomplish such ends. His assignment tasks teachers with elucidating common historical narratives before critically examining content standards for such narratives and values. Subsequently, teachers retool standards to be more inclusive and critical. While his assignment is more critical of content standards in the first place, such an assignment might elucidate teachers’ powers as instructional gatekeepers and the exact
content and values standards require teachers to teach while still allowing for standards-based instruction.

Finally, teacher preparation programs might leverage existing community resources to equip PSTs with knowledge and skills to teach global citizenship and controversial issues in specific contexts. This could include intentional partnerships with local school districts and mentorship programs with local teachers beyond and prior to late-stage mentorship during the PSTs placement. Intentional mentorship could be a bridge between early observation-based placements and later, more-intensive placements where PSTs are responsible for teaching.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Of course, there are academic implications of this project as well. This project adds to a body of literature in multiple domains, including teacher identity, rural teaching, global citizenship education, and curricular instructional gatekeeping. Furthermore, by utilizing a conceptual framework that operationalizes research from across these domains, my findings speak to the intersections of identity, GCE, and gatekeeping. None of these domains are incidental or partial in my study. Rather, I am intentional about framing questions and analysis at the intersections or, to borrow a term, suturing points of different bodies of research.

That said, the findings in this project are not generalizable. Future empirical work will need to be done to verify or challenge the findings I present here. Furthermore, there are many additional areas of exploration and ways to refine this project that might color or strengthen future research on rural identity and GCE gatekeeping. As all of the participants in this study were White, it would be useful to draw on the experiences of a more racially diverse participant pool. As all of the teachers in this study had taught for more than five years, it would be beneficial for future research to consider the experiences of younger in-service and pre-service
teachers. Diversity of teaching topic would be another way to refine future endeavors, as all participants in this study taught primarily United States history.

A few areas of further inquiry also emerged as I combed through my data. One semiotic question that might be addressed in future research is the extent to which rural teachers operationalize, take up, and resist words as signs in their identities and gatekeeping (Chandler, 2022). In this study, teachers reclaimed words like “redneck” and “bumpkin” in their conversations with me and students and implicitly approved of, or at the very least allowed, use of such terms by rural insiders. They did not, however, allow for well-intentioned use of such terms by rural outsiders.

Another area of exploration might be how rural teachers take up master narratives like race. Research on teaching race in the south (Stutts, 2020) and teaching slavery in neo-Confederate contexts (Moffa, 2022) reveals the difficult position teachers are in when it comes to teaching issues that might be considered controversial or thorny in their teaching context. Further research centering teaching narratives in rural contexts would continue to shed light on how teachers reinforce or resist master narratives in their curriculum.

Methodologically, a strength of this project was prioritizing the rural as a place and making explicit the importance of identity in gatekeeping. In line with this prioritization, I structured my first interview to deal almost exclusively with rural identity before proceeding in interview two to global citizenship and gatekeeping. By asking direct questions about identity, I was able to uncover internal and external identity sites and how they might influence GCE gatekeeping for rural teachers. However, it is difficult to uncover aspects of identity in such a limited time frame. It is also possible that by inquiring through one format, interviewing, I foreclosed some possibilities for how these participants think of their rural teaching identities.
One opportunity for future research would be to include a visual element like drawings, photography, or mind maps to offer participants a way to express their identities in a context and format other than direct verbal questioning.

Conclusion

With the findings and implications of this study in mind, it is worth reflecting on the realities rural students face and the position of education for global citizenship for rural, and all, students in the United States. Rural students occupy complex spaces. They experience and are exposed to unique opportunities and barriers to success, and importantly, their teachers, and the way their teachers respond to community pressures, mediate these students’ experiences with global citizenship. Though globalization continues to increase opportunities for communication and access to knowledge, rural students can be more physically and culturally isolated than their urban and suburban peers. Further, despite widespread recognition of the importance for preparing students to exist in a changing world, there is no widespread support for GCE in the United States. It is likely that exposure to education for global citizenship is incidental and partial for these rural students. Any efforts to inculcate global citizenship for rural students must contend with the realities of rural education, including student experiences, community pressures, and teacher identities.

This qualitative case study found that rural teachers hold complex rural teaching identities, and that the characteristics of their identities sometimes align and sometimes conflict with their curricular gatekeeping choices regarding education for global citizenship. Though confusing and somewhat frustrating, these areas of misalignment reflect a need to understand the complexities of rural space, the impact of rural space on teachers’ conceptualizations of identity, and curricular instructional gatekeeping. Findings further reflect a need to situate training and
professional development for gatekeeping and GCE in light of what teachers think it means to be rural social studies teachers and what responsibilities they have to their students.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview 1: Rural Identities
1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself. I’d like to know about your current and former experience, education, and background.
   a. Did you grow up in a rural area? What was that like?
2. There are a lot of different ways of thinking about the rural. When I use the term “rural” what does that mean to you?
   a. Expect geographic spatial answers, probe for culture – community involvement, access to resources, socioeconomics, race/ethnicity, diversity
3. How is the rural portrayed media? What do you think of this portrayal?
4. How does being in a rural area affect the way you approach teaching?
   a. What issues do you think are most relevant to cover in your curriculum for students in your community? Are there any issues you prioritize or avoid?
   b. What challenges are there to teaching in a rural area?
   c. What responsibilities do rural teachers have to their students?
   d. Is there any special knowledge or are there skills that you think are required to be a rural teacher?
   e. Are there any ethical concerns you think about as a rural teacher specifically?
5. How would you describe your identity as a rural teacher? Is it something you have thought of?
   a. Potential probes may include socioeconomic class, sex and gender, profession as a social studies teacher, politics, religion, community values
6. What factors contribute to your identity as a rural teacher?
7. To what extent has your identity as a rural teacher changed over time?
8. Is there something I haven’t asked that you would like to talk about? Or is there something we discussed earlier that you would like to talk more about?

Interview 2: GCE & Gatekeeping
1. Global citizenship is a topic that is becoming more popular in education, but there’s a lot of ways to think about it. When I say, “global citizenship,” what does that mean to you?
2. What does it mean for someone to be a good global citizen?
   a. What values do global citizens have?
   b. What is an example of global citizenship? What actions do global citizens take?
   c. Do you seen any tension between being a global citizen and being a part of a rural community?
   d. What issues should global citizens be aware of?
   e. What sort of skills should students have regarding global citizenship?
   f. How does being a rural teacher affect how you think about global citizenship? How might a teacher in an urban area, for instance, differ in your opinion?
3. I’d like to ask you more about how you approach global citizenship education in your classroom:
a. To what extent do you shape your curriculum to include global citizenship? Does this look differently for different courses?
b. What issues do you talk about in your classes regarding global citizenship? Are there any issues that you avoid? Why?

4. In our last interview we talked a lot about identity. To what extent do you think about your rural identity when it comes teaching global citizenship?
   a. Probes based on previous individual interviews. May include: socioeconomic class, sex and gender profession as a social studies teacher, politics, religion, community values something you think about?

5. Can you think of any existing obstacles or risks to teaching GCE in your community specifically?
   a. How do these obstacles affect the ways in which you teach global citizenship?

6. Can you think of any existing supports that help you teach GCE in your community specifically?
   a. How do these supports affect the ways in which you teach global citizenship?

7. I’d like to finish up by talking about your lesson plan you shared with me. Can you explain how the lesson you shared is an example of global citizenship education?
   a. After talking about identity in our last conversation, how do you think your rural identity contributed to the development of this lesson.

8. Is there something I haven’t asked that you would like to talk about? Or is there something we discussed earlier that you would like to talk more about?
Appendix B: A Priori Codebooks

Identity Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External identity</th>
<th>Factors outside the individual that contribute to identity. These could be as complex as globalization or as simple as new school policy.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal Identity</td>
<td>Factors inside the individual that contribute to identity. These are named by the participant and may be experiential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotype Threat</td>
<td>An attitude or conception of the rural or rural people that is negative and potentially damaging to rural persons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Comparison</td>
<td>Discussing rural identity or the rural through its comparison to urban or suburban areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender/Sex</td>
<td>Discussions of gender identity or self-reported sex as it relates to identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomics</td>
<td>Discussion of wealth, class, or occupation (not teaching duties or professional ethics) values as they relate to identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Discussion of politics or engaged citizenship as it relates to identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Discussion of religion or faith as it relates to identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit</td>
<td>Characterizations of rural as lacking or a problem. Potential overlaps with stereotype threat as negative conceptualizations, but not needing a threat to the individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Discussion of the teaching profession, potentially rural teaching, as it relates to identity. Potential for overlap with socioeconomic s and occupation values, but more specific to the teaching profession.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GCE Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neoliberal GCE</th>
<th>Work preparation, capitalism, service to the nation-state (United States)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal GCE</td>
<td>Common humanity, multiculturalism, respect for difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical GCE</td>
<td>Justice oriented, active, political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism &amp; Diversity</td>
<td>Discussion of diversity or other cultures broadly. Not social justice oriented or political, but cosmopolitan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs &amp; Work</td>
<td>Discussion of job or occupation opportunities. Preparation for those job opportunities in K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Studies</td>
<td>Discussion of other cultures, governments, economies in social studies subjects like history, geography, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights &amp; Responsibilities</td>
<td>Discussion of the rights and responsibilities of citizens such as voting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstacles &amp; Risks</td>
<td>Obstacles to teaching global citizenship in a rural area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controversial Issues</td>
<td>Self-defined by participant. Anything perceived as controversial in their context or subject matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice</td>
<td>Discussion of social justice and advocacy as part of global citizenship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: IRB Approval Letter

October 04, 2022
Dylan Tyler Edmondson
UTK - Coll of Education, Hlth, & Human - Theory & Practice in Teacher Educaton
Re: UTK IRB-22-07164-XM
Study Title: Rural Identity and Global Citizenship Education Gatekeeping

Dear Dylan Tyler Edmondson,

The Human Research Protections Program (HRPP) reviewed your application for the above referenced project and determined that your application is eligible for exempt review under 45 CFR 46.191, Category 2. Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if the information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Your application has been determined to comply with proper consideration for the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects.

Therefore, this letter constitutes full approval of your application (version 1.0) as submitted, including the following documents that have been dated and stamped IRB approved:

- Edmondson GK Consent v 1.0
- Edmondson GK Interview protocol v 1.0
- Edmondson GK Recruitment v 1.0

You are approved to enroll a maximum of 6 participants. Approval of this study will be valid from 10/04/2022.

Any revisions in the approved application, consent forms, instruments, recruitment materials, etc., must be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. In addition, you are responsible for reporting any unanticipated serious adverse events or other problems involving risks to subjects or others in the manner required by the local IRB policy.

Approval of this study is valid for three years. If a Study Update Form is not submitted in iMedRIS and approved by the IRB prior to 10/03/2025, the study will be automatically closed by the IRB and no further study activity will be permitted until a Study Update Form is received. Please be sure to also submit a Study Closure Request (Form 7) when all research activity, including data analysis, has been completed.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Institutional Review Board | Office of Research & Engagement
1534 White Avenue Knoxvile, TN 37996-1529
865-974-7697  865-974-7400 fax  irb.utk.edu
Appendix D: Informed Consent

Consent for Research Participation

Research Study Title: Rural Identity and Global Citizenship Education Gatekeeping

Researcher(s): Dylan Edmondson, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Dr. Joshua Kenna, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Why am I being asked to be in this research study?

We are asking you to be in this research study because you are a secondary social studies teacher at [Redacted] Public Schools. We believe your experiences and thoughts will be useful in our study.

What is this research study about?

The purpose of the research study is to find out how rural secondary social studies teachers describe their teacher identity and how they think about and teach global citizenship education. I hope to find what beliefs and values secondary social studies teachers at [Redacted] Public Schools hold about global citizenship education.

How long will I be in the research study?

If you agree to be in the study, your participation will likely last for 2 hours, but no more than 3 hours total. Your total involvement would be two interviews occurring either in person or over Zoom. You will have the choice of how you want to interview.

What will happen if I say “Yes, I want to be in this research study”?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to complete two interviews at a time and location of you choosing. In interview one, I will ask you about your identity. In interview two, I will ask you about global citizenship education.

If you choose to interview in person, I will keep an audio recording and written notes of our interview. If you choose to interview via Zoom, I will keep notes as well and ask that you keep your computer camera on. Zoom will create an audio and video recording of the interview, but I will only be keeping the audio recording for my study.
I will also ask you to share an informal lesson plan that you have already created or may create during the project. In your opinion, this lesson plan must address global citizenship education in some way. We will discuss this lesson plan in interview two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>What happens if I say “No, I do not want to be in this research study”?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being in this study is up to you. You can say no now or leave the study later.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>What happens if I say “Yes” but change my mind later?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Even if you decide to be in the study now, you can change your mind and stop at any time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you decide to stop before the study is completed, you can contact me directly and tell me your decision. Any information collected from you will be deleted and not used in the study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Are there any possible risks to me?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is possible that someone could find out you were in this study or see your study information, but we believe this risk is small because of the procedures we use to protect your information. These procedures are described later in this form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible risks include discomfort discussing controversial topics and global issues. To minimize this risk, I only ask you to share information you are comfortable sharing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Are there any benefits to being in this research study?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not expect you to directly benefit from being in this study. Your participation may help us to learn more about rural teaching identities and global citizenship education. We hope the knowledge gained from this study will benefit others in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about how you think about your identity and global citizenship education may indirectly help you think about your teaching practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Who can see or use the information collected for this research study?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will protect the confidentiality of your information by deidentifying your data. You may choose a pseudonym (fake name) to identify your data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All information and research records will be kept confidential on my personal computer. I will store your data in a secure web-based platform. I am the only one who will have access to your data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will keep audio tape data and your lesson plan (if printed) secure at my home. All of your data will be destroyed at the end of this study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If information from this study is published or presented at professional conferences, your name and other personal information will not be used.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information or what information came from you. Although it is unlikely, there are times when others may need to see the information we collect about you. These include:

- People at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville who oversee research to make sure it is conducted properly.
- Government agencies (such as the Office for Human Research Protections in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), and others responsible for watching over the safety, effectiveness, and conduct of the research.
- If a law or court requires us to share the information, we would have to follow that law or final court ruling.

**What will happen to my information after this study is over?**

I will not keep your information to use for future research or other purposes. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be deleted from your research data collected as part of the study.

**What else do I need to know?**

About 3-6 people will take part in this study. Because of the small number of participants in this study, it is possible that someone could identify you based on the information we collected from you.

If we learn about any new information that may change your mind about being in the study, we will tell you. If that happens, you may be asked to sign a new consent form.

**Who can answer my questions about this research study?**

If you have questions or concerns about this study, or have experienced a research related problem or injury, contact the researcher (Dylan Edmondson, demand7@vols.utk.edu, 865-254-7244) or the faculty advisor (Dr. Joshua Kenna, jkenna@utk.edu, 865-974-4144).

For questions or concerns about your rights or to speak with someone other than the research team about the study, please contact:

Institutional Review Board
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
1534 White Avenue
Blount Hall, Room 408
Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
Phone: 865-974-7697
Email: utkirb@utk.edu
STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the chance to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have more questions, I have been told who to contact. By signing this document, I am agreeing to be in this study. I will receive a copy of this document after I sign it.

Name of Adult Participant   Signature of Adult Participant   Date

Researcher Signature (to be completed at time of informed consent)

I have explained the study to the participant and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to be in the study.

Name of Research Team Member   Signature of Research Team Member   Date
Appendix E: Recruitment Letters

To Principals
Hello,

My name is Dylan Edmondson, and I am a graduate student in the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I am reaching out to see if you could put me in contact with social studies at your school for a research study on rural social studies teachers’ identities and global citizenship education. It is my goal to see how rural secondary social studies teachers in [Redacted] Public Schools describe their identity as well as global citizenship education.

As a former student of [Redacted] Public Schools and current social studies teacher myself in [Redacted] Schools, I am very interested and involved in social studies education in rural areas. I would greatly appreciate the involvement of social studies teachers in your school. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

To Teachers

Hello,

My name is Dylan Edmondson, and I am a graduate student in the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I am reaching out to see if you would be interested in participating in a research study on rural social studies teachers’ identities and how they think about global citizenship education. It is my goal to see how rural secondary social studies teachers at [Redacted] Public Schools describe their identity as well as global citizenship education.

As a former student of [Redacted] Public Schools and current social studies teacher myself in [Redacted] Schools, I am very interested and involved in social studies education in rural areas. I would greatly appreciate your involvement in my study.

Because of your role as a rural social studies teacher, I believe you would be an ideal candidate to participate in this study. Your participation would be very valuable in providing information on rural identity and global citizenship education and it could help contribute to education programs for future teachers.
I’ve included a summary of what your involvement in the study would look like below. If you choose to participate in the study, or if you have any questions, please reply directly to this email. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing back from you.

What your role in study looks like:

- Two interviews total. One interview on rural identity lasting about 1 hour but no more than 90 minutes. A second interview on global citizenship education lasting about 1 hour but no more than 90 minutes. These two interviews are the total amount of time you will participate in the study.
- You would share an informal lesson plan that you have already created or may create during the project. In your opinion, this lesson plan must address global citizenship education in some way.
- You have the choice of how you want to interview. The interview could occur in person at a time and location of your choosing. Or it could occur over Zoom and at a time of your choosing.
- During the interview, I will take notes, and I may ask follow-up questions to make sure I understand what you are saying.
- I will only save audio recordings of our interviews. If interviews occur on Zoom, I will ask you to keep your camera on, but I will delete the video file immediately after our interview.
- Even after agreeing to be in the study, you may pull out at any time. If you pull out, I will delete your data and not use it in the study.

Sincerely,
Appendix F: Participant Lessons

Brittany’s Lesson Plan
Leson Plan: Cold War & Global Citizenship

Grade Level: 11th Grade

Bellringer: Students will define NATO and identify the countries who started the organization.

Instruction: Students will be given a graphic organizer that has them identifying the economic and political differences between the United States and the Soviet Union after WWII. They will be able to work through this with a partner and we will come back together to go over their findings. I.e. communism, democracy, NATO and the response of the Warsaw Pact and Arms development

Problem: Students will then be given the problem of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in January 2022. They will be given a series of “what if” questions, but also the issue of Poland. I will then guide them to identify what is the United States’ obligation. Should it just be to the NATO states or should it go beyond that? I will have them work through this thought process.

End/Start Tomorrow: This will lead me to US intervention in Korea. We will study how the Korean (and eventually the Vietnam War) went and they will decide if their original response to Ukraine and Russia is the same or if they change their minds? Does history change their beliefs? Or should another approach be taken?
Alex's Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan: Exploring Global Citizenship through "The Shot Heard Around the World"

Grade Level: 8th Grade

Objective: Students will understand the significance of the American Revolution in the context of global citizenship, recognizing its impact beyond national borders and exploring how historical events can shape modern concepts of citizenship and global responsibility.

Lesson 1: Understanding the American Revolution in Global Context

Introduction (15 minutes): Begin the lesson by discussing the concept of global citizenship and its importance in today's interconnected world. Introduce the American Revolution and its significance as "the shot heard around the world." Explain that this event had implications beyond just the American colonies.

Main Activity - Analyzing Primary Sources (30 minutes): Divide students into small groups and provide each group with a set of primary sources related to the American Revolution. Have students analyze the sources to identify different perspectives on the revolution, both from within the colonies and from outside sources. Encourage students to discuss how these sources reflect global connections and viewpoints.

Class Discussion (20 minutes): Reconvene as a class and have each group share their findings. Discuss the global reactions and implications of the American Revolution. Explore the term "the shot heard around the world" in depth. What does it mean? How does it relate to the concept of global citizenship?

Lesson 2: The American Revolution's Legacy in Modern Global Citizenship

Interactive Mapping Activity (30 minutes): Display the map of the world with markers indicating locations of major events during the American Revolution. Discuss the global reach of the revolution, highlighting countries and regions affected by its outcomes. Ask students to identify ways in which the revolution influenced other nations' quests for independence and self-determination.

Group Project: Modern Global Citizenship (30 minutes): Assign each group a modern global issue (e.g., climate change, human rights, poverty) and have them research how the values and ideals of the American Revolution are relevant to addressing that issue on a global scale. Each group should create a short presentation explaining the connections between the historical revolution and their chosen issue.

Presentations and Reflection (20 minutes): Allow each group to present their findings. Facilitate a class discussion about the ways in which the American Revolution's principles continue to influence global citizenship and advocacy. Have students reflect on how historical events can shape modern notions of citizenship, social responsibility, and global awareness.
**Assessment:** Evaluate student participation in class discussions and group activities. Assess the quality of group presentations, looking for accurate connections between the American Revolution's values and modern global issues.

**Homework (Optional):** Have students write a short essay discussing how studying historical events like the American Revolution can inspire and inform their roles as global citizens in addressing contemporary global challenges.

**Extension Activity (Optional):** Invite a guest speaker or conduct a virtual interview with a historian or expert in global citizenship to discuss the connections between historical events and present-day global responsibilities.
Kelci’s Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan: Globalization during the Colonization Era

Objective: Students will understand the concept of globalization during the Colonization era and its impact on the exchange of goods, cultures, and ideas between different regions of the world.

Grade Level: 8th Grade

Day 1: Introduction to Globalization during the Colonization Era

Step 1: Warm-up (10 minutes) Begin the lesson by asking students what they know about colonization and the exploration of new lands during the 15th to 17th centuries. Discuss briefly how these historical events connected different regions of the world.

Step 2: Definition of Globalization (15 minutes) Introduce the concept of globalization and define it as the process of increased interconnectedness and interdependence among people, cultures, and economies around the world. Explain that globalization was already happening during the Colonization era, but it looked different from modern-day globalization.

Step 3: Map Activity (15 minutes) Provide each student with a map of the world during the Colonization era. Ask them to identify the major trade routes, colonial settlements, and regions where cultural exchange took place. Discuss as a class how these connections contributed to globalization.

Step 4: Case Study: Columbian Exchange (15 minutes) Explain the Columbian Exchange, focusing on the exchange of goods, plants, animals, and diseases between the Old World (Europe) and the New World (the Americas). Discuss how this exchange transformed both continents and led to global interconnections.

Day 2: Impact of Globalization during the Colonization Era

Step 1: Review (5 minutes) Recap the previous day’s lesson on globalization and the Columbian Exchange.

Step 2: Video Presentation (15 minutes) Show a short video or present visuals depicting the impact of globalization during the Colonization era. Highlight how cultural exchanges led to the blending of traditions, languages, and religions in different regions.
Step 3: Discussion (15 minutes) Lead a class discussion on the positive and negative consequences of globalization during the Colonization era. Discuss how economic benefits and the spread of knowledge were balanced with the negative effects of disease, exploitation, and cultural assimilation.

Step 4: Role Play Activity (10 minutes) Divide the students into small groups and assign each group a different role from the Colonization era, such as European explorers, Native Americans, or African traders. Have them act out scenarios that highlight the impact of globalization on their respective communities.

Step 5: Reflection (5 minutes) Conclude the lesson with a reflective discussion on how globalization during the Colonization era continues to influence the modern world. Assessment: Assign students a short writing assignment where they describe one significant impact of globalization during the Colonization era and its relevance to the present-day globalized world.

Homework: Ask students to research and prepare a presentation on one specific cultural exchange or trade route that occurred during the Colonization era, emphasizing its significance in global history.

Extension Activity: Invite students to research how globalization during the Colonization era laid the groundwork for subsequent global interactions, such as the Age of Exploration and the development of global trade networks.
VITA

Dylan Edmondson began his career in education as a high school classroom teacher at South Doyle High School in Knox County Schools, Tennessee, where he spent five years teaching primarily world history to 9th graders. He currently works as a social studies facilitator in Knox County Schools. In his work, he offers social studies curriculum planning and implementation support for K-12 teachers in Region 5 schools in addition to helping plan and offer professional development for in-service teachers. Dylan’s research is informed by his experience growing up in a rural area and his experience teaching world history to diverse learners.