

EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING CONTROVERSIAL AND EMOTIVE ISSUES IN
TERRORISM STUDIES COURSES IN THE POLITICALLY-CHARGED CLASSROOM: A
TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Blake Douglas DeVold

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the phenomenon experienced by faculty members in higher education who teach courses in terrorism studies with curriculum containing controversial and emotive issues in a politically-charged classroom. The study included 12 college faculty members who taught courses in terrorism studies from several institutions of higher learning throughout the United States. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, participant questionnaires and the collection of course materials. The data collected through these methods were analyzed using the process suggested by Moustakas (1994) to write a composite description of the phenomenon using textural and structural descriptions to develop the culminating aspects of the essence of the experience. The results of this study identified five themes that emerged from the participants' significant statements. These themes were (a) teacher awareness of the classroom environment and students, (b) teacher perception of academic freedom, (c) teaching styles and adaptations to accommodate controversy, (d) fear of retribution, and (e) benefits of teaching controversial and emotive issues. Recommendations were made to address problems identified in the study. These included a commitment on the part of school administrations to create and maintain an environment of academic freedom, an effort to institute teacher training to develop skills for dealing with controversy and emotion in the classroom, and an effort to institute student education to understand the benefits of having scholarly classroom discussions on subjects that may be controversial and emotive and develop a respect for academic freedom, notwithstanding their personal sensitivities.

Keywords: academic freedom, controversial issues, higher education, homeland security, Islam, political correctness, terrorism studies

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to the men and women serving in the Armed Forces of the United States of America who are fighting the war against the terrorism of global Islamic Jihad and in the memory of those who have given their life in this battle.

Acknowledgements

This effort would never have been accomplished without the love and support of my wife, Kimberly M. DeVolld, M.D. She has been a constant encouragement who has sustained me. I also want to express my sincere appreciation to my Committee Chair and dear friend, Dr. Samuel J. Smith. The faculty of the School of Education and my Dissertation Committee have also helped me immensely. God surrounded me with strong people who made this dissertation possible. Thank you all.

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List of Abbreviations

Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU)

Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS)

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

Council for Arab Islamic Relations (CAIR)

Department of Defense (DoD)

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

National Intelligence University (NIU)

National Security Agency (NSA)

University and Agency Partnership Initiative (UAPI)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter provides a background of the most relevant literature as well as a discussion of the historical, social, and theoretical contexts of the research problem. I include a situation to self that provides a discussion of my personal background as it relates to my motivations for engaging in this study. The problem statement summarizes the context of the study while the propose statement summarizes the focus and intentions of my research. Finally, I provide a significance section describing how this study contributes to the field of teaching terrorism studies in higher education.

Background

This section provides a historical overview of the research problem of this study. Specifically, events since the terror attacks of 9/11 have changed the educational landscape of homeland security and terrorism studies. These changes have created challenges to schools offering programs in these fields of study. The impact on the higher education community in the United States is also discussed as well as major theoretical underpinnings to this study.

Historical Background

Since the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, the demand for professionals in the homeland security and defense community has placed new demands and requirements on colleges and universities throughout the United States (Supinski, 2011). Homeland security is a national priority and there is a growing concern about the government's ability to detect and prevent future terrorist attacks (Moore, Hatzadony, Cronin, & Breckenridge, 2010). Jobs in the homeland security fields are growing above the national average and students are seeking careers with the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, Federal Bureau of

Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, and other federal, state, and local government agencies. Entry positions for officers in these organizations are very selective and competitive. To answer this demand, many schools are integrating courses in homeland security and defense in their criminal justice, political science, or other department as a means to attract students and make their programs more competitive.

This demand has further led to the creation of new programs of study to prepare professionals to enter careers in the fields of homeland security, defense and intelligence. New courses, minors, majors, and even entire academic departments have been created as the homeland security discipline has taken foothold in colleges and universities (Supinski, 2011). Many faculty members have been added from outside traditional academia. These faculty members come from careers in agencies that are part of the Department of Homeland Security and the military (Supinski, 2011). Schools have seen the creation of new academic disciplines with new programs of study, new courses, and new faculty coming from a variety of professional backgrounds.

This dynamic environment has not come without its challenges. One such area has been in the teaching of terrorism studies. Terrorism studies courses are a significant part of education programs in homeland security (Supinski, 2011).

Contemporary literature reveals that faculty members are pressured by various political influences (DeVold, 2015). Horowitz (2007) in his book, *Indoctrination U: The Left's War Against Freedom*, warned that college campuses have become heavily influenced by a politically liberal philosophy and have become antagonistic towards other points of view. They espouse politically correct behaviors and would object to linking the ideology of Islam to terrorism. Horowitz (2007) stated that terrorism is linked to the ideology of Islam. Conversely, there are

many individuals who have argued against even using the term “Islamic terrorism” whatsoever and say it creates a discourse that is unhelpful and damaging (Jackson, 2007).

This situation where faculty members are pressured from both sides of the political spectrum has certainly had an effect on faculty members and how they teach. Consequently, it may also have some kind of impact on student learning and the preparation of professionals entering the ranks of the security and defense career fields. There is extensive literature on academic freedom and faculty perceptions. (Buss, 1999; Hofstadter & Metzger, 1955; Hofstadter, 1996; Joughlin, 1967; Poch, 1993) There is also much research on teaching controversial and emotive issues in college classrooms. (Philpott, Clabough, McConkey, & Turner, 2011). However, there is a significant gap in research that studies the phenomenon of these two influences in teaching terrorism studies courses. The problem has significant impact on these faculty members because they are often subjected to criticism and even disciplinary actions if students complain about how they handle certain controversial and emotive topics in the classroom.

Society-at-large

The Homeland Security education community is experiencing problems associated with teaching controversial and emotive issues in a politically-charged classroom. A top counterterrorism expert who taught a course that familiarized military officers with the war with radical Islamists at the National Defense University was fired, and the course was removed from the curriculum after students complained. Lt. Col. Matthew A. Dooley, was removed from the faculty permanently for telling students that Islam is responsible for terrorism (Lynch, 2012; Sizemore, 2012).

In another case involving the U.S. Government, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Instructor William Gawthrop was recorded making comments about Islam in the classroom. His comments to an audience of law enforcement officials during a counter-terrorism seminar in New York were labeled as “dangerous” (Parsons, 2011). The FBI soon announced that they would be revising their curriculum, and the FBI Director reassured Islamic groups that the agency had ordered the removal of presentations and curricula on Islam that were deemed “offensive” from FBI offices around the country. The FBI purged any criticism of Islam from its curriculum (Ackerman, 2012).

This criticism and backlash is not limited to institutions within the U.S. Government. The Florida chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations accused a University of Central Florida professor of teaching anti-Muslim bigotry (Ordway, 2013). A DePaul University professor, Thomas Klocek, was fired for political correctness. Some Muslim and Palestinian students did not like what he had to say about the Arab-Israeli situation. The Council for Arab Islamic Relations (CAIR) Chicago demanded the university fire him after being informed by the student activist group Students for Justice in Palestine and United Muslims. Professors of terrorism studies courses seem to be disproportionately the target of criticism and political backlash (Dizon, 2005).

What makes teaching terrorism studies so different from other disciplines? Terrorism is inherently a political subject (Jackson, 2007; Pisiu & Hain, 2018). Most every definition of terrorism attributes political goals as the objective of terrorist activity. Government actions to counter terrorism are, by definition, political acts (White, 2014). Additionally, terrorism studies courses deal with emotional issues where students come into the classroom with deeply-felt, pre-existing opinions that are often diverse and have polar extremes.

Probably the most heated issue has to do with the treatment of Islam and its relationship to terrorism. One side of this issue believes that Islam has nothing to do with terrorism, while many believe that the basic tenants of orthodox Islam actually fuel violent terroristic behavior and is primarily responsible for this ideology. While religion is the major source of conflict, other controversial and emotive issues exist. These include torture and the use of enhanced interrogation techniques, sensitive government intelligence collection activities, such as the National Security Agency (NSA) metadata program and other Fourth Amendment concerns. The use of drones to target terror suspects and the practice of profiling based on ethnicity and religion in counter-terrorism efforts can be controversial. These are only a few of the issues that can contribute to tension in the classroom. Terrorism studies professors live in politically-charged classrooms and must deal with controversial and emotive issues on a daily basis.

This environment can have a significant impact on effective classroom teaching. Faculty members may fear for their own job security, which has obvious implications for teacher motivation and morale (Misco, 2011; Philpott, et al., 2011). There is a potential for a hostile classroom environment with disruptions and conflict that can continue well beyond the classroom. Class participation can suffer when only a few students dominate the discussion or with some students withdrawing and not participating altogether. Probably the most unfortunate outcome is the loss of an opportunity to teach students critical thinking skills. A politically-charged classroom can actually be an excellent opportunity to teach (Byford, Lennon, & Russell, 2009).

Theoretical Background

This study considered the theory that teachers can successfully engage students in the discussion of controversial and emotive issues in an effective manner. Oliver and Shaver's

(1996) Jurisprudential Inquiry Model can be effectively use to help describe the phenomenon created when teachers must deal with controversial and emotive issues in the politically-charged classroom.

This study also recognized that faculty members teaching courses in terrorism studies find themselves dealing with competing influences. They understand their right to academic freedom and have developed their own personal philosophies for teaching terrorism (Misco & Patterson, 2007). They also are subject to political pressures from various sources, such as the school administration, community and campus organizations, or simply individual students (Miller, Mills, & Harkins, 2011). These are the two competing influences that come together to create a dilemma for faculty members. Thornton's (1991) Teacher as Curricular Instructional Gatekeeper Theory recognizes that teachers have control over day-to-day classroom content. This study looked more closely at how teachers adapt to the politically-charged classroom.

Situation to Self

I approached this research from the standpoint of having served as a career intelligence officer from 1983 to 2012. I have included a biography in Appendix A. During my career, I also taught graduate-level courses at the National Intelligence University (NIU) and developed an understanding for the responsibilities of faculty members at institutions of higher education. Additionally, I currently serve as an assistant professor at Liberty University, a private Christian university, and teach online undergraduate courses in terrorism and strategic intelligence studies. I have developed an appreciation for academic freedom and the ability to study ideas critically, without fear of retribution or being subjected to undue external influences.

I have an in-depth understanding of Islam and the modern manifestation of Jihad currently being waged through asymmetric tactics, including violence and terrorism. The events

of 9/11 serve as a defining example of such tactics. It is my opinion that violence and Sharia-adherent Islam, at least as it is historically taught in its sacred texts, are inseparable. One cannot understand the current terrorist threat against the United States and Western Civilization without first understanding the basis for this threat. This basis is Islamism and the embracing of Sharia.

I base this belief on having personally conducted hundreds of interrogations of Al Qaeda and Taliban fighters at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in 2002. I have also engaged in an intensive study of Islam since that time. I have read scores of books from respected authors dealing with Islam, written from many points of view. I have read the Koran and much of the Hadith. This personal experience, coupled with serious academic study, gives me the credibility to make these statements about Islam and attribute its influence to the violence currently being waged in its name.

I am also a Christian and believe in a Christian worldview. My knowledge of biblical truth helps me understand and appreciate the historical events surrounding Islam and its core philosophical basis.

Problem Statement

College faculty members in homeland security programs are faced with the problem of teaching highly politically-charged issues that are often controversial and emotive in nature. Students come into the classroom with perspectives based on different worldviews that can be the source of conflict and emotion. Faculty members may be expected to teach from a worldview or position different from what they may personally believe—academic freedom notwithstanding. This dilemma creates a phenomenon in which faculty members must reconcile these two competing influences. The reconciliation of these two influences will undoubtedly

have effects on faculty members and how they teach. This phenomenon brings together the issue of academic freedom, political correctness, and a dynamic and highly-politicized field of study.

There is a significant body of research on teaching controversial and emotive issues that describes the phenomenon present in the classroom and attempt to provide ways of achieving positive outcomes in the classroom by overcoming the negative effects of the phenomenon. However, what is lacking in the literature is specifically looking at teaching controversial and emotive issues in terrorism studies courses in today's college classroom that may be politically-charged following the terror attacks of 9/11.

This phenomenon needs to be further understood and explained from an objective perspective. The problem is that there is currently no such voice to describe the experiences of faculty members who teach in this environment.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the phenomenon experienced by faculty members in higher education in the United States who teach courses in terrorism studies. Teachers are quite aware of the current political climate that pervades American education and the phenomenon that is present in the classroom (Hess, 2004). At this stage of the research, the phenomenon experienced by the faculty members involves teaching in an environment of academic freedom, but with political influences, especially those associated with controversial and emotive topics, such as the association between Islam and terrorism, targeted assassinations (drone strikes), coercive interrogation techniques such as waterboarding, and increased government powers to monitor citizens such as the Patriot Act and similar statutes. This study included 12 faculty members from colleges and universities in the United States who offer programs in homeland security and related disciplines. The theories guiding this study

included Oliver and Shaver's (1966) Jurisprudential Inquiry Model which was used to help teachers critically explore issues and Thorton's (1991) Curricular Instructional Gatekeeper Theory which addresses the idea that teachers exercise great autonomy in determining curricular content.

Significance of the Study

This study makes a significant contribution to the field of teaching terrorism studies, adds to the empirical literature regarding the teaching of controversial and emotive issues, and applies theoretical concepts in a new way to classroom teaching.

Practical Significance

Since there is no literature specifically addressing the teaching of controversial and emotive issues in terrorism studies courses, schools and academic departments involved with preparing homeland security professionals need guidance on how best to accomplish their tasks (Supinski, 2011) . The preparation of professionals entering the homeland defense and security field is important to the nation's security (Moore, Hatzadony, Cronin, & Breckenridge, 2010). The results of this study will shed light on the phenomenon experienced by faculty members assigned the responsibility of teaching courses in terrorism studies.

The phenomenon described in this research has an impact on their overall effectiveness of education programs in homeland defense and security because faculty members are often subjected to influences charged by political motivations (Horowitz, 2007). This research can help institutions further develop curriculum and improve how this subject is taught in courses. Best practices can be developed by identifying successful teaching methods and classroom strategies. The overarching goal of this research was to improve the quality of graduates of academic programs that prepare officers to serve in defense, intelligence and homeland security

organizations who have the mission of protecting the United States from foreign and domestic terrorist threats.

Empirical Significance

This research also contributes to the empirical literature that exists that deals with the teaching of controversial and emotive issues. While this area has been the object of much scholarly research over the last several decades (Philpott, Clabough, McConkey, & Turner, 2011) there has been no study specifically addressing the teaching of terrorism studies courses in the current environment created in this country following the terror attacks of 9/11.

Theoretical Significance

Finally, this research extends and applies the Jurisprudential Inquiry Model Theory (Oliver and Shaver, 1996) and the Teacher as Curricular Instructional Gatekeeper Theory (Thornton, 1991) to the study of the terrorism studies classroom in higher education in the U.S. This application has not been done in the existing literature.

Research Questions

Moustakas (1994) suggested that formulating the research question is the first challenge of the researcher. While this is true, the research questions can be formulated only after conducting an exhaustive literature review. It is only after the significant gaps in the literature are identified can applicable research questions be formulated (Creswell, 2013). The review of the literature revealed that there is little known about how faculty members deal with teaching courses in terrorism studies as it relates to engaging in the discussion of controversial and emotive issues. Creswell (2013) recommended using a single overarching central question and several research questions.

Central Question

The central question of my research was, “What are the experiences of faculty members who teach courses in terrorism studies as they relate to engaging in the discussion of issues that are controversial and emotive?”

The research question was the focus of the investigation (Moustakas, 1994). The central question was intentionally broad and was exploratory in nature. This was because I wanted to investigate a phenomenon of which little was known. This question helped to examine an area in which not much was known and lead towards a greater understanding of the essence of the experience.

Research Questions

The research questions for this research follow the central question and are more detailed. Moustakas (1994) recommends formulating the research questions so as to lead to a finer level of granularity and specificity to more carefully direct the researcher.

RQ1. How do instructors who teach courses in terrorism studies in higher education conceptualize controversy and emotion in the classroom that is politically-charged? Teachers define these terms in different ways (Malikow, 2006). The context in which the terms are framed can change how the issue is perceived by the teacher (Hess and Gatti, 2010). The manner and in which these terms are defined by the teacher influences how they are dealt with in the classroom (Clabough et al., 2011; Misco & Patterson, 2007).

RQ2. How do teachers in terrorism studies courses in higher education understand academic freedom, especially as this concept intersects with their own teaching experiences with

regards to teaching about controversial and emotive subject matter in the politically-charged classroom? Academic freedom means many things to many people. It is a complex term and is hard to define (Swezey & Ross, 2011). This is important to understand how teachers reconcile these issues (Hess and Gatti, 2010).

RQ3. How do instructors who teach courses in terrorism studies in higher education change their classroom teaching strategies based on their conceptions and experiences of teaching controversial and emotive issues? There can be a disparity in how teachers perceive teaching controversy and how they actually perceive their own practices in the classroom (Hamdan & Khader, 2014). Teachers can react to controversy in different ways that affect their teaching approaches (Hess, 2005). The politically-charged classroom can actually be an excellent opportunity to develop innovative teaching strategies (Byford, Lennon, & Russell, 2009) and best practices need to be identified.

RQ4. How have changes in teaching strategies affected teacher job satisfaction and student learning in the terrorism studies classroom? Teachers may feel subjected to political pressures from various sources, such as the school administration, community and campus organizations, or simply individual students (Miller, Mills, & Harkins, 2011). Teachers who feel pressured to change their teaching strategies often experience job dissatisfaction (Hess, 2004). Teacher job satisfaction has a significant impact on the teaching-learning process in the classroom (Misco, 2011; Philpott, et al., 2011).

Summary

This study used a qualitative research approach and a transcendental phenomenological design to examine the phenomenon experienced by college faculty members who taught terrorism studies courses at several colleges and universities throughout the United States in an

environment that is politically-charged after the attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. This issue is relevant and critical to the War on Terror.

Terrorism studies are a significant part of education programs in homeland security.

The contemporary literature revealed that faculty members are pressured by various political influences when teaching issues that are considered controversial and emotive in nature. The Jurisprudential Inquiry Model and the Curricular Instructional Gatekeeper Theory were used to provide a theoretical framework to address the issue of dealing with controversy and the idea that classroom teachers have great autonomy in determining the instructional content when addressing these controversial and emotive issues.

The central question asked in this research was, “What are the experiences of faculty members who teach courses in terrorism studies as they relate to engaging in the discussion of issues that are controversial and emotive?” This question helped to examine an area where not much was known and lead towards a greater understanding of the essence of the experience. research questions followed the central question and got into more detail, as they were more explanatory in nature.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter provides a discussion of the theoretical framework that was used and a review of the relevant professional and research literature. The Jurisprudential Inquiry Model and the Curricular Instructional Gatekeeper Theory were used to provide a theoretical framework to address the issue of dealing with controversy and the idea that classroom teachers have great autonomy in determining the instructional content when addressing controversial and emotive issues. The theories were defined and the relationship was established between what the theories assert and how they can be used to observe and describe the phenomenon experienced by the participants in this study.

This chapter draws upon relevant work from scholars investigating the teaching of controversial and emotive issues in education. This literature review provides an integrative review of the professional and research literature that represents the major areas of consideration and study for this topic.

First, a review of the relevant body of knowledge of how controversial and emotive issues are dealt with in the classroom is presented. This review is not a comprehensive historical collection but a purposeful selection focused on existing research about the perceptions and practices related to teaching controversial and emotive issues.

Second, this chapter delves into issues related to academic freedom in higher education in the United States. This review helps establish a basis for understanding faculty expectations in regards to what they believe can be freely discussed in the classroom and how certain subject matter should be handled.

Finally, this chapter presents the literature of the contemporary public discourse about potentially controversial and emotive issues commonly dealt with in terrorism studies courses, including the association between Islamism and terrorism, ethnic and religious profiling, detention and prosecution of terror suspects, enhanced interrogation techniques such as waterboarding, and expanded powers of government surveillance and searches.

There were considerable gaps identified in the literature that were relevant to my research problem. The first gap that became quite obvious was that the preponderance of the literature on controversial issues in the classroom was the result of research conducted at the secondary school level. While I determined that this literature was relevant to my study, it was apparent that there was a shortfall in available literature that was focused on higher education. Second, a great deal of the literature was focused on the student or on the overall learning process, and not directed towards the teachers' attitudes and practices. My research problem looked at the phenomenon of teaching controversial and emotive issues from the teacher's perspective, which filled the gap in this area. Finally, there was virtually no literature available on dealing with controversial and emotive issues in terrorism studies courses. Research that could be identified in this area had to do with overall terrorism curriculum and was not focused on the faculty member's perspective or specifically on controversial and emotive issues.

Research on terrorism and terrorism-related issues has increased dramatically in the wake of the 9/11 attacks (Silke, 2004). Silke (2004, p. 247) noted, "The rise in such reviews and surveys of the research literature reflects both the massive increase in volume and more significantly the massive increase in interest." While the subject of terrorism has experienced increased interest and research, the subject of teaching terrorism has not. A significant research gap exists with literature dealing with the teaching of terrorism in higher education. This

research gap was significant and pointed to a shortfall in knowledge relevant to teaching and preparing men and women to enter the workforce in the areas of defense, homeland security, intelligence, and law enforcement.

Theoretical Framework

This study was built on the premise that controversial and emotive issues-based instruction in terrorism studies can occur through a variety of strategies and models. Oliver and Shaver's (1996) Jurisprudential Inquiry Model was used to frame the instruction of controversial and emotive issues that occur when teaching terrorism studies. Thornton's (1991) Teacher as Curricular Instructional Gatekeeper Theory provided a framework for addressing the idea that classroom teachers have great autonomy in determining the day-to-day curricular content, instructional strategies, and learning objectives to be experienced by their students. Instructors are free to react to classroom dynamics and change their approaches as needed.

The Jurisprudential Inquiry Model

The Jurisprudential Inquiry model is based on the exploration and reflection of everyday social issues in which people usually have conflicting thoughts and differences (Oliver & Shaver, 1966). The idea is that this model will help teachers guide students to explore social issues, encourage them to question social and political forces, encourage value clarification, and practice reflective thinking skills. The process of the Jurisprudential Inquiry Model includes the elements below:

- Orientation to the case
- Identifying the issue(s)
- Taking a position
- Exploring the stance

- Refining and qualifying the position
- Testing the assumption about the facts, definitions, and consequences

The model holds to the assumptions that social values legitimately conflict with one another, that negotiation can help to resolve complex and controversial issues, and that a skillful citizen is like a competent judge. A judge listens to the evidence, analyzes the legal positions taken by both sides, weighs these positions and the evidence, assesses the meaning provisions of the law, and finally makes the best possible decision. To play the role, three types of competencies are required: familiarity with values, skills for clarifying and resolving issues, and knowledge of contemporary political and public issues (Oliver & Shaver, 1966).

The Jurisprudential Inquiry Model provides a lens through which one can study and analyze the experiences of teaching controversial and emotive issues. Oliver and Shaver (1966) provided a model for how issues can be framed. The Jurisprudential Inquiry Model identifies issues as either definitional, ethical/value, or fact-explanation.

Definitional issues. These issues relate to the meaning of particular words or phrases. Ambiguity, especially with words that may have emotive connotations, such as “illegal alien” or “Islamic extremist,” must be resolved. Oliver and Shaver (1966) realized that it was important to resolve issues related to definitions before the discussion of a case. All participants of the discussion must agree on the same definition. This agreement may come from an authoritative source or agreed upon criteria by the participants (Oliver, Newmann, & Singleton, 1992).

Ethical/value issues. These issues deal with, “the legitimacy and rightness or wrongness of actions and policy” (Oliver et al., 1992, p. 101). Questions dealing with ethics and values can often have controversial and emotive aspects. They are common in dealing with political or social subjects. This is especially true in issues discussed in terrorism studies courses. Issues

dealing with Fourth Amendment protections or enhanced interrogation techniques are steeped in ethical and value considerations.

Fact-explanation issues. Questioning the facts involved with an issue is common when dealing with controversial and emotive issues. They most frequently arise as a result of the discussion of ethical/value issues (Oliver et al., 1992). Citing U.S. Supreme Court rulings on Fourth Amendment cases would be an example of a fact-explanation issue. Using authoritative sources and demonstrating consistency will ensure the accuracy of factual information (Oliver et al., 1992).

The Jurisprudential Inquiry Model considers questions dealing with definitions, values, and facts. Oliver and Shaver (1966) developed their model realizing that teachers make decisions regarding how issues will be dealt with in their classrooms. Teachers also serve in the role of curriculum and instructional gatekeeper.

Teacher as Curricular-Instructional Gatekeeper Theory

Through this study I will also seek to identify what influences terrorism studies teachers' decisions to teach controversial and emotive issues and what successes and challenges they perceive in doing so. Stephen Thornton's (1991) Teacher as Curricular-Instructional Gatekeeper Theory provides a framework for addressing this aspect of the study.

The gatekeeper theory is based on Thornton's (1991) belief that classroom teachers have great autonomy in determining the day-to-day curricular content, instructional strategies, and learning objectives to be experienced by students. While Thornton's research was focused on high school social studies teachers, it is applicable to this study. Teachers might identify with gatekeeping because they believe their autonomy and empowerment over the curriculum allows them to embrace or reject the curriculum content (Thornton, 2005).

Gatekeeping, or the control and direction maintained by the classroom teachers over curriculum, is “more crucial to curriculum and instruction than the form the curriculum takes” (Thornton, 2005, p. 10). Thornton said that gatekeeping is important because it “determines both what content and experiences students have access to and the nature of that content and those experiences” (Thornton, 1989, p.4).

The decisions made by teachers vary considerably based on each teacher’s frame of reference, which is influenced by individual values, beliefs, and previous experiences. Often teachers are unreflective about the decisions they make and may even base their decisions on unexamined assumptions. Curricular-instructional decisions are the key determinants of what students take away from the classroom (Thornton, 1991). Thornton (1991) identifies three components to the gatekeeper theory: meaning, planning, and instructional strategy.

Meaning. The beliefs teachers hold about the meaning of the subject matter they are teaching greatly affects how they teach. These beliefs are strongly influenced by their own life experiences (Thornton, 1991). Curricular-instructional gatekeeping is a decision-making process governed by the instructor’s frame of reference (Thornton, 2005). This has a strong implication for terrorism studies. Many teachers in the terrorism studies discipline teach as a second career after having served in the military, intelligence, security, or law enforcement career fields (Supinski, 2011). They have had a lifetime to develop strong beliefs regarding their discipline.

Planning. While most teachers are provided established curriculum by their institutions, teachers determine the specific scope, sequence, and learning activities that will be presented in the classroom. Planning is also a product of the instructor’s frame of reference (Thornton, 2005). Teachers’ planning interacts with their beliefs about motivation and socialization goals (Thornton, 2005).

Instructional strategy. Instruction involves the sequence of activities to engage the students in the learning process. Thornton's (1989) research shows that in teaching social studies, the instructional curriculum is textbook-based and teacher-dominated. There is much instructional variety because each teacher determines his or her own instructional strategy. Like meaning and planning, the instructional strategy is influenced heavily by the teacher's beliefs and frame of reference (Thornton, 2005).

Related Literature

This section provides an integrative review of the professional and research literature that represent the major areas of consideration for this study. First, a review is presented of the relevant body of knowledge in the study of how controversial and emotive issues are dealt with in the classroom. Second, in this section I delve into issues related to academic freedom in higher education in the United States. This review is done to help establish a basis for understanding faculty expectations in regards to what they believe can be discussed in the classroom and how certain subjects should be handled.

This section also presents the literature of the public discourse about issues prone to being controversial and emotive that are commonly dealt with in terrorism studies courses. These issues include the association between Islamism and terrorism, ethnic and religious profiling, detention and prosecution of terror suspects, enhanced interrogation techniques such as waterboarding, and expanded powers of government surveillance and searches.

Teaching Controversial and Emotive Issues

An abundance of research on teaching controversial issues has been conducted since the 1960s (Philpott, Clabough, McConkey, & Turner, 2011). The vast majority of this research has to do with teaching controversial issues at the secondary school level, especially in social studies

classes. The research can be helpful and relevant to the issues investigated in this study, which focuses on higher education. While there are some differences, they deal with the same pedagogical methods with similar student populations. In instances where there is research available from both the high school and college levels, the findings in the literature are similar.

While there is much research available on the topic of teaching controversial issues, for this study I focus my inquiry on three areas most relevant to my research problem. These areas include defining the nature of controversial and emotive issues, the need for and benefits of discussing controversial and emotive issues in the classroom, and teacher perceptions and practices of dealing with controversial and emotive issues in the classroom.

What is the nature of controversial and emotive issues? Before a serious study of controversial and emotive issues can be conducted, an examination of the nature of these issues must be done. It is important to define what a controversial issue is. There is certainly no shortage of definitions for what can be considered controversial

Varied and simplistic definitions of controversial issues are prevalent in research where educators were questioned. In one study, all of the teachers surveyed defined the nature of controversy as simply opposing viewpoints and conflict. They referred to them as sensitive subjects requiring students to choose sides (Clabough, Philpott, McConkey, & Turner, 2011). Probably the most simplistic definition states that controversial issues are issues about which a considerable number of people argue without reaching a conclusion (Oulton, Dillon, & Grace, 2004). They are what Levinson (2008) calls “reasonable disagreements” (p. 1217). They are issues that have withstood examination and debate over a period of time. Dearden (1981) defines an issue as being controversial “if contrary views can be held on it without these views being contrary to reason” (p. 38). Malikow (2006) says a controversial issue exists when a strong

intellectual argument can be made by two or more competing interests. Harwood and Hahn (1990) simply refer to them as issues that bring about disagreement.

One element left out of these definitions is the aspect of emotion. The Oxford English Dictionary (2000) defines the term *emotive* as “arousing or able to arouse intense feeling and expressing a person's feelings rather than being neutrally or objectively descriptive.” The more simplified definitions of controversial issues do not describe the whole phenomenon adequately. Other researchers have developed more complete definitions to consider.

Controversial and emotive issues are different because they are personal, public, and provocative. People often take controversial issues personally and believe that their position is superior to those held by others (Gardner, 1984). Differences in personal values and interests can stimulate conflict. They can be offensive to some and provoke passionate discussions (Byford, Lennon, & Russel, 2009; Evans, Avery, & Pederson, 1999; Noddings & Brooks, 2017; Soley, 1996; Zimmermen & Robertson, 2017). A study by Clabough, Philpott, McConkey, and Turner (2011) defined a controversial issue as “a state of prolonged public dispute or debate where one side of the debate can be offensive to some and provoke passionate discussions” (p. 3). Stradling (1984,) defined controversial issues as “issues that deeply divide a society, that generate conflicting explanations and solutions based on alternative value systems” (p. 122). The context of a controversial and emotive issue is also important.

The extent to which an issue is considered controversial is also highly contextual in nature (Misco, 2011; Thornton, 2005). It is contextual in terms of time, location, and how it is presented by the teacher (Clabough et al., 2011; Misco & Patterson, 2007). Time often determines if an issue is considered controversial (Levinson, 2008). For example, the issue of women's suffrage was extremely controversial in 1920, yet today it is virtually universally

accepted that women should have the right to vote. Time and history have reshaped the debate. It is no longer what Harwood and Hahn (1990) considered an issue on which there is disagreement.

The physical location where the debate takes place can also help determine whether an issue is considered controversial. For example, a debate over the Province of Quebec's independence from Canada could be an extremely emotional and contentious topic in Canada, yet few in the United States may not even be aware the issue exists. Taking an issue across an international border can significantly change the nature of the debate.

Controversial issues are also contextual because the way a teacher frames an issue in the classroom can change how the issue is dealt with in the classroom. Hess and Gatti (2010) concluded that teachers will identify an issue as being either *closed*, *open*, or *tipping*. It is the teacher who frames how the issue is dealt with in the classroom. If a teacher considers an issue closed, there is no need for discussion. For example, a teacher may consider the issue of same-sex marriage to be a closed issue and therefore not subject to inquiry and debate. His opinion may be that the Supreme Court has determined the law and the issue is now settled. Another teacher may point to the current public discourse in the United States and treat the issue as open. He will encourage the students to deliberate the matter as a legitimate contemporary controversy suitable for inquiry and debate. Some issues may be described as *tipping* when they are in transition between open and closed. Understanding the nature of controversial and emotive issues is important, but understanding the benefits there are to the student will help one understand why a teacher would want to use them in the classroom.

The benefits of discussing controversial issues in the classroom. There is a considerable body of knowledge supporting the discussion of controversial issues in the classroom. The benefits are well-established and documented in numerous studies using various

approaches and methods. The literature shows that engaging in the discussion of controversial issues in the classroom helps the students develop critical thinking skills, develops interpersonal communication skills, and enhances student interest and performance.

Development of critical thinking skills. Various researchers had varying concepts for what they considered to be critical thinking. The most common way that researchers conceptualized critical thinking related to using cognitive skills and a strategy of solving a complex problem by raising vital questions, gathering relevant information, determining findings, and communicating effectively (Halpern, 1996; Manfra & Bolick, 2017; Paul & Elder, 2006). They believed that students benefited by learning the process of analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating supported arguments. Critical thinking is also linked to higher order thinking found in Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956).

Incorporating the discussion of controversial issues in the learning process can have a significantly positive effect on helping students to develop critical thinking skills (Alleva & Rovner, 2013; Clabough et al., 2011; Davis, Zorwick, Roland, & Wade, 2016; Fournier-Sylvester, 2013; Hess, 2009; Hess & Gatti, 2010; Kruger, 2012; Levstik & Tyson, 2010; Manfra & Bolick, 2017; Misco, 2011; Misco, 2012; Noddings & Brooks, 2017; Parker, 2006; Payne & Gainey, 2003; Pollock, Hamann, & Wilson, 2011; Zimmermen & Robertson, 2017). Camicia and Dobson (2010) found that the discussion of controversial issues in the classroom provides students with opportunities to engage in higher order thinking by examining divergent points of view about an issue. Hahn (1996) added that students developed cognitive skills, such as constructing hypotheses and collecting and evaluating evidence.

Fessel (2006) found that the use of controversial issues promoted critical thinking skills. However, he added that this requires institutional commitment in the form of encouraging and

maintaining academic freedom. If the institution creates an environment in which the teacher and student can both feel safe discussing a controversial issue, then the student will be able to develop higher order of learning skills. I will discuss academic freedom later in this chapter, but first it must be noted how closely related to critical thinking skills is a student's ability to communicate effectively.

Development of interpersonal communication skills. The literature overwhelmingly shows that incorporating the discussion of controversial issues in the classroom can have positive effects on students' interpersonal skills (Barton & McCully, 2007; Byford, Lennon, & Russell, 2009; Harwood & Hahn, 1990; Hess, 2004; Misco, 2011; Misco & Patterson, 2007). These positive outcomes include listening, speaking, and working effectively in groups.

Harwood and Hahn (1990) concluded that students who engage in the discussion of controversial issues in the classroom develop important attitudes and communication skills, such as listening more carefully, responding empathetically, speaking persuasively, and cooperating better with others in a group. Misco (2011) cited that investigating values reflected in public policy leads to dealing with controversial issues and contributes to improving research skills, critical thinking, deductive and inductive reasoning, persuasive writing skills, and interpersonal skills in students. Hess (2002) cited that students' ability to work in groups is significantly improved by engaging in the discussion of controversial issues. In a research study of 54 MBA graduate students, Dallimore, Hertenstein, and Platt (2008) discovered a significant positive correlation between active classroom discussion and an increase in students' self-reported oral communication skills. They also concluded that this increase in oral communication skills was related to an increase in student performance.

Enhancing student interest and performance. The literature clearly points to the inclusion of the discussion of controversial and emotive issues in the classroom as being very beneficial to stimulating student interest and improving overall classroom performance (Hess, 2004, 2005; Kirschner, 2012; Pollock, Hamann, & Wilson, 2011; Prince, 2004; Stradling, 1984). Student interest in the subject matter is increased because they have a sense of being engaged (Kirschner, 2012). This sense of engagement can have many benefits to the learning process. When students are engaged, they are more likely to feel independent, to retain information better, and to perceive the subject as being more meaningful and relevant. Stradling (1984) concluded that, when students become engaged in the classroom, they become more intellectually independent. Prince (2004) found that students retain information better when they are more engaged in the classroom. Several research studies concluded that, when encouraged to discuss controversial issues in the classroom, students are more actively engaged in the curriculum and believe that the issues are more meaningful and relevant to their everyday lives (Huerta, 2007; McGowan, McGowan, & Lombard, 1994; Misco, 2012). The students claim that they feel more like participants in the learning process.

Students also report that, by engaging in discussions of controversial issues in the classroom, they better enjoy the complexity of the issue (Solomon & Aikenhead, 1994) and actually have more fun learning (Hess, 2004). This student awareness also leads to an increase in the actual mastery of the subject matter. All of these benefits point to an increase in overall learning.

When students engage in the discussion of controversial issues in the classroom, they actually learn better. Their acquisition of understanding is increased mainly because of an increased level of interest (Byford & Russell, 2006; Dearden, 1981; Stradling, 1984) while they

become more active learners. Hess (2001, 2004) suggested that simply teaching with discussion and allowing student input improves the students' abilities to think.

Teacher perceptions and practices in dealing with controversial and emotive issues.

Teacher perceptions and practices regarding teaching controversial and emotive issues have been the focus of much contemporary research. Teacher perceptions are described as the thoughts or mental images that teachers have regarding their teaching style. They are shaped by their background knowledge and life experiences. It is a way of regarding situations and judging their relative importance (Abu-Hamdan & Khader, 2014). A thorough review of the literature shows two common themes related to teacher perceptions and practices.

First, it is clear that teachers understand and appreciate the importance controversial and emotive issues play in the social science classroom. Second, however, they are concerned about unpredictable student reactions, the fear of retribution for offending political sensitivities, and realization of their own teaching inadequacies, such as having insufficient knowledge of the subject matter and the pedagogical skills to effectively deal with controversial issues in the classroom. Abu-Hamdan & Khader's (2014) study of 24 teachers revealed "a gloomy picture and tremendous contradictions, paradoxes and challenges among teachers." (p. 76). They went on to conclude that there were diverse perceptions regarding teaching controversy and that a disparity existed between their perceptions and practices in the classroom (Hamdan & Khader, 2014). The teachers knew what to teach, but resisted teaching controversial issues.

Teacher understanding and appreciation of teaching controversial and emotive issues.

The literature shows that teachers appreciate the value of using the discussion of controversial and emotive issues in the classroom because they help the student develop critical thinking skills, develop interpersonal communication skills, and enhance student interest and performance

(Alleva & Rovner, 2013; Byford, Lennon, & Russell, 2009; Clabough et al., 2011; Dallimore, Hertenstein, and Platt, 2008; Davis, Zorwick, Roland, & Wade, 2016; Fournier-Sylvester, 2013; Hahn, 1996; Hess, 2009; Hess & Gatti, 2010; Kruger, 2012; Levstik & Tyson, 2010; Misco, 2011; Misco, 2012; Parker, 2006; Payne & Gainey, 2003; Pollock, Hamann, & Wilson, 2011).

The many benefits of discussing controversial and emotive issues in the classroom are discussed earlier in this chapter, and the literature about teacher perceptions of these benefits closely parallel these findings. What is especially relevant to this study are the teacher perceptions that are detrimental to teaching controversial and emotive issues.

Unpredictability of student reactions. While some teachers experience a problem with getting students to participate in the discussion of controversial and emotive subjects in the classroom (Fournier-Sylvester, 2013), most educators fear the emotional reactions of the students and the problems that can occur with classroom control (Kello, 2015). A study conducted by Byford, Lennon, and Russell (2009) examined teachers' attitudes towards teaching controversial issues in the classroom. The study surveyed 67 high school teachers and identified several problems they experienced when dealing with controversial issues. They found that teachers believed it is necessary to teach students how to deal with controversial issues because they believed these issues confuse and frustrate the students (Byford, et al., 2009). A study conducted by Kello (2015) determined that some teachers avoided topics because of negative student reactions. These negative student reactions led to even greater problems for teachers when the students made complaints to the school or an outside organization.

Fear of retribution for offending political sensitivities. The literature revealed three common themes related to the fear of retribution for offending political sensitivities. First, there is a perception among teachers that there is a climate of political sensitivity present in the

classroom and with society in general (Fournier-Sylvester, 2013; Hess, 2004; Kello, 2016; Misco, 2011). Second, educators fear repercussions when certain political sensitivities are offended (Misco, 2011; Philpott, et al., 2011). Third, educators perceive that they do not have support from their systems and administrators and even feel that teaching about controversial issues can bring retribution from their leadership (Clabough et al., 2011).

Teachers are quite aware of the current political climate that pervades American education. Hess (2004) noted, “The rancorous division that permeates the current political climate, coupled with the aftermath of September 11, make the terrain of controversial issues teaching especially treacherous now.” (p. 258). Hess (2004) added that in the more dramatic cases, teachers were disciplined and even fired for teaching about controversial political issues that involved September 11. Teachers are aware that controversial issues are likely to divide the community along racial, ethnic, or religious lines. These divisions can disturb the “peace and stability of the scholastic environment.” (Abu-Hamdan & Khader, p. 71).

Educators are also aware of the possibility of repercussions and even reprisals if it is suspected that they were trying to push a certain political agenda or not properly respect certain political sensitivities (Clabough et al., 2011; Fournier-Sylvester, 2013; Hess, 2004; Kello, 2016; Misco, 2011). Teachers have perceptions of compromised academic freedom that results in avoiding controversies in the classroom (Kello, 2016). These perceptions are of pressures coming from the school, community, and the government. What makes this worse is that they do not feel like they have the support of their superiors.

In a study by Clabough et al. (2011), 50 teachers were questioned, and many said they did not feel that they have the support of their systems and administrators when challenged for how they handle controversy in the classroom. Many of them also said that teaching about

controversy is a problem because they fear it as a “career destroying monster and demon.” (p. 1). Many are afraid they could be involved in a lawsuit without the protection of their organization (Clabough, et al., 2011). In summary, teachers know the value and benefits of engaging in the discussion of controversial and emotive issues in the classroom, but they often avoid it because of a fear of retribution without being protected by their leadership and school.

Feeling restrained by their own values and beliefs. Educators can also feel restrained by their own values and beliefs regardless of outside pressures and expectations (Kello, 2016). Teachers often have an inherent fear of offending someone or being insensitive (Flinders, 2005). This is probably enhanced by the tendency of students to be more critical of teachers and to be easily offended (Elmore, 2010). These self-induced pressures can be just as real and have a detrimental impact as those pressures coming from external sources outside of the teacher’s control. Philpott, et al., (2011) found that many teachers “almost instinctively want to avoid conflict in the classroom”. (p. 32). In Nelson’s (2003) prominent study of teachers’ perceptions of academic freedom, he concluded that many teachers have misconceptions about academic freedom that lead to self-censorship.

Feelings of inadequacy on the part of the teacher. Many teachers feel under-prepared and constrained in their ability to handle controversial issues in the classroom (Byford, et al, 2009; Clabough et al., 2011; Fournier-Sylvester, 2013; Hess, 2004; Oulton, et al., 2004). The Clabough, et al. (2001) study concluded that teachers have difficulty dealing with ideas and opinions different from their own. Teachers are uncomfortable openly discussing controversial issues in the classroom. Cotton’s (2006) case study concluded that teachers had difficulty becoming actively involved in argument and debate without injecting their own opinion. The teachers found that maintaining a neutral or balanced approach was unsustainable. In addition to

teacher confidence in dealing with controversial issues, Fournier-Sylvester (2013) found that many teachers questioned their ability to teach controversial and emotive issues because they lacked sufficient knowledge in the controversial subject matter. Reis and Galvão (2009) also found that teachers often believed they had insufficient knowledge of the issue. Pedagogical skills and subject matter knowledge determine the success of a teacher when dealing with controversial and emotive issues.

Teacher approaches to dealing with controversial issues. Over the last 20 years, Hess (2005), from the University of Wisconsin – Madison, has been a respected and leading thought leader in the area of teaching controversial issues in the classroom. Hess has identified four approaches that illustrate how teachers' views influence their teaching of controversial issues. Hess discusses four approaches that have been cited extensively in the literature dealing with controversial issues in the classroom. An illustration of these four approaches is depicted in Figure 1 (Hess, 2005, p. 259).

<p style="text-align: center;">Denial</p> <p>It is not a controversial political issue: "Some people may say it is controversial, but I think they are wrong. There is a right answer to this question. So I will teach as if it were not controversial to ensure that students develop the answer.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Avoidance</p> <p>Avoid the controversial political issue: "The issue is controversial, but my personal views are so strong that I do not think I can teach it fairly, or I do not want to do so."</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Privilege</p> <p>Teach toward a particular perspective on the controversial political issue: "It is controversial, but I think there is a clearly right answer and will try to get my students to adopt that position</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Balance</p> <p>Teach the matter as genuine controversial political issue: "The issue is controversial and I will aim toward balance and try to ensure that various positions get a best case, fair hearing."</p>

Figure 1. Approaches to Controversial Issues

Denial. The first approach is for teachers to deny that an issue is actually controversial at all. Hess (2005) provided an example in which a teacher discussed the death penalty in the United States not as being a controversial issue, but rather as a question for which there was only one correct answer that the students should be taught to believe. The teacher was a member of Amnesty International and deeply believed that the sanctioned capital punishment was wrong (Hess, 2005).

Privilege. With this approach teachers believe a topic is controversial, but they want to stress a particular perspective in their teaching. Like *Denial*, they are teaching or siding with only one issue of the controversy. They are promoting their own perspective on their students. (Hess, 2005).

Avoidance. Even when teachers believe a topic is a controversial issue, they sometimes decide not to include it in the curricula. Teachers decide not to include controversial issues for two main reasons. Some teachers are afraid that the issue will cause uproar in the classroom or community. More prevalent, however, is the influence of the teachers' own views. They feel that their strong views about an issue prevents them from teaching their students about it in a pedagogically neutral fashion (Hess, 2005).

Balance. This approach typically involves applying a standard for determining whether a topic is a controversial issue and, if it is, teaching about it without favoring a particular perspective. This approach is clearly the most preferred method (Hess, 2005).

The State of Academic Freedom in the United States

To understand the classroom dynamic of dealing with controversial and emotive issues, it is necessary to have an understanding of what academic freedom is and its role in higher education. One must understand that college faculty members go into the classroom with some perception of academic freedom.

Academic freedom means many things to many people. It is a complex term and is hard to define (Swezey & Ross, 2011). However, professional and scholarly organizations have examined the concept of academic freedom and have defined its significance in higher education.

Historical development of academic freedom in the U.S. The historical development of academic freedom in the U.S. has its roots going back to the development of mid-eighteenth century liberalism (Hofstadter & Metzger, 1955). The ideology of liberalism included the concepts of equality, autonomy, sovereignty, and individual freedom. According to the contemporary political philosopher John N. Gray (2008), "the essence of liberalism is toleration

of different beliefs and of different ideas as to what constitutes a good life” (p. 86). This is the major philosophical basis for academic freedom.

This early development of academic freedom had a significant impact on institutions of higher learning in Germany (Smith, 2002; Worgul, 1992). The development of academic freedom in Germany included three important concepts: (a) *Lehrfreiheit*, which means freedom to teach; (b) *Lernfreiheit*, which means freedom to learn; and (c) *Freiheit der Wissenschaft*, which means freedom of a school to conduct research free from governmental interference

Lehrfreiheit was the first of the concepts developed in Germany to take hold in the United States. This freedom continued to develop as faculty members sought greater autonomy within their colleges and universities (Chang, 2001). Academic freedom in America promoted the advancement of knowledge by protecting researchers and scholars. It protected their ability to conduct scholarly research, teach, and publish. (Eisenberg, 1988).

Institutional academic freedom developed in the 20th century in response to governmental intrusion into the affairs of colleges and universities (Hofstadter, 1996). Academic freedom in the United States developed over the centuries from its revolutionary foundations in the 1700s in response to challenges to professorial autonomy and institutional sovereignty in the 20th century (Metzger, 1955).

The AAUP Statement of Academic Freedom. The most recognized and referenced definition of academic freedom in the United States is from the statement published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) in 1940. The statement addressed three basic academic freedoms. These are (a) freedom of inquiry and freedom of research and publication; (b) the freedom of teaching within the university or college institution; and (c) the

freedom of extramural utterance and action (Joughlin, 1967; Poch, 1993). The complete statement is as follows.

Academic Freedom

- a. Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.
- b. Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment.
- c. College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution. (American Association of University Professors, 1915, p.1).

The statement's purpose was "to promote public understanding and support of academic freedom and tenure and agreement upon procedures to ensure them in colleges and universities" (American Association of University Professors, 1915, p. 1). The statement went on to say,

Academic freedom is essential . . . and applies to both teaching and research. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning. (p. 1).

The statement proclaimed rights on behalf of the professors and the students.

The statement did provide some guidance on what is considered academic freedom. The statement said that, although teachers may be entitled to freedom of discussion in their classrooms, they should be careful not to introduce controversial issues that could have no relation to their subject being taught in the classroom (Buss, 1999). The statement cautioned that academic freedom was not intended to justify uncontrolled commentary on any subject regardless of the content of the course. Buss (1999) also observed that the statement acknowledged, however, that academic freedom is a right that is limited to a great extent by an institution's curriculum requirements, institutional and contractual obligations, and the freedoms and rights of students. Furthermore, Dulles (1992) noted that it also advised that academic freedom did not include protecting speech that was deemed to be professionally inappropriate. It required that it be consistent with academic community standards. Finally, the U.S. Supreme Court adopted the standard included in the statement in 1968 in *Pickering v. Board of Education*. Since that time; academic freedom has been considered protected speech and protected by law. Academic Freedom in the American college classroom has been challenged recently by what has been called *political correctness*.

Political Correctness in American Academia

To understand the classroom dynamic of dealing with controversial and emotive issues, not only is it necessary to understand the idea of academic freedom, but it is also necessary to

understand the phenomenon known as *political correctness* as it exists today in the college classroom.

A common definition of political correctness does not exist in the literature. The Oxford English Dictionary (2018) defines the term political correctness as, “The avoidance of forms of expression or action that are perceived to exclude, marginalize, or insult groups of people who are socially disadvantaged or discriminated against.” The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2018) adds an element of exclusion by defining the term as, “conforming to a belief that language and practices which could offend political sensibilities (as in matters of sex or race) and that should be eliminated.”

The idea of political correctness is certainly not new. Bloom (1988) pointed out that John Stuart Mill, in his work *On Liberty*, had a good understanding of political correctness in 1859, although the term did not exist at that time. Mill wrote about the harm that the social stigmatization of unpopular speech does to freedom of speech. He discussed the presence of “social intolerance” and was very concerned about its impact.

One of the first contemporary uses of the term political correctness was published by Bloom (1987) in his book, *The Closing of the American Mind*. Bloom wrote about the existence of political correctness, especially as it exists in American higher education. His use of the term provided a negative commentary to the current intellectual and moral climate in American education. Bloom criticized moral relativism and other modern philosophies as being barriers to truth and knowledge by limiting debate and critical thinking on certain subjects.

Today’s use of the term political correctness is essentially used by the political right to describe ideas of the political left which seek to limit what they call offensive language, prejudiced attitudes, and insulting behavior directed towards those in marginalized groups

(Hughes, 2010). Other researchers have attempted to provide a reasonable definition of political correctness.

Loury (1994) defined political correctness as “an implicit social convention of restraint on public expression, operating within a given community” (p. 430). Lalonde, et al (2000) said that proponents of political correctness put specific restraints on speakers when referring to specific social groups and that certain words or phrases should be avoided that might provide negative associations with a group’s identity. Choi and Murphy (1992) said that the use of politically incorrect language may not be intentional. They said the act of engaging in politically incorrect language may be expressed by someone who neither endorses such views at a conscious level nor intends for these views to be promoted.

The use of the expression political correctness can in and of itself be controversial and emotive. Deresiewicz (2017), in an article published in *The American Scholar* described political correctness as a “flesh-eating bacterium” that “feeds preferentially on brain tissue, and which has become endemic on elite college campuses” (p. 30). He argued that political correctness has nothing to do with creating a safe environment in the classroom, but is actually about power. He went on to claim that political correctness is used by the the ideologically privileged to espouse the approved points of view which target the views held by conservative students, especially students with religious beliefs, such as Christians and Jews.

Political correctness is a term with an evolving definition. The mere use of the term political correctness can create controversy and emotion. The discipline of Terrorism Studies is fraught with topics that generate a great deal of controversy and emotion.

Controversial and Emotive Issues Relative to Terrorism Studies Courses

The nature of the public discourse related to controversial and emotive issues is important to understanding the classroom dynamic. Also important is the environment that college faculty members find themselves. Stakes are high because schools are training the next generation of intelligence officers, military and law enforcement, homeland security, FBI officers, etc.

The relationship of Islamic teaching with violence and terrorism. There is a great variation of opinions in the public discourse on what role Islam and Islamic teaching play in modern terrorism. Many believe that religious motivations for terrorism are a thing of the past (Horowitz, 2009). There is a lack of agreement as to whether Islamic terrorism is even a correct term to use. Before delving into the issues surrounding this question, it will be helpful to define terms. The study of religion can be particularly controversial, but teaching Islam can pose a host of challenges (Dakake, 2018)

Defining terrorism. Terrorism has a variety of meanings and many different definitions (Crenshaw, 2000; Jackson, 2016; Pisiu & Hain, 2018). There are many official definitions of terrorism maintained by the U.S. government. The Department of Defense defines it as “the unlawful use of violence or threat of violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies. Terrorism is often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs and committed in the pursuit of goals that are usually political.” (Department of Defense, 2010, p. I-1). The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) has adopted a definition found in U.S. law, specifically, the Annual Country Reports on Terrorism 22 USC § 2656f. This law stated that, “‘terrorism’ means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.” (p.2). The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines terrorism as the “unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to

intimidate or coerce a Government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.” (White, 2013, p.4).

In 2004, the United Nations convened a High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change that was composed of independent experts. The Secretary-General of the United Nations called states to set aside their differences and to adopt, in the text of a proposed Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism, the following political description of terrorism:

Terrorism is any action, in addition to actions already specified by the existing conventions on aspects of terrorism, the Geneva Conventions and Security Council resolution 1566 (2004), that is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, when the purpose of such an act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act. (UN, 2004, p.2)

Schmidt’s academic consensus definition of terrorism was written in 1988 and remains the standard definition used in academia. Schmidt and Jongman (2005) said that there is no true or correct definition of terrorism because terrorism is an abstract concept. Schmidt and Jongman’s (2005) definition said,

Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby - in contrast to assassination - the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperiled) victims, and main targets are used

to manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought. (p. 38)

In summary, there is no commonly accepted definition for the term terrorism. Some of the definitions appear very similar, but are only nuanced by the organization that provided the definition. For example, law enforcement organizations tend to define terrorism in terms of criminal activity, while military organizations tend to define terrorism in terms of force.

International organizations see the term terrorism through the philosophical lens of international law. Because terrorism is an abstract term, students will enter the classroom with their own definitions of terrorism which can be a source of controversy.

Defining Islamism. This research also deals with the concept of Islamist terrorism (and, thusly, Islamism). It should be noted that not all Muslims are Islamists. As with terrorism, there are several definitions of Islamism. Among these definitions is the idea that Islam is a system that controls all aspects of life, that Sharia (traditional Islamic law) covers not only religious life but also all other areas of human life, from government to ethics (Soage, 2009). Liebl (2009) provided a very basic definition by defining an Islamist as a “fundamentalist” (p. 373).

In his testimony to the U.S. Senate, Maajid Nawaz, a former leader for the global Islamist extremist group Hizb ut-Tahrir, described four beliefs that all Islamists, or followers of Islamism, generally share:

- 1) Islam is a political ideology rather than a religion.... there must be an Islamic solution to everything;
- 2) "Sharia[h] religious code, which is a personal code of conduct, must become state law";
- 3) The Ummah, or the Muslim global community is a political identity rather than a religious identity; and
- 4) The political ideology with its laws

(Sharia) and global community (Ummah) is represented by an expansionist state, and that is the Caliphate. (Nawaz, 2008. p. 6)

Mozaffari (2007) said that Islamism is an ideology, a movement-organization, and a form of government. He provided probably the most complete and realistic definition of Islamism. His definition said,

Islamism is a religious ideology with a holistic interpretation of Islam whose final aim is the conquest of the world by all means. This definition is composed of four interrelated elements. The first is a religious ideology, the second a holistic interpretation of Islam, the third conquest of the world and finally the fourth and the last element is the use of all means in the search for the final objective. (Mozaffari, 2007, p. 21)

Two competing views of Islamism and terrorism. The literature shows that there are two broad categories of authors who have studied the relationship between Islam and terrorism. One side claims that religion is not the cause of Islamist terrorism. Instead, they believe that the causes are due to social and political problems, such as poverty and hunger. The other side believes that Islamism is the main driving force behind terrorism by groups claiming an affiliation with Islam.

Jackson (2007) argued that the term *Islamic terrorism* that is often used in literature draws attention to inaccurate cultural stereotypes of Islam and Muslim people. Mamdani (2002) stated that it is impossible to determine a person's political outlook from his or her culture or religion. He wrote that the only way properly to understand terrorism is by looking at broader historical and political perspectives (Jackson, 2016).

Ehrlich and Liu (2002) said that the causes of terrorism come mainly from geopolitical factors, such as oil and history. They point to income infusion into Muslim countries by oil

revenue and to problems brought about by former colonial powers in the Middle East. Frisch (2005) wrote that Islam is used mainly as a justification to mobilize and recruit members rather than to serve as an ideological basis for terror groups. Finally, Mousseau (2002) wrote that Islam has been manipulated by terrorists to protect privileged statuses by endorsing a sort of “anti-market” ideology.

Others believe that religion, specifically Islam, plays a significant role in motivation of Islamist terrorists. Crenshaw (2000) said that solidarity and ideological commitment are very important factors in terrorism. Terrorism, as expressed by groups such as Al Qaeda, Hezbollah, and Hamas, is religiously motivated and is a more fanatical, deadly, and pervasive form of terrorism. Silberman, Higgins, and Dweck (2005) wrote that the establishment of Sharia law is a coordinated method for world change and Islamic terrorism is a primary instrument to bring this about.

One of the loudest proponents of the belief that terrorism is a part of a greater worldwide Islamic movement to institute Sharia law is Lindsey. Lindsey (2011) argued that the violence perpetrated by Islamists is actually prophesized in the Bible. In the book, *The Everlasting Hatred: The Roots of Jihad*, Lindsey (2011) wrote,

More than at any time since the Crusades, Islam poses a serious threat to the whole of Western Judeo-Christian civilization. Nations of the European Union (EU) and NATO are now being seriously threatened from within by a rapidly expanding and demanding Muslim population that is bent upon forcing Islamic Sharia law upon their host nations. Similarly, the United States and Israel now face in Islam the greatest threat to their survival. (p. 4)

Although Lindsey may not be a widely accepted subject matter expert on terrorism, Lindsey does represent one side of the public debate that takes a strong view of the role Islamic teaching has on promoting violence. Finally, Gorka (2016) said that, if the U.S. were to win the war against Islamic terrorism, people must be able to discuss the enemy honestly and openly. He cited:

Since the 9/11 attacks, political correctness and ideological prejudice – under both Republican and Democratic presidents – have distorted our analysis of the enemy, preventing us from drawing an effective plan to defeat the likes of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. (p. 128)

Figure 2 shows a continuum of how the literature treats the role Islam plays in terrorism. One extreme says that there is no relationship between Islam and terrorism, while the other extreme embraces the views held by Lindsey and others.

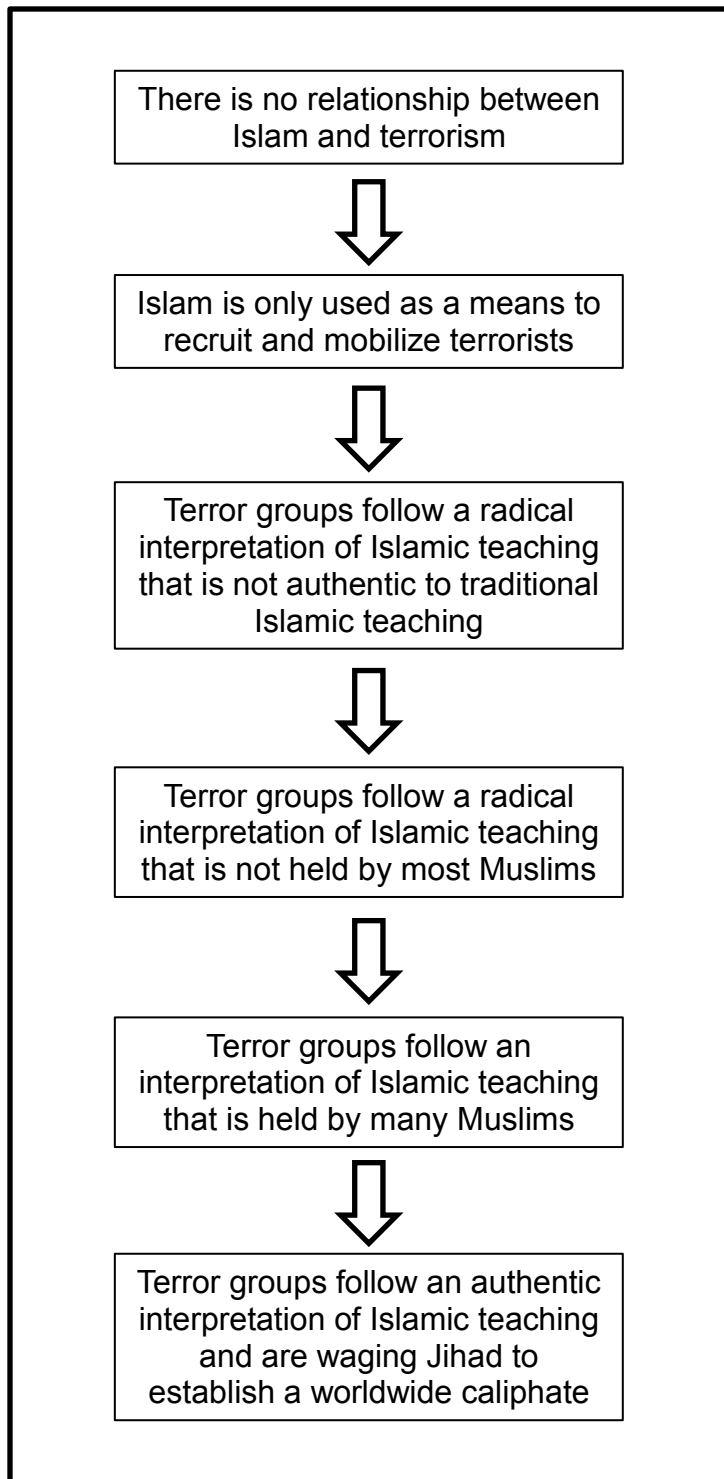


Figure 2. Continuum of Views Regarding the Relationship Between Islam and Terrorism

Ethnic and religious profiling. Ethnic and religious profiling has been the subject of much discourse in the public and academic arenas for many years (Johnson et al., 2011). There is a great deal of literature examining the extent to which law enforcement has used ethnic and religious profiling. However, less attention has been paid to public perceptions of profiling. Americans have debated the appropriateness of law enforcement targeting people based on their race or religion (Johnson et al., 2011; Lund, 2002). Before the terror attacks of 9/11 in 2001, racial profiling appeared to be a discredited law enforcement practice. However, a new debate about the appropriateness of racial profiling emerged after the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

According to Johnson et al. (2011), the public has in the past disapproved the use of ethnic and religious profiling to prevent crime, but recent polling data suggest the public is more supportive of the use of ethnic and religious profiling to prevent terrorism. Most people are either strongly in favor of or strongly against racial profiling as a means to prevent terrorism and come down very strongly at either end of the spectrum. According to the results of Lund's (2002) study comparing the perceptions of conservative and liberals regarding ethnic and religious profiling, conservatives are more skeptical of the claims that racial profiling is misused, and they favor at least some use of it in the War on Terror. Liberals, on the other hand, are more willing to believe that racial profiling is a serious problem.

Detention of terror suspects. The public debate surrounding the detention of terror suspects has been around since the detention facility at Guantanamo was opened after 9/11 (Hanley, 2011). The United States still faces major questions and partisan debate over the prison and the fate of the remaining detainees. One critic has said, "Every day Guantánamo is open is an insult to the values Americans hold dear (Hanley, 2011, p. 54). Those on the other side of the

issue claim that terror suspects should be held for the safety of the American people (Waldron, 2008).

Enhanced interrogation techniques. During the War on Terror, the U.S. government authorized the Central Intelligence Agency to use enhanced interrogation techniques to extract intelligence information from detainees suspected of terrorism (Chwastiak, 2015). Many people believe that enhanced interrogation techniques are torture. U.S. and international law clearly speaks out against it. Few issues are more settled in law than torture. Slavery would be only one exception. Opposition against torture has been a chief cause of human rights groups (Calo, 2008). The debate over enhanced interrogation techniques is very emotional and politically-charged.

Expanded government surveillance and searches. Government electronic surveillance programs are an active topic in public debate and have a long history. The intensity of the debate heated up following the introduction of new technologies that created new opportunities for information surveillance (Mamonova & Koufaris, 2016). In May of 2013, National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden flew to Hong Kong with thousands of classified NSA documents. His revelations revealed that the U.S. government was spying on U.S. citizens without court warrants (Rice, 2015). The controversy over the disclosures of mass surveillance are still ongoing with some people defending the NSA's practices while others are adamantly opposed to them (Lyon, 2015).

Most recently the debate over the Apple-FBI issue of iPhone security has sharply divided the American people. Federal law enforcement, including the FBI, are arguing that their ability to collect intelligence information is severely thwarted by the advances in encryption technology. A public debate is going on over government claims that the "collection landscape is going dark

due to new forms of encryption introduced into mainstream consumer products and services by the companies who offer them” (Zittrain, Olsen, O’Brien, & Schneier, 2016, p.2). There has been very little agreed to in this very controversial and public debate (Lyon, 2014).

Targeting terror suspects for drone attack. One of the most pervasive elements of the U.S. government’s approach to counterterrorism has been its use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), or drones, to target terrorist operatives abroad (Boyle, 2013). The public debate over drone use by the government is heated (Hazelton, 2013). Critical issues range from the morality of targeting choices, concerns about unintended casualties, and anti-Americanism to matters of legal and bureaucratic oversight (Hazelton, 2013). A significant concern raised in the public debate is that drones make killing too easy (Boyle, 2013).

Proponents of the use of drones to target suspected terrorists believe that these weapons are highly effective in killing terrorist operatives and disabling terrorist organizations, while killing fewer civilians than other means of attack. Many opposed to the use of drones cite the fact that their use is leading to a growing anti-Americanism and serve as a fresh recruitment source for Islamic terrorists (Boyle, 2013). There is clearly no consensus to this issue and the public debate is intensifying.

Summary

There were considerable gaps identified in the literature that were relevant to my research problem. The first gap that became quite obvious was that the majority of the literature on controversial issues in the classroom was the result of research conducted at the secondary school level. While I determined that this literature was relevant to my study, it was apparent that there was a shortfall of literature available that focused on higher education. Second, a great deal of the literature was focused on the student or on the overall learning process and not directed

towards the teachers' attitudes. My research problem looked at the phenomenon of teaching controversial and emotive issues from the teacher's perspective, and therefore helped to fill the gap in this area. Finally, there was virtually no literature available on dealing with controversial and emotive issues in terrorism studies courses. The research that could be identified in this area had to do with overall curriculum and was not focused on the faculty member's perspective or specifically on controversial and emotive issues.

These research gaps were important and point to a shortfall in knowledge relevant to teaching and preparing men and women to enter the workforce in the areas of defense, homeland security, and law enforcement. The war on Islamic terrorism is the single most important issue facing this country. Understanding the learning process associated with the ascension of new troops into the fight is critical.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The overarching purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of faculty members who taught courses in terrorism studies in an environment that was politically charged and where they had to teach controversial and emotive issues on a frequent and reoccurring basis. A better understanding of this phenomenon may contribute to a more informed perspective in teaching controversial issues. This was a transcendental phenomenological study with an emphasis on the perceptions and lived experiences of instructors who taught terrorism studies courses. Since the primary goal of qualitative research was to understand human behavior and experience (Bogden & Biklen, 1992), I chose a qualitative research method for this study.

This phenomenological study included 12 participants who were faculty members from several colleges and universities that offered courses in the discipline of terrorism studies as part of a program of study affiliated with the Center for Homeland Defense and Security – University and Agency Partnership Initiative (CHDS-UAPI).

Design

This study used a transcendental phenomenological design and followed procedures developed by Moustakas (1994) and Husserl (1931). A phenomenological study was best suited to highlight and investigate the beliefs, and thoughts of the participants. This research problem was not suitable for a quantitative design for several reasons. There was little existing research on the problem. Moustakas (1994) stated, “Any phenomenon represents a suitable starting point for an investigation” (p. 26). I was interested in studying the lived experiences of the participants and developing textural and structural descriptions leading to an overall description of the essence of the experience. A transcendental phenomenological design was used to focus more on

experiences of participants and less on the researcher. This helped mediate any bias that may have been present. This particular methodology was also selected to ensure the voices of the participants were heard in their own words.

A transcendental phenomenology approach was chosen instead of a hermeneutic phenomenology approach for two reasons. First, hermeneutics uses reflective interpretation of data to achieve a meaningful understanding (Moustakas, 1994). Because I had so much experience with issues related to this study, I needed to be able to set aside any prejudgments as much as possible and use systematic procedures for analyzing the data. A transcendental phenomenology approach allowed me to do this. Second, the data analysis suggested by Moustakas (1994) uses a more structured approach than employed by the hermeneutical writers (van Manen, 1990).

Research Questions

Moustakas (1994) suggested that formulating the research question is the first challenge of the researcher. While this is true, the research questions can be formulated only after conducting an exhaustive literature review. It is only after the significant gaps in the literature are identified can applicable research questions be formulated (Creswell, 2013). The review of the literature revealed that there was little known about how faculty members deal with teaching courses in terrorism studies as it relates to engaging in controversial and emotive issues. Creswell (2013) recommended using a single overarching central question and several research questions.

Central Question

The central question was, “What are the experiences of faculty members who teach courses in terrorism studies as they relate to engaging in the discussion of issues that are controversial and emotive?”

The research question was the focus of the investigation (Moustakas, 1994). The central question was intentionally broad and is exploratory in nature. This is because I wanted to investigate a phenomenon of which little is known. This question helped to examine an area in which not much was known and lead towards a greater understanding of the essence of the experience.

Research Questions

The research questions for this research followed the central question and were more detailed. Moustakas (1994) recommended formulating the research questions so as to lead to a finer level of granularity and specificity to more carefully direct the researcher.

RQ1. How do instructors who teach courses in terrorism studies in higher education conceptualize controversy and emotion in the classroom that is politically-charged?

RQ2. How do teachers in terrorism studies courses in higher education understand academic freedom, especially as this concept intersects with their own teaching experiences with regards to teaching about controversial and emotive subject matter in the politically-charged classroom?

RQ3. How do instructors who teach courses in terrorism studies in higher education change their classroom teaching strategies based on their conceptions and experiences of teaching controversial and emotive issues?

RQ4. How have changes in teaching strategies affected teacher job satisfaction and student learning in the terrorism studies classroom?

Setting

The overall setting for this study was made up of programs at institutions of higher learning throughout the United States that were affiliated with the Center for Homeland Defense and Security - University and Agency Partnership Initiative (CHDS-UAPI) and offered courses in terrorism studies. This setting was selected because the overarching goal of this research, as part of the significance of the study, was to improve the quality of graduates of academic programs that prepared officers to serve in defense, intelligence and homeland security organizations who have the mission of protecting the U.S. from foreign and domestic terrorist threats. To do this, I needed to restrict my setting to those programs and institutions who had this mission. Institutions who were affiliated with the CHDS-UAPI had identified themselves as being institutions that had the mission of preparing officers to serve in defense, intelligence and homeland security organizations that had the mission of protecting the U.S. from foreign and domestic terrorist threats.

Individual participants were chosen from various institutions of higher learning. The specific settings depended on the school affiliation of the selected participant. The participants were chosen from a variety of institutions that were classified as public, private sectarian and private non-sectarian. This purposeful selection insured that participants came from a variety of school types and represented various regions of the United States. Specific sites are not mentioned by name to protect the identity of the participants, but were described in meaningful terms. For example, Liberty University would be referred to as a large, private sectarian university in the Eastern United States.

Participants

Twelve participants were interviewed and thematic saturation was achieved. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants who were most appropriate for the design and were representative of the overall population. This strategic sampling was done so the research may be more applicable to understanding the phenomenon across the entire population of college faculty members who met the criteria.

Criterion sampling was employed. Participants for this research were limited to faculty members at colleges and universities in the United States who had at least two years of experience teaching terrorism studies as part of an academic program that was affiliated with the Center for Homeland Defense and Security - University and Agency Partnership Initiative (CHDS-UAPI).

Potential participants were recruited by an announcement posted in an online forum sponsored by the CHDS-UAPI. This announcement called for volunteers who taught residential courses in terrorism studies, whose programs were affiliated with the CHDS-UAPI, and who had been teaching these courses for at least two years. Some basic demographic information was asked, such as the location and type of school at which the instructor taught. I selected participants from this pool purposefully so as to have participants from a variety of regions of the United States and to have participants from a variety of school types. Participants were selected from schools classified as being very small, small, medium and large. Participants were selected from schools representing a variety of control classifications, such as public, private sectarian and private non-sectarian. The Carnegie Classification System was used to classify schools in this selection process (Carnegie, 2010).

Procedures

Before beginning data collection, the Liberty University Institution Review Board (IRB) approved the research proposal (See Appendix B for IRB approval letter). Once IRB approval to proceed was obtained, The Director of the Center for Homeland Defense and Security – University and Agency Partnership Initiative (CHDS – UAPI) agreed to publish an announcement of my research project in the online UAPI forum. The UAPI brings together institutions nationwide dedicated to advancing homeland security education. The UAPI seeks to provide opportunities for collaboration that create an intellectual multiplier effect that furthers the study of homeland security. This announcement included a call for research participant volunteers. Hundreds of educators involved with teaching programs of study associated with homeland defense and security participated in this forum. Faculty members who responded to this announcement served as the pool from which I selected my final research participants. I interviewed 12 participants and thematic saturation was achieved.

The selected research participants were asked to review and sign a research consent form. They also completed a questionnaire and provided relevant documents such as course syllabi and other course materials. Participants participated in a semi-structured, face-to-face interview via WebEx video conferencing. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed using Express Scribe transcription software. I analyzed the data using a modified version of Colaizzi's Seven Step Method.

The Researcher's Role

In a qualitative research study, the researcher should clarify any potential biases he or she may have in order to create an "open and honest narrative" (Creswell, 2013, p. 192). The researcher was the primary collection instrument for this research. During data collection, I

practiced epoche (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Moustakas, 1994). Epoche (or bracketing) is a technique to increase the alertness of the researcher's feelings and beliefs about the research topic based on their experiences. This transcendental phenomenological approach required that I bracket my past experiences as an expert in terrorism and a faculty member who taught courses in terrorism studies. I purposefully and methodologically suspended my past experiences, assumptions, and judgments and approached the data with a fresh lens (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). This was done by focusing on the participants and their experiences. To ensure full disclosure with the reader of this study, my official professional biography was included in Appendix A. I did not share my biography or any specifics of my background with the participants until after data collection had occurred.

In this method, I took advantage of the fact that I have experienced much of the same phenomenon as my participants. I used this to help me build rapport and connect with the participants during the interview process. Contrary to quantitative researchers who distance themselves from the participants and the research questions, the qualitative researcher is participatory (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

Data Collection

Creswell (2013) stated, "The qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants" (p. 38). This study used rigorous and varied data collection techniques in order to provide for data triangulation (Creswell, 2013). I used semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and the collection of documents and course materials. Using these three instruments ensured the triangulation of data.

Interviews

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews of the participants served as the primary data collection method for this research since it had the greatest potential to collect rich descriptions for a phenomenological study. This method of interviewing allowed the participant to expand and reflect through guided questions (Creswell, 2013). I used skills I developed as an interrogator and debriefer to build rapport and elicit information while ensuring the participants remained comfortable.

Semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to introduce questions and based on the response, formulate follow-up questions as appropriate. I introduced the topic through a general question, and then guided discussion with specific questions, prompts, and probes (Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Participants were encouraged to talk freely and to tell stories using their own words.

Seidman's (2006) advice was followed by allowing the interviews to flow from what has already been said. Additional questions were used as a means to follow-up, clarify, or confirm what the participant said. Each new interview contained additional questions or thoughts based on responses from previous interviews. In other words, each interview was built on the previous interviews (Seidman, 2006).

The interviews took place through an internet-based video conference system, known as WebEx. The interviews were audio recorded by a personal recording device connected to a telephone headset. The audio recordings were transcribed using Express Scribe transcription software and later checked by the researcher for accuracy. Participants were provided copies of the interview transcript and were asked to check for accuracy. There were no corrections to the original transcripts necessary.

Interview question validity. To ensure validity of the interview method of data collection, caution was observed as not to influence the participants' descriptions that could result in responses that were not truly reflective of the participants' overall experiences (Creswell, 2013). The use of a pilot study to examine the interview questions was conducted prior to the actual study. Following the interviews, the transcripts of the interviews were provided to the participants for their review and comment.

Interview pilot study. Validity of the interview questions was ensured by conducting a pilot interview study. A pilot is a smaller size testing of the procedures that the researcher plans to use in the main study (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The effectiveness of the questions were evaluated, especially the prompts and probes, in eliciting useful information. Interview questions and procedures were revised based on the results of the pilot study. An Interview Questioning Guide was included in Appendix F.

This pilot study included two faculty members from the Center for Homeland Defense and Security – University and Agency Partnership Initiative who teach courses in terrorism studies and agreed to participate in the pilot study. These individuals were not included in the pool of participants for the interviews. The pilot study interviews were conducted in the same manner as the participant interviews and used WebEx and the same recording methods. Following the pilot study interviews, I debriefed the pilot study participants and obtained feedback. Changes to the interview questions were made as necessary. The WebEx and recording processes were also checked and adjustments made as necessary.

Interview protocol. The interviews used open-ended questions. Questions were asked in such a way as not to influence the contents of the participants' descriptions, which could hinder the participants from conveying their actual experiences (Creswell, 2013). The interviews were

audio recorded and transcribed. Member checking was used by having the transcripts reviewed by the participants to ensure accuracy. Interviews continued until thematic saturation was achieved. Interview questions were formulated using the research questions as a starting point. Follow-up and spontaneous questions were used during the interview when appropriate. Periods of silence during the interview process were used to allow the participant time to formulate a response (Seidman, 2006). These reflective periods gave permission to the participants to provide more information. It also allowed them to reveal their thoughts, opinions, or feelings without being rushed or constrained (van Manen, 1990).

With the permission of the participants, the interviews were digitally audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. These audio recordings were stored in a secure manner and destroyed upon completion of transcription review. A copy of the transcribed interviews were sent to each participant to offer them the opportunity to clarify or add information and to confirm the data accuracy (Creswell, 2013).

Interview questions. The following questions were used during the participant interviews

Icebreaker question

1. Please introduce yourself to me, as if we just met one another.

Descriptions of the nature of the classroom

2. What kinds of topics do you deal with in your classroom that you consider to be controversial and emotive in nature?
3. Why do you consider these topics to be controversial and emotive?
4. What benefits, if any, do you see in dealing with controversial and emotive topics in your classroom?

5. Describe any positive outcomes, including student reactions, you have experienced from dealing with controversial and emotive issues in your classroom.
6. Describe any negative outcomes, including student reactions, you have experienced from dealing with controversial and emotive issues in your classroom.

Teacher and student reactions to the classroom environment

7. How does having to deal with controversial and emotive issues affect your teaching style and interaction with your students? Are there any changes to your teaching style? Have you had to adapt?
8. Describe how your students have reacted to dealing with controversial and emotive issues.
9. What classroom rules have you established for your students when discussing controversial and emotive issues? Have they been effective?
10. What have you learned about effectively dealing with controversial and emotive issues in your classroom? Do you have any best practices to pass on?
11. How have the challenges of teaching controversial and emotive issues affected your job satisfaction and your overall perception of teaching as a career?

Identifying sources of influence

12. Do you sense any external pressures or fears when dealing with controversial and emotive issues in your classroom? Explain.
13. Are there any limits imposed on your teaching, either external or self-induced, that could have an effect on your teaching effectiveness? How have you dealt with these?

Theoretical foundations of interview questions. The interview questions are based upon the constructs which frame this study and contribute directly to answering the central questions and research questions.

The *descriptions of the nature of the classroom* questions were based on the literature that revealed the extent to which an issue is considered controversial is also highly contextual in nature (Misco, 2011; Thornton, 2005). Before the experiences can be explored the participants' descriptions needed to be determined. These questions also applied Oliver and Shaver's (1996) Jurisprudential Inquiry Model which holds to the assumptions that social values legitimately conflict with one another, that negotiation can help to resolve complex and controversial issues, and that a skillful citizen is like a competent judge. In this case, the teacher was the judge and their description of the nature of the classroom was required to further explore their experiences. These questions sought to address RQ1. "How do instructors who teach courses in terrorism studies in higher education conceptualize controversy and emotion in the classroom that is politically-charged" and RQ2. "How do teachers in terrorism studies courses in higher education understand academic freedom, especially as this concept intersects with their own teaching experiences with regards to teaching about controversial and emotive subject matter in the politically-charged classroom?"

The *reactions to the classroom environment* questions took into consideration Thornton's (1991) Teacher as Curricular-Instructional Gatekeeper Theory. The gatekeeper theory is based on Thornton's (1991) belief that classroom teachers have great autonomy in determining the day-to-day curricular content, instructional strategies, and learning objectives to be experienced by students. Since the teacher has this autonomy to change, their reactions to the classroom environment needs to be understood. These questions related directly to answering the research

RQ3. “How do instructors who teach courses in terrorism studies in higher education change their classroom teaching strategies based on their conceptions and experiences of teaching controversial and emotive issues?”

The *identifying sources of influence* questions sought to answer RQ4 “How have changes in teaching strategies affected teacher job satisfaction and student learning in the terrorism studies classroom?” Teachers felt subjected to political pressures from various sources, such as the school administration, community and campus organizations, and individual students (Miller, Mills, & Harkins, 2011).

Questionnaires

Participants were asked to complete questionnaires to collect personal data and answer questions related to the research questions. The information obtained from these questionnaires were used to assist in the interview process and were included in the analysis phase.

Information asked in these questionnaires included personal and professional information, such as academic background, teaching experience, and job history. This information helped in the triangulation of data to strengthen reliability.

Creswell (2013) stated, “[Researchers] do not tend to use or rely on questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers” (p. 38). The key thing about effective questionnaires is that they should be simple and written in a well understood language (Walonick, 1993). The Participant Questionnaire was included in Appendix E.

Document Analysis

Course materials, such as course syllabi, teacher-generated learning materials, and other materials, were collected and reviewed. These materials also assisted in my role as a researcher and in the interview process. This objective data helped to validate the data collected from the

semi-structured interviews and participant questionnaires. This information was collected directly from the participants and their permission was secured to use this information in the research. To the extent possible, documents were collected and reviewed prior to the first interview with a given participant so that the information gathered could be used to assist in conversation or to explore the participants' thinking.

Data Analysis

When analyzing the data, the methods suggested by Moustakas (1994) was used. Phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and a synthesis of meanings and essences was performed. In order to do this methodically and correctly, a modified version of Colaizzi's Seven Step Method (Colaizzi, 1978) was used. This modified method included the following steps (Sanders, 2003).

1. Reading the interview transcripts. In this section of the analysis process, participant narratives were transcribed from the audio-recorded interviews. Each transcript was then read several times to gain a sense of the whole content of the interview. While reading the transcripts, I recorded any thoughts or ideas that arose based on my previous experiences and were added to the bracketing diary. Moustakas (1994) called the bracketing process an epoche.
2. Extracting significant statements. Any statements in the participants' narratives that relate directly to the phenomenon of teaching controversial and emotive issues in a politically-charged classroom were extracted. This process is called horizontalization (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). The significant statements that were extracted were

coded using the transcript page and line numbers. At this point, no effort was made to group these statements or order them in any way (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004).

3. Interpretative analysis of symbolic representations. This step took into account jargon and culturally-specific slang and anecdotes used in the military and law enforcement communities. I translated the meanings of these phrases and included them in the list of significant statements.

4. Creating formulated meanings. Colaizzi (1978) recommends that the researcher attempt to formulate more general restatements or meanings for each significant statement extracted from the participants' narratives. Each underlying meaning was coded in one category as they reflected an exhaustive description.

5. Aggregating formulated meanings into theme clusters. Colaizzi (1978) suggests that the researcher assign or organize formulated meanings into groups of similar type. In other words, the formulated meanings were grouped into theme clusters. Each cluster of theme was coded to include all formulated meanings related to that group of meanings.

6. Developing an exhaustive description. An exhaustive description was developed through a synthesis of all theme clusters and associated formulated meanings (Colaizzi, 1978). All emergent themes were defined into an exhaustive description. After merging all study themes, the whole structure of the phenomenon "teaching controversial and emotive issues in the politically-charged classroom" was extracted.

7. Identifying the fundamental structure of the phenomenon. The fundamental structure refers to the essence of the experiential phenomenon as it is revealed by explication

through a rigorous analysis of the exhaustive description of the phenomenon (Colaizzi, 1978). The groups of theme clusters were developed to establish the final thematic construct.

Analysis of Questionnaires and Documents

The same process for analyzing the participant interviews was used for the participant questionnaires. In Step 1, I read and reread the completed participant. In Step 2, I extracted the significant statements and merged them with the significant statements from the participant interviews. The remainder of the steps included analysis of all the significant statements from the data sources.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was a major consideration in this research. Creswell (2013) considered validation to be essential in achieving accuracy in the findings. Trustworthiness was achieved through using the methods of credibility, dependability and confirmability, and transferability. These validation strategies are commonly used in qualitative research.

Credibility

Credibility directly relates to how the research findings accurately describe reality (Creswell, 2013). To that end, it is important that a variety of strategies to establish the credibility of the study are used (Creswell and Miller, 2010). I employed the methods of member checking and peer/expert review to help achieve credibility,

Member Checking. Creswell and Miller (2010) encouraged researchers to build collaboration with the participants. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and participants were asked to review transcripts from the interviews to ensure accuracy and to

clarify the intent and message. This was accomplished soon after the interviews. The use of member checking also strengthened this study's dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Peer/Expert Review. Peer and expert review was accomplished through the dissertation committee system where the chair and readers were engaged throughout the process. Also, an expert was used to review the study results and provide advice when appropriate.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability deal with consistency and determines if it is possible to reproduce the research (Creswell, 2013). To increase dependability and confirmability in this study, I provided thorough descriptions of the procedures employed and the methods of data collection and analysis. I also used a standard set of questions in the semi-structured interviews.

Transferability

Transferability of data means the findings of the study are applicable to other contexts (Creswell, 2013). To ensure transferability of the data, I used triangulation of data collection and purposeful participant and site selection to ensure the findings are transferable between the researcher and those being studied (Creswell, 2013).

Triangulation. In qualitative research, triangulation is “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection” (Creswell, 2013, p. 208). Triangulation is applied to this research design through the use of multiple data collection instruments. This study provided triangulation through the use of the interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis to confirm the findings. Although the preponderance of the data collected was through the semi-structured interviews and participant questionnaires, the

documents provided a check to reveal any irregularities. The use of triangulation strengthened this study's credibility, dependability and confirmability, and transferability.

Participant and Site Selection. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants who are most appropriate for the design and are representative of the overall population. The participants represented a cross-section of the greater population. This sampling method was used to improve transferability. Specifically, participants for this research were limited to faculty members at colleges and universities in the United States who had at least two years of experience teaching terrorism studies courses as part of an academic program that was affiliated with the Center for Homeland Defense and Security's (CHDS) University and Agency Partnership Initiative (UAPI). By doing so, I limited my participants to those who actually taught in programs that prepare students to enter the homeland defense and security career field. This purposeful sampling also ensured that various types of institutions, e.g. public, private secular and private secular were included in the sample.

Ethical Considerations

Human subjects were used in this study. Therefore, consent forms for participants was approved by the IRB and strictly adhered to. The participants were made aware of the voluntary nature of this study and may have withdrawn at any time. Several steps were taken to ensure the highest level of ethics and the protection of the participants' identity. These included confidentiality, security of data, and avoidance of situations of influence.

Confidentiality

Pseudonyms were used for all participants. Descriptions of the participants were detailed enough to be meaningful, but general enough to protect the identities of the participants.

Transcripts of the recordings had personal or identifying information redacted so as to maintain participant confidentiality.

Security of Data

All data was handled and stored in a safe manner. Hardcopy and electronic data was physically protected by being stored under lock and key and transported safely. Electronic data and information systems were protected using approved software and security protocols to include password protections. Physical and electronic security was maintained at all times.

Avoidance of Situations of Influence

Situations where influence could affect the study were avoided. People from Liberty University and The Citadel were not be used as participants in this study because of my employment relationship with these institutions and the fact that there are preexisting professional and personal relationships with people from these institutions. Since I have worked in the homeland defense and security arena in the past, I also ensured that I did not select participants with whom I may have had a professional relationship of supervisor or subordinate. It was unavoidable that I had previously met some of the participants at professional conferences and other events prior to participating in the study.

Summary

The overarching purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of faculty members who taught courses in terrorism studies in an environment that was politically-charged and where controversial and emotive issues were taught on a frequent and reoccurring basis. This qualitative research study allowed the participants to speak for themselves on this issue and have their voices heard.

A phenomenological study was chosen to highlight and investigate the beliefs, feelings, thoughts, frustrations, and other emotions of the participants. A transcendental phenomenology approach was used to set aside any prejudgments as much as possible and to implement a systematic procedure for analyzing the data. Carefully crafted research questions helped focus on the investigation and helped to examine an area where not much was known, leading towards a greater understanding of the essence of the experience. The methodology used a central question and several research questions to achieve more detail.

Participants were selected purposefully, using criterion sampling to capture a target audience who taught professionals entering the counter-terrorism career fields and to ensure various types of schools from throughout the U.S. were included.

The data collection allowed for triangulation by using semi-structured interviews, participant questionnaires, and course materials. The data was analyzed using a modified version of Colaizzi's Seven Step Method. Trustworthiness was maintained by the use of triangulation in the analysis of data, member checks, peer/expert review, and purposeful sampling. Ethical considerations were given to protecting the privacy of the participants, security of data, and avoiding inappropriate situations of influence.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the phenomenon experienced by faculty members who teach controversial and emotive issues in terrorism studies courses in an environment that can be politically-charged. Chapter Four contains a Participants section that provides a description of the 12 individuals who participated in this study. This section provides information about the participants as a group and a summary of their participation in the semi-structured interviews.

This study addressed one central question with four supporting research questions. The following questions guided this study:

Central Question: What are the experiences of faculty members who teach courses in terrorism studies as they relate to engaging in the discussion of issues that are controversial and emotive?

RQ1: How do instructors who teach courses in terrorism studies in higher education conceptualize controversy and emotion in the classroom that is politically-charged?

RQ2: How do teachers in terrorism studies courses in higher education understand academic freedom, especially as this concept intersects with their own teaching experiences with regards to teaching about controversial and emotive subject matter in the politically-charged classroom?

RQ3: How do instructors who teach courses in terrorism studies in higher education change their classroom teaching strategies based on their conceptions and experiences of teaching controversial and emotive issues?

RQ4: How have changes in teaching strategies affected teacher job satisfaction and student learning in the terrorism studies classroom?

This chapter includes a Results section that provides a discussion of the results of the data analysis process that was discussed in Chapter Three. The analytical process led to the development of seven themes. The Results section includes a discussion of theme development and a detailed discussion of the seven themes as they relate to the four research questions. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Participants

The 12 participants were selected through a purposeful sampling process described in Chapter Three. The participants were faculty members from schools that were classified as very small (less than 1,000 residential students), small (1,000 to 2,999 residential students), medium (3,000 to 9,999 residential students), or large (10,000 or more residential students). The Carnegie Classification System was used to classify the various schools according to size (Carnegie, 2010). The participants' schools were also classified according to financial and administrative control, to include public, private non-sectarian or private sectarian. Schools were also classified by region of the United States, e.g., East, Midwest, Northeast, South, and Southwest.

The participants' highest earned academic degrees ranged from master's degrees to doctorate degrees, including Ph.D., Ed.D., D.P.A., and J.D. Participants held the academic rank of lecturer, instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, or professor. The participants' years of teaching experience in higher education ranged from five years to 40 years, with a mean of 17.17 years and median of 20 years. The participants' years of professional experience ranged from none to over 30 years, with a mean of 17.91 years and median of 20 years. The years of professional experience related to terrorism studies included service in the military, security, and

law enforcement career fields. The combined teaching and professional years of experience ranged from 11 to 50 years, with a mean of 35.08 years and median of 36 years. Participant information is depicted in Figure 3.

No other demographic information was solicited or collected from the participants, to include race, religion, age, etc. The gender of participants was made evident during the semi-structured interview process. There were 11 male participants and one female participant.

Pseudonyms were used for the participants in this study to protect their identities.

Participant Pseudonym	Academic Rank	Highest Degree	University Size	University Type	Region of U.S.	Years of Teaching Experience	Years of Professional Experience
Dr. Allen	Instructor	J.D.	large	private non-sectarian	South	7	30
Dr. Baker	Associate Professor	Ph.D.	large	public	East	20	7
Mr. Cox	Associate Professor	M.P.A.	large	public	South	8	30
Dr. Davis	Associate Professor	Ph.D.	very small	public	Southwest	40	0
Mr. Ewing	Lecturer	M.P.A.	large	public	Midwest	5	6
Mr. Frasier	Instructor	M.S.	medium	public	South	20	12
Dr. Golden	Professor	Ph.D.	medium	private non-sectarian	Northeast	15	20
Dr. Holder	Assistant Professor	Ed.D.	large	public	Midwest	5	30
Dr. Irving	Professor	Ph.D.	large	private non-sectarian	Northeast	20	20
Dr. Johnson	Assistant Professor	D.P.A	large	public	South	20	30
Dr. Knight	Professor	Ph.D.	small	private sectarian	Midwest	40	0
Dr. Lynch	Assistant Professor	Ph.D.	large	private non-sectarian	Midwest	6	30

Figure 3. Participant Information

Dr. Allen

Dr. Allen is an instructor on the faculty of a large, private, non-sectarian university located in the Southern United States. He primarily teaches undergraduate courses in the homeland security area, including terrorism studies and other courses with significant material devoted to terrorism studies topics. He has been teaching in higher education for more than seven years. Prior to his teaching career, he served in the U.S. military for 30 years. He holds a juris doctor degree and two master's degrees.

Dr. Allen said that his job was to control the class and that failure to do so would result in the students taking over. While he appeared to have an understanding of academic freedom, he said, "We have academic freedom to the extent that we are not offending someone." He said that academic freedom is being encroached on by what he called, "political correctness." He used the term "political correctness" several times during the interview. He expressed no particular political view or association during the interview. He did describe his students as being mostly conservative in political thinking.

Dr. Allen seemed to enjoy his job and welcomed dealing with difficult issues in the classroom. He said, "The students challenge me. If I quit getting challenged, I will lose all interest in teaching."

Dr. Allen said that issues related to border security were the most controversial and emotive. He stated that a best practice he uses in dealing with controversial and emotive issues is to be a good listener in the classroom.

Dr. Baker

Dr. Baker is an associate professor at a large public university located in the Eastern United States. She teaches several courses in terrorism studies at the graduate and undergraduate

level. She also teaches other courses on national security that deal considerably with issues related to terrorism studies. She has been teaching in higher education for more than 20 years at various institutions. Prior to her teaching career, she worked for seven years as a defense and security analyst for a private company as a government contractor. She has a Ph.D. in foreign policy studies.

Dr. Baker conveyed passion for teaching and embraced the necessity of dealing with controversial and emotive issues in the classroom. She said that effectively dealing with these issues teaches the students proper civil discourse and critical thinking skills.

She described her students as being politically conservative and credited that to the fact that they were in homeland security programs of study. She said that she was moderately conservative in her political viewpoints. She made the comment, “The biggest terror force on Earth is the United States government. The U.S. is not blamed for crimes against humanity because the current international power structure protects them.” She described her classroom discussions as being passionate and said that students are often intransigent in their viewpoints.

Dr. Baker tries not to let her opinions and political beliefs come into the classroom. She is guarded in her comments in class. In reference to student complaints she said, “I need to be scrutinizing my own behavior and making extra sure I’m not providing ground or basis for such charges I document the hell out of things if I start to worry that anything is going to come back to bite me.”

Dr. Baker believed that terrorism, in general, is a controversial and emotive topic, but cited the Arab-Israel conflict as the most difficult to deal with in the classroom. She said, “When it comes to matters of faith, there is not a lot of room for compromise.” When she used the term, faith, she was referring to religion. She clearly gets much satisfaction from her teaching and said

that she deals with controversial and emotive issues by having the students look objectively at all sides of an issue.

Mr. Cox

Mr. Cox is an associate professor at a large public university located in the Southern United States. He primarily teaches courses in emergency management; however, many of the courses he teaches have a considerable amount of the curriculum devoted to terrorism studies. He has been teaching in higher education for more than eight years. Before his teaching career, he served over 30 years in emergency management. He has a Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree.

Mr. Cox said that he addresses areas that have a lot of controversy in the courses he teaches. He welcomes this and said, "In teaching, if you don't have controversy, you don't have a discussion." Much of his student population consists of current or former military, and he highly respects and admires the military. He believes that the younger students look at issues in polar extremes, as being good or bad, without middle ground. He said, "Students come into class with a belief system that's already been formed, with no curiosity about why." He claims that he is very guarded in what he says when dealing with controversial and emotive issues. He said, "You have to be very careful what you say and who you say it to. I have to be careful because someone will call and complain." He has to adapt to this environment and sometimes holds back from covering areas he considers to be too sensitive.

Mr. Cox stated that the most controversial and emotive issue he deals with regularly in the classroom relates to law enforcement. Issues such as ethnic and religious profiling and 4th Amendment issues create the most controversy. His best practice in dealing with controversial and emotive issues is getting the students to consider other sides of an argument.

Dr. Davis

Dr. Davis is an associate professor and department chair at a very small, private, non-sectarian university located in the Southwestern United States. He teaches undergraduate courses dealing with national security, criminal justice, military science, and terrorism studies. He has over 40 years of teaching experience and has a Ph.D. degree.

Dr. Davis claimed that he does not have to deal very much with controversial and emotive issues because the curriculum he is provided is based on established military doctrine and not subject to different viewpoints. He does have some classroom discussions where controversy exists and where students have strong feelings. He said that he does have to be careful when discussing sensitive subjects. While he has had students who were offended with some things he has said in the classroom, there have been no negative outcomes or official complaints. He claimed that he has academic freedom in the classroom but did admit that he has to be careful when dealing with certain subjects. He does control classroom discussions so students do not say things that might be perceived as offensive. He said, "I'm kind of a censor. I kind of have the final say in the classroom"

Dr. Davis said that the events of 9/11 are the most controversial and emotive issues he deals with in the classroom. He offered that having a carefully prepared curriculum is a best practice to dealing with controversial and emotive issues.

Mr. Ewing

Mr. Ewing is a lecturer at a large public university located in the Midwestern United States. He teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in homeland security as part of a Public Administration program. Many of the courses he teaches have a considerable amount of the curriculum devoted to terrorism studies. He is an adjunct faculty member and works primarily as

a contractor with the U.S. Government and the Department of Homeland Security. He has been teaching in higher education for approximately five years and has a Master of Public Administration degree.

Mr. Ewing claims that controversial and emotive issues are very prevalent in his courses. He commented that students come into the classroom with very set beliefs and will often attempt to shut down competing viewpoints. He attempts to take a middle road and make the students consider all sides to an issue. He said, "My job is being an arbiter, someone presenting facts. I'm not going to quash conversation about these facts. I try to aim for the sweet middle on issues." He attempts not to reveal his opinion to his students. He noted that he must be careful when addressing certain issues in the classroom. He said, "There are landmines everywhere." He did say that he believed his school's administration would support him if he were the target of a complaint from a student. He feels that students should challenge what he says and that he should be prepared for class discussions.

Mr. Ewing said that Islam and its role in violence is the most controversial and emotive topic he covers in class. He offered as a best practice the use of proactive questions to open a classroom discussion and to present all sides of an issue.

Mr. Frasier

Mr. Frasier is an instructor and program director at a medium-sized, public educational institution that is part of the U.S. Federal Government - Department of Homeland Security, located in the Southern United States. He teaches courses in homeland security and disaster preparedness to first responders from agencies throughout the United States. Much of the curriculum in his courses deals with terrorism studies. He has been teaching for more than 20

years at various institutions, including four-year schools and community college systems. He has a master's degree in homeland security.

Mr. Frasier said that there is much controversy and emotion in the classes he teaches. He said that the environment is sometimes hostile. He is very guarded about what he says in class and fears negative outcomes if students complain. He said, "If you say the wrong thing, it can have serious consequences on you . . . this makes me feel stressed, uncomfortable, pressured, out of my zone." He feels there is a lack of academic freedom and that he is restricted in what he can teach. He said, "You know the material but have been placed in a container that says, this is as far as you go. You cannot cross this line. You cannot exit this box. You cannot reach this high. You cannot go this low." He feels that students are quick to complain for any perceived insensitivities. He said, "I've got a group of folks who are always looking to be the victim. Some people are always looking for a reason to get somebody on something." He related that several fellow faculty members have been terminated by administration because of student complaints that they were not respectful of certain sensitivities.

Mr. Frasier said that the most controversial and emotive issues he deals with relate to religion and ethnicity. As a best practice, he familiarizes himself with the demographics of the class and adjusts how he teaches accordingly.

Dr. Golden

Dr. Golden is a professor at a medium-size, private, non-sectarian university located in the Northeastern United States. He teaches graduate courses in homeland security and terrorism studies. He has been teaching in higher education for more than 15 years and has a Ph.D. degree in criminal justice. Before entering academia, he spent 20 years as a law enforcement officer.

Dr. Golden encourages dialogue and debate in the classroom and sees dealing with controversial and emotive issues as being an opportunity to learn. Most of his students are working professionals and are very good at handling sensitive issues in a mature manner. He said, “We are able to get a good dialogue going and keep it on somewhat an intellectual level.” He did say that dealing with Islam was a sensitive issue and that he has several Muslim students in his classes. At times, he has to step in and control class discussions. He said, “There have been times where I have had people that kind of ‘go off’ about Muslims, and I have to shut them down . . . and usually it’s a real emotional outburst.” While he has not been the target of student complaints, he feels his institution may not be supportive of him if the complaint dealt with an alleged issue regarding political correctness. He said his department is different from other departments in his institution, and that faculty members from other departments are resentful towards faculty members in his department who come from law enforcement backgrounds rather than academia. He claimed that universities in his part of the country are heavily politicized and the political ideology often clouds their objectivity.

Dr. Golden feels that Islamic teaching and its connection with violence is the most controversial and emotive issue he deals with. As a best practice, he advises using a more seminar approach in the classroom and drawing from the students’ experiences.

Dr. Holder

Dr. Holder is an assistant professor at a large, public university located in the Midwestern United States. He teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in Homeland Security and Transportation Security. Much of the curricula in his courses deal with terrorism studies. He has five years teaching in higher education and has an Ed.D. degree. Before his teaching career, he spent over 30 years in law enforcement.

Dr. Holder acknowledged that he often deals with controversial and emotive issues when on the subject of terrorism in his classes. The vast majority of his students can be described as being politically conservative. However, dealing with radical Islam is quite difficult, and he has several students from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in his class. He tells his students to grow “thick skin” when they begin a section of material that may become contentious. He admitted that, when he teaches controversial issues, he finds himself being more on guard with his comments. He said there is some expectation of “political correctness” from his school administration, and there is always a concern of a student complaint. He said, “I’m trying to balance two worlds to keep myself out of hot water. I do a lot of tongue biting. I kind of know how far to push it.” However, he said much of what prompts the change in his teaching comes from a genuine respect for his student and a desire not to offend any of them. He often takes a “middle of the road” stance on controversial issues and tries not to push his personal beliefs.

Dr. Holder said the subject that generates the most controversy and emotion in his classroom is the relationship between Islamic teaching and violence. As a best practice, he recommends getting to know the class and being aware of their feelings.

Dr. Irving

Dr. Irving is a professor at a large, private, non-sectarian university located in the Northeastern United States. He has taught at various other public universities and at institutions that are under the administration of the U.S. Government. He has been teaching in higher education for more than 20 years. Before entering academia, he served for over 20 years in the U.S. military. He holds a Ph.D. degree.

Dr. Irving said that he does deal with controversial and emotive issues quite often in his classes but sees this as an opportunity. He said most of his students can be described as

politically conservative; however, students who hold a more liberal view on political subjects help make the class more interesting and lead to colorful discussions. He believes that dealing with controversial issues makes students better understand their own thoughts on these topics. He did not report any negative outcomes when dealing with controversial and emotive issues, such as student complaints or other adverse actions. He did admit that he has students in his classes who are waiting to “catch you saying something they can find offensive.” He is cautious when dealing with certain issues. He said, “You are filtering everything. Humor is very hard to happen in the classroom anymore.”

Dr. Irving felt strongly that the issue of how much Islam relates to terror and violence is by far the most controversial and emotive issue he teaches. As a best practice, he recommends having the students support their assertions they make in class with facts.

Dr. Johnson

Dr. Johnson is an assistant professor and program director at a large, public university located in the Southern United States. He teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in criminal justice and terrorism studies. He has been teaching in higher education for almost 20 years. Before teaching, he served in law enforcement for 30 years. He has a Doctor of Public Administration degree as well as a graduate degree in criminal justice.

Dr. Johnson reported that terrorism studies courses deal with highly controversial topics that are integral to the field of study. He said, “You cannot shy away from these topics. They need to learn this.” He said most of his students espouse a more politically conservative viewpoint on issues, but he does get a lot of “push back” when dealing with issues related to Islam. He does feel pressure to be especially sensitive to issues related to religion and race when dealing with terrorism. He also observed an overall environment at his university where there is

the pressure of political correctness. Although he did not report any adverse events, he indicated that his university would deal harshly if there was a perceived behavior that showed insensitivity towards a certain group. He also noted that there is some discrimination against faculty who have more politically conservative viewpoints on issues. He sees the need to practice academic freedom and believes the idea of the university is to discuss controversial topics.

Dr. Johnson said that the issue of Islamic terrorism and “Islamic supremacy” are overwhelmingly the most controversial and emotive issues he deals with. As a best practice, he encourages the students not to take issues too personally. He said, “I tell my students our job is not to fix the ills of society, but to respond to them.”

Dr. Knight

Dr. Knight is a professor and program director at a small, private sectarian college in the Midwestern United States. He teaches undergraduate courses in American foreign policy, intelligence studies, and terrorism studies. He has over 40 years of experience in higher education and has a Ph.D. degree.

Dr. Knight observed that violent events and terrorism are very emotional topics and can be controversial. He is very aware that any perceived insensitivity to certain groups can lead to complaints and that he must choose his words carefully. He said, “You have to be careful about what you say. This day and age, anything you say can pop up on Twitter.” He has known faculty members at his school who have been dismissed for inappropriate comments in the classroom. He said that you have to be sensitive to the potential feelings within the classroom; however, if you live in fear, you are not going to be a good teacher. He defines academic freedom as having to do with speaking about the curriculum and not just talking about any subject.

Although Dr. Knight avoided using the term “Islam,” it was clear that discussion about “violent organizations” are the most controversial and emotive issues he has to deal with. He believes that a best practice is to understand other cultures when dealing with sensitive issues.

Dr. Lynch

Dr. Lynch is an assistant professor at a large, private non-sectarian university located in the Midwestern United States. He teaches undergraduate courses in terrorism studies. He has six years of experience in higher education. Before teaching, he served 30 years in the U.S. military. He has a Ph.D. degree.

Dr. Lynch said there is a lot of emphasis on “Islamophobia” and claims that discussions about Islam can be very controversial and emotional. He describes himself as being politically conservative and feels somewhat a minority at his university. He said that he has to exercise extreme caution when dealing with issues related to “political correctness.” He does not feel that his university would back him up if he were accused of being insensitive. He believes that this environment takes away from the teaching-learning process. He said, “If you try to please everyone, you please no one, including yourself.”

Dr. Lynch believes very strongly that “Islamophobia” and any negative comment about Islam can be very controversial. As a best practice, he believes it is very important to establish the ground rules for class discussions at the beginning of the course.

Results

This section includes a discussion of the results of the data analysis process. The analytical process that led to the development of themes is discussed and was conducted as described in Chapter Three. The themes are listed and further described as they relate to the four research questions.

Theme Development

Analysis of the data was conducted according to the procedures discussed in Chapter Three. The data were analyzed using the method suggested by Moustakas (1994) and using a modified version of Colaizzi's Seven Step Method (Colaizzi, 1978).

Reading the interview transcripts. I used semi-structured interviews and participant questionnaires to collect information from the participants' experiences in teaching courses in terrorism studies with curriculum containing controversial and emotive issues in a politically-charged classroom. The transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews were read several times to gain a sense of the whole content of the interview. While reading the transcripts, I recorded any thoughts and ideas that arose based on my previous experiences and added them to my bracketing diary. I also reviewed the participants' responses to the participant questionnaires several times.

Extracting significant statements. Any statement made by a participant that was recorded in the semi-structured interview transcript and participant questionnaire that related directly to the phenomenon of teaching controversial and emotive issues in a politically-charged classroom was extracted. The significant statements that were extracted were coded using the transcript page and line numbers. A total of 143 significant statements were extracted from the semi-structured interviews and participant questionnaires.

Interpretative analysis of symbolic representations. In following the modified Colaizzi Seven Step Method, I performed an interpretative analysis of symbolic representations by translating jargon and culturally-specific phrases and anecdotes used in the military and law enforcement communities into common vernacular language. Figure 4 depicts the terms found in

the semi-structured interviews and participant questionnaires and how I translated them in the list of significant statements.

Military/Law Enforcement Jargon and Slang Terms	Interpretive Meaning
Ate-Up	Describes someone who follows regulations so closely that they disregard the context of the situation. Someone over-obsessed with following regulations.
Burn Bag	A trash bag used to hold classified documents until they can be burned. To put something in the burn bag means to get rid of something permanently.
Down Range	The direction on a marksmanship range that is toward the target area. Used to refer to the physical location closest to the action or combat.
Sandbox	An area of operations in the desert. Also indicates possessiveness and protecting your area of control, such as "stay out of my sandbox".
Shanked	A shank is a homemade knife made by inmates in prison. Getting shanked means getting stuck with something that is not one's responsibility.

Figure 4. Interpretative Analysis of Symbolic Representations

Creating formulated meanings. The significant statements were then revised to obtain the formulated meanings of the statements. Emergent themes were identified from the formulated meanings that related to the research questions.

I also reviewed the course materials provided by the participants as a way to check the validity of the data derived from the semi-structured interviews and participant questionnaires. No new significant statements were identified, and I observed no inconsistencies between the interrogatory data and the data from the course materials. In other words, nothing in the course

materials revealed anything different or not in agreement with what was obtained from the semi-structured interviews and participant questionnaires.

Aggregating formulated meanings into theme clusters. The formulated meanings of the significant statements were reviewed several times. During this analysis process, I grouped related words and phrases into categories (See Figure 5). The categories were further synthesized and evolved into codes, categories, and theme clusters. The themes that emerged were (a) teacher awareness of the classroom environment and student behavior, (b) teacher perception of academic freedom, (c) teaching styles and adaptations to accommodate controversy, (d) fear of retribution (e) benefits of teaching controversial and emotive issues. Each of these themes was derived from 16 to 50 specific formulated meanings, with most themes being derived from no less than 20 formulated meanings. These themes served as a meaningful framework to understand the instructors' experiences. The themes, the number of formulated meanings (revised significant statements), and the participants who provided the significant statements are depicted in Figure 6.

Repeated Topics of Words/Phrases in Formulated Meanings	Researcher Assigned Codes	Data Source
Controversy in the classroom	CC	SI
Student reactions to controversy	SR	SI
Religion and ethnicity	RE	SI
Polarized issues	PI	SI
Student political views	SP	SI
Student negative attitudes	SN	SI
Understanding of academic freedom	UA	SI
Hostile environment	HE	SI
Restrict academic freedom	RA	SI
Teacher limits to speech	LS	SI
Adapting to students sensitivities	AS	SI

Figure 5. Example of Coding Process in Data Analysis

Theme	Number of formulated meanings	Participants who provided significant statements
Teacher awareness of the classroom environment and student behavior	45	1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10,11,12
Teacher perception of academic freedom	19	1,2,4,6,7,8,10,11,12
Teaching styles and adaptations to accommodate controversy	50	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12
Fear of retribution	24	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12
Benefits of teaching controversial and emotive issues	16	1,2,3,5,7,8,9,10,12

Figure 6. Theme Summary

Developing an exhaustive description. An exhaustive description was developed through a synthesis of all theme clusters and associated formulated meanings (Colaizzi, 1978). All emergent themes were defined into an exhaustive description. After merging all study themes, the whole structure of the phenomenon “teaching controversial and emotive issues in the politically-charged classroom” was extracted. The themes address specific research questions and are discussed in the following sections.

RQ1

How do instructors who teach courses in terrorism studies in higher education conceptualize controversy and emotion in the classroom that is politically-charged?

I formulated this research question because teachers define controversy and emotion in different ways (Malikow, 2006). The context in which the terms are framed can change how the issue is perceived by the teacher (Hess & Gatti, 2010). The manner in which these terms are

defined by the teacher influences how they are dealt with in the classroom (Clabough et al., 2011; Misco & Patterson, 2007).

To help address this research question, I formulated prompts in my interrogative collection methods, the Participant Interview Questioning Guide (Appendix F) and the Participant Questionnaire (Appendix E). The two questions that were incorporated into the Participant Interview Questioning Guide were, “What kinds of topics do you deal with in your classroom that you consider to be controversial and emotive in nature?” and “Why do you consider these topics to be controversial and emotive?” The Participant Questionnaire included two questions, “What courses do you regularly teach that deal with terrorism studies?” and “Are there issues/subjects in the courses you teach that you consider controversial and that can cause an emotional response in the classroom? What are they, and why do you consider them to be controversial?”

After data were analyzed, one theme was revealed that addressed this research question:
(a) teacher awareness of the classroom environment and students,

Teacher awareness of the classroom environment and students. Throughout the interview sessions, all of the participants voiced a keen awareness of what controversial and emotive issues were and could name several controversial and emotive issues that were prevalent in their classrooms. They were also aware of their students’ sensitivities to these issues. I extracted 45 significant statements from the participant interviews and participant questionnaires from 11 participants that directly contributed to the development of this theme.

The subject of “terrorism” was commonly cited by participants as being a controversial and emotive issue. Dr. Baker said, “Terrorism, in general, is controversial and emotive,” while Dr. Johnson said, “All criminal justice and terrorism is controversial in nature,” and “Terrorism

brings out controversies; there is a lot of pushback.” Drs. Davis and Ewing cited that discussing issues surrounding the events of 9/11 created controversy and led to heated classroom debates.

Several participants cited specific issues within terrorism studies courses that were considered controversial and emotive. By far, the most commonly mentioned issue dealt with Islam and the perceived role that Islamic ideology has in influencing acts of violence and terrorism. It is an issue that cannot be avoided when teaching terrorism studies. Dr. Baker simply said, “The Muslim face of violence is persistent.” Dr. Irving stated that “There is a debate on how much Islam relates to terrorism and it is most contentious.”

Participants were clear in their accounts of how students react when the issue of Islam is discussed. Dr. Golden shared his experiences in his classroom and said, “There have been times where I have had people that kind of ‘go off’ about Muslims, and I have to shut them down . . . and usually it’s a real emotional outburst.” Dr. Lynch noted that “There is a lot of emphasis on Islamophobia. This complicates everything.” This seemed to indicate that criticism of Islam was perceived by some to be bigoted or discriminatory. Finally, Dr. Knight said bluntly, “Islam is a hot button.”

The issues of religion and ethnicity were cited by several participants. However, by listening to their comments in the context of the entire interview, they were actually referring to Islam. Mr. Frasier commented, “We have had many controversies with some ethnic groups.” Dr. Baker said, “When it comes to matters of faith, there is not a lot of room for compromise.” Dr. Knight actually avoided using the terms *Islam* or *Muslim* and simply mentioned “violent organizations” as being the source of conflict. Even after follow-up questioning and some prodding, he would not identify any specific religious group.

The analysis of the data also brought out another aspect of the faculty members' awareness of controversial and emotive issues. These issues were described by the participants as being highly polarized, without much room for compromise. Students come into the classroom with already deeply felt opinions on certain issues. Drs. Davis, Holder, and Lynch made comments about the bifurcation of certain issues. Dr. Baker said, "People are passionately devoted to one side of the conflict," and "There is no room for compromise." Dr. Baker also said that when he attempts to describe the terrorist organization's viewpoint, some of his students accuse him of "defending terrorists." Participants were also aware of their students' sensitivities to these issues.

Participants strongly indicated that they were very focused on their students and developed a strong perception of their attitudes and beliefs. This awareness of the students' views on issues related to how they conceptualized controversy and emotion. How the participants conceptualized controversy and emotion strongly influenced how they taught.

The participants clearly showed that they took an interest in understanding the students. They confidently discussed things about their students from a position of knowledge and understanding. Dr. Holder said, "I kind of feel my way through the class to get their feelings." This deliberate effort to understand their students was a common trait among the participants. Their insights into their students enabled them to develop various perceptions.

One perception held by the participants had to do with the students' political orientations. I did not specifically ask this question. The participants revealed this information through the course of the interviews without prompting. They felt it to be an important fact to share with me. Most participants commented that their students were politically conservative, especially when compared to other college students. Dr. Johnson said, "The students in general are conservative."

They spoke as if they were more comfortable having conservative students in the classroom. Dr. Davis said, “Most of my students are conservatives and don’t have as much of a problem with what I teach.” This conservative bent was attributed to the fact that many of the students in their programs were either ex-military, law enforcement, or in training for these professions. Dr. Irving said that “Students drawn to homeland security tend to be more on the conservative side.” Dr. Baker added that, “My students tend to be more conservative politically. They are concerned with security and intelligence issues.”

Indeed, the participants shared that a large number of their students came from a military and law enforcement background. Dr. Golden commented that, “My student population is made up of working professionals in the field and have a more professional attitude.” A common perception is that students from a military or law enforcement background tend to look at issues more as absolutes. Mr. Cox said, “Ex-military or ex-police get so offended because everything is black or white — there’s no gray area.”

Participants also shared a perception that having Muslim students in the class was a source of tension and conflict. Dr. Holder said, “We have a lot of Saudi students, which creates a stressful situation.” Dr. Baker shared that he had several Palestinian students in his class whom he described as “angry.” Dr. Golden commented that, “There seems to be a large number of Muslim students taking courses in Homeland Security, quite a few of them are in the business—in the military.”

Finally, there was a strong perception among the participants that many of the students were millennials (students currently in their late teens and twenties) and attributed traits to this group that were not positive. Mr. Cox said that his millennial students “come into class with a belief system that’s already been formed, with no curiosity about why.” He said, “A lot of the

younger generation — everything is either good or bad.” The negative attributes continued with Mr. Frasier saying about his younger students, “I’ve got a group of folks who are always looking to be the victim.” Millennials were described as being immature and prone to inappropriate comments in class or more prone to argue. Dr. Davis said, “There is always that student, when I propose a situation to them, they say we should torture the sucker, we should waterboard the sucker.” Dr. Ewing said about his younger students, “One political persuasion will literally shout down students from the other political persuasion.”

RQ2

How do teachers in terrorism studies courses in higher education understand academic freedom, especially as this concept intersects with their own teaching experiences with regards to teaching about controversial and emotive subject matter in the politically-charged classroom?

I formulated this research question because academic freedom means many things to many people. It is a complex term and is hard to define (Swezey & Ross, 2011). This is important to understand how teachers reconcile issues related to teaching controversial and emotive subject matter with expectations of academic freedom (Hess & Gatti, 2010).

To help address this research question, I formulated prompts in my interrogative collection methods, the Participant Interview Questioning Guide (Appendix F) and the Participant Questionnaire (Appendix E). The question that was incorporated into the Participant Interview Questioning Guide was, “What are your expectations of academic freedom in your classroom and does your current teaching environment meet these expectations?” The Participant Questionnaire included the question, “What is your understanding of academic freedom?” One theme was revealed after data were analyzed that addressed this research question: teacher perception of academic freedom.

Teacher perception of academic freedom. Participants commented that they were very aware of what academic freedom is and shared various viewpoints about their perceptions and experiences in their jobs. Their perceptions of academic freedom and the extent to which it existed in their classrooms significantly affected how they taught. I extracted 19 significant statements from the participant interviews and participant questionnaires from nine participants that directly contributed to the development of this theme.

An analysis of the participants' comments revealed three elements to the theme of teacher perception of academic freedom. First, the participants had an understanding of what academic freedom is and had some expectation that it could be practiced in their classrooms. Second, they perceived an environment hostile to the study of terrorism, at least for their own departments and schools. This perception included an awareness of political correctness and the stifling of open discussion in the classroom. Third, this environment significantly limited the practice of academic freedom.

The participants were asked directly what their understanding of academic freedom was and if there was any expectation of it in their classrooms. The comments repeatedly revealed that they had a clear understanding of what academic freedom is and that it existed to some degree in their classes. Dr. Golden said, "I let students know that I am open to discourse, discussion, and debate – and I expect them to be also," and "I throw out a point of view and my students are free to argue with it or not."

There was some variation and nuances in the participants' understanding of academic freedom. Dr. Knight understood that academic freedom did not protect all discussion in the class, just that speech which dealt with the subject matter. He said, "Academic freedom has to do with

speaking about the curriculum and not just talking about anything.” Mr. Frasier had a slightly different understanding. He said, “I’m only responsible for what I say, not how you interpret it.”

While the comments reflected the opinion of the participants that some degree of academic freedom was respected in their classrooms, clearly they said this freedom was restricted. The term “political correctness” was repeated over and over again. For example, Dr. Lynch said, “I’m very concerned about the political correctness; it’s a cultural weakness.” Dr. Holder said, “I’m not real good at political correctness.” All of the participants, except for Dr. Baker, mentioned the term “political correctness” and claimed that political correctness restricted their abilities to openly discuss certain issues. I did not use the term “political correctness” anywhere in my interrogatories in the participant questionnaires or during the participant interviews; I specifically avoided using the expression. The 11 participants who used the term “political correctness” did so spontaneously, without any prompting.

Several comments revealed that the programs and fields of study, e.g., homeland security and terrorism, were specifically targeted and restricted by political correctness. Dr. Golden claimed that “Academia in America is not well-disposed to Homeland Security. There’s an awful lot of ideological pushback by people who don’t really know what our program is about.” He went on to say, “Universities in the Northeast tend to be very politicized and that political ideology often overwhelms administration and faculty’s objectivity and they become blinded to realities and are ignorant.” Dr. Irving observed that most of the faculty in his department came from the security and defense career field and were not career academicians. He felt that other departments had political agendas and resented his department. He said, “The faculty we have in our program is apolitical and different from other faculty at the university. We are largely resented by other departments. We are the practitioner/scholars.” Dr. Golden seemed to agree with this

statement and said, “There is a resentment of practitioners among faculty members who are pure academics in criminal justice.” Dr. Johnson observed this resentment as being widespread and said, “You see conservative speakers being uninvited and in some cases lied to. What kind of academic freedom is that?”

Dr. Johnson said, “You know the material but have been placed in a container that says, this is as far as you go. You cannot cross this line. You cannot exit this box. You cannot reach this high. You cannot go this low.” He clearly voiced an opinion that his academic freedom was highly restricted.

Most all of the participants claimed that faculty who taught terrorism studies courses, especially those programs affiliated with the Center for Homeland Defense and Security, had professional backgrounds in the field before entering academia and tended to have more conservative political views. Dr. Johnson added that, “Criminal justice and homeland security faculty are a little right of center from most faculty members.” Dr. Lynch voiced that the restrictions to academic freedom come from the top. He said, “Our leadership in Washington says we can’t use Islamic terrorism. It’s not politically correct. There’s your hot button.”

Dr. Allen best summed up the current state of affairs with academic freedom when discussing issues in terrorism studies courses. He said, “We have academic freedom to the extent that we are not offending someone.”

RQ3

How do instructors who teach courses in terrorism studies in higher education change their classroom teaching strategies based on their conceptions and experiences of teaching controversial and emotive issues? I formulated this research question because there can be a disparity in how teachers perceive teaching controversy and how they actually perceive their

own practices in the classroom (Hamdan & Khader, 2014). Teachers can react to controversy in different ways that affect their teaching approaches (Hess, 2005). The politically-charged classroom can actually be an excellent opportunity to develop innovative teaching strategies (Byford, Lennon, & Russell, 2009) and best practices need to be identified.

To help address this research question, I formulated prompts in my interrogative collection methods, the Participant Interview Questioning Guide (Appendix F) and the Participant Questionnaire (Appendix E). The following are the three questions included in the Participant Interview Questioning Guide:

1. How does having to deal with controversial and emotive issues affect your teaching style and interaction with your students? Are there any changes to your teaching style? Have you had to adapt?
2. Describe how your students have reacted to dealing with controversial and emotive issues.
3. What classroom rules have you established for your students when discussing controversial and emotive issues? Have they been effective?

The Participant Questionnaire included the following questions:

1. Are there any roadblocks or influences that hinder your ability to teach controversial and emotive issues? Briefly describe them.
2. Do you use different teaching strategies when you teach controversial and emotive issues? What are they?
3. What would you change about your teaching environment that would help you more effectively teach subjects that are controversial and emotive?

One theme that addressed this research research question was revealed after data were analyzed: (c) teaching styles and adaptations to accommodate controversy.

Teaching styles and adaptations to accommodate controversy. Throughout the interview sessions, all of the participants stated that they practiced some form of censorship or filtering process when dealing with controversial and emotive issues in their classes. The word “careful” was used repeatedly when describing how participants addressed controversial and emotive issues in the classroom. I extracted 50 significant statements from the participant interviews and participant questionnaires from 12 individual participants that directly contributed to the development of this theme.

Dr. Davis said, “When I teach controversial issues, yes, I do go carefully.” Dr. Knight said, “You have to be careful about what you say,” And, “I try to think carefully about what I am going to say. You have to choose your words carefully.” Dr. Holder used the term, “guarded” in his response. It was clear, as evidenced by their statements below, that the participants did not like the fact that they had to exercise this kind of self-control. Dr. Holder said, “I hate to admit it, but I find myself being more on guard and I don’t like doing that, but I have to.” Dr. Irving said, “You are filtering everything. Humor is very hard to happen in the classroom anymore.” Dr. Davis summed it up when he said, “For the lack of a better word, I’m kind of a censor.” He clearly did not like having to assume that role.

The participants spoke a lot about having to hold back discussion on certain topics that were controversial and emotive. Mr. Cox stated, “Sometimes I have to hold back things because it’s not going to go over very well, and that stifled creativity,” and, “I’ve changed some things. I’ve held back some information and tried to find a different way to approach a subject.” Dr.

Holder used the expression “tongue biting” when describing how he has to restrict conversation on certain topics.

The participants also provided comments that revealed how they were focused on the students when in a situation involving controversy. This “student-centered” approach was a common strategy used by the participants. Mr. Frasier said, “The type of students does change how the course is delivered,” and “I am concerned about how I will use the words, more so with a group that I am not familiar with.” Dr. Holder expressed a sincere desire to respect student sensitivities. He said, “I do respect the students, and I don’t want to offend them.” He added, “The difficulty in teaching is finding a middle road that is not necessarily going to offend.”

This theme focused on holding back discussion as a way to address the issue of controversy and emotion in the classroom. Participants also spoke about how they adapted to the environment and made accommodations for dealing with controversial and emotive issues.

The participants clearly were aware of controversy and emotion in the classroom when certain issues were discussed. They also realized the dangers of not handling these issues correctly. They discussed how this limited what they said in the classroom. The participants also shared how they made changes in their teaching styles and accommodated the presence of controversy and emotion in the classroom.

The participants shared their strategies that they employed with their students. These strategies included establishing control of the classroom, engaging in dialogue with the students, maintaining neutrality when engaged in discussions, and accommodating student sensitivities on particular issues.

The word “control” was common when the participants described how they managed their classrooms. Dr. Lynch commented that it was important to “establish ground rules up

front.” Dr. Allen warned that there were consequences for not maintaining control of the classroom. He said, “You have to control the students or they take over your class.” Dr. Davis and Mr. Cox felt it important for the teacher to be the final authority in the classroom and to exercise that role when necessary.

The use of dialogue and the guided classroom discussion were other important tools that participants used to deal with controversial and emotive issues. Dr. Golden saw dialogue as a way to address controversy. He said, “When there’s a difference in opinion, I really encourage dialogue and debate.” Mr. Ewing said he always uses a provocative question to start a class discussion, but most participants spoke about maintaining civility through mature and objective discussions. Dr. Golden said, “If you are going to go down the path of a controversial subject, you really need to bring in both objective sides, both legit arguments there.” He also said it was important to engage the students and value their input. He said, “To overcome problems with controversy, draw from students’ areas of expertise — more of a seminar style.” Dr. Irving actually challenges his students by making them support the assertions they make in class. Finally, Dr. Allen simply suggests that the teacher be a good listener when engaged in classroom discussions.

Related to classroom dialogue was the importance of the teacher to maintain his or her neutrality during class discussions. Mr. Cox said he is careful not to share too much of his personal beliefs. Dr. Holder agreed and said, “I don’t take a stance because I distance myself from my personal beliefs. I try not to show any bias and it’s all tempered.” Mr. Ewing said, “While they may be experiencing the material emotionally, I try to stay objective.” He also did not like to share his personal opinions and tried to seek middle ground in controversial issues.

The participants also spoke about being sensitive to students and to adjust their teaching accordingly. Mr. Frasier said to “be sensitive to the potential feelings within the classroom.” Dr. Lynch felt it was his personal responsibility. He said, “It’s my responsibility to be careful and approach them in a way that is not offending.” Dr. Knight said, “You have to be sensitive to the potential feelings within the classroom – you have to know the importance of understanding other cultures, especially Islam.”

RQ4

How have changes in teaching strategies affected teacher job satisfaction and student learning in the terrorism studies classroom? I formulated this research question because teachers may feel subjected to political pressures from various sources, such as the school administration, community and campus organizations, or simply individual students (Miller, Mills, & Harkins, 2011). Teachers who feel pressured to change their teaching strategies often experience job dissatisfaction (Hess, 2004). Teacher job satisfaction has a significant impact on the teaching-learning process in the classroom (Misco, 2011; Philpott et al., 2011).

To help address this research question, I formulated prompts in my interrogative collection methods: the Participant Interview Questioning Guide (Appendix F) and the Participant Questionnaire (Appendix E). The four questions included in the Participant Interview Questioning Guide were as follows:

1. What benefits, if any, do you see in dealing with controversial and emotive topics in your classroom?
2. How have the challenges of teaching controversial and emotive issues affected your job satisfaction and your overall perception of teaching as a career?

3. Do you sense any external pressures or fears when dealing with controversial and emotive issues in your classroom?
4. Are there any limits imposed on your teaching, either external or self-induced, that could have an effect on your teaching effectiveness? How have you dealt with them?

The Participant Questionnaire included one question: what would you change about your teaching environment (inside or outside the classroom) that would help you more effectively teach subjects that are controversial and emotive?

Two themes were revealed after data were analyzed that addressed this research question: (a) fear of retribution or discipline, and (b) benefits of teaching controversial and emotive issues.

Fear of retribution or discipline. An analysis of the data shows that the participants clearly have a keen awareness that a hostile environment often exists in the classroom where controversial and emotive issues are being discussed. They are aware that they could be held accountable if there were a complaint and that could have consequences affecting their careers and job security. To compensate for this, participants often felt the need to practice defensive measures in the classroom to avoid complaints, sometimes avoiding the discussion of controversial and emotive issues altogether. The words *hostile*, *complain*, *pressure*, and *fear* were repeated throughout the participant interviews. I extracted 24 significant statements from the participant interviews and participant questionnaires from all 12 of the participants that directly contributed to the development of this theme.

The participants discussed an environment that they considered to be hostile to some degree. Dr. Holder admitted, “I do to some extent feel there are external pressures from my school.” Many described this hostility as being profound. Mr. Frasier said, “It is quite a hostile environment—some people are always looking for a reason to get somebody on something.”

There were several comments that some students were actually looking for something to file a complaint about. Dr. Irving claimed, “Some students are waiting to catch you saying something they can find offensive.” While Mr. Ewing said, “There are landmines everywhere” when discussing students in his class who seem to be waiting to be offended and make a complaint. Dr. Knight said, “This day and age anything you say can pop up on Twitter.” He summarized his feeling by saying, “If you live in fear you’re not going to be a good teacher.”

This awareness of a hostile environment in the class and a readiness on the part of students to file official complaints led to a fear for job security because there was a perception that retribution in the form of some adverse personnel event such as termination could be administered by the school administration. Many participants related stories of fellow faculty members who were terminated based on student complaints of being offended or for the teacher not being sensitive enough regarding some particular issue. Dr. Knight remembered, “We had a faculty member dismissed for saying something students thought was unacceptable.” Mr. Frasier recalled, “I know some instructors who have been terminated because of complaints from students on being offended by political or cultural comments.” Dr. Frasier also said, “If you say the wrong thing, it can have serious consequences on you. This makes me feel stressed, uncomfortable, pressured, out of my zone.” He commented that he was considering leaving his current teaching position because of the hostile environment he feels forced to work in. He said, “I am actively looking for something else that gets me out of this environment.”

Dr. Lynch experienced a negative outcome when he tried to discipline a student who was inappropriate in class during a heated discussion over a highly controversial issue. He said, “I disciplined a student, but my admin threw me under the bus. I don’t trust my school’s

leadership.” Many of the participants expressed this same degree of mistrust for their school’s leadership and willingness on their part to take the side of the offended student.

Two participants did express some degree of trust in their school’s leadership and felt that they would be treated fairly if a student complaint were made. Mr. Ewing said, “If I did have a student complain about me, I believe the school would have my back.” Dr. Irving said, “Never felt a need to police myself based on my leadership at both schools I taught at.”

Many participants spoke about their need to practice what one faculty member called “defensive teaching.” Defensive teaching ranged from being cautious when dealing with certain issues to avoiding those issues altogether. All participants made some comment regarding the need to be careful in their choice of words when dealing with controversial and emotive issues. Mr. Frasier said, “You need to be careful today about what you say. You have to think about how it will come across and how you are going to explain that.” Mr. Cox said, “You have to be very careful what you say and who you say it to. I have to be careful because someone will call and complain.”

This level of caution extended to avoiding discussing certain issues altogether. Mr. Cox said, “We are afraid to share these topics and have these discussions.” He felt that avoiding certain controversial and emotive issues was a form of what he called “risk aversion.” Certainly finding the need to avoid adverse actions was a common comment. Dr. Holder said, “I’m trying to balance two worlds to keep myself out of hot water.” While Dr. Baker said, “I need to be scrutinizing my own behavior and making extra sure I’m not providing ground or basis for such charges.”

Some participants said that they have to take measures to cover their own back in case a complaint was made. The most common measure was to document any incident where there was

a chance of a complaint. Dr. Baker said, “There was a student who was offensive in the classroom. I made a record in case he decided he was going to file a complaint. I document the hell out of things if I start to worry that anything is going to come back to bite me.”

Benefits of teaching controversial and emotive issues. Throughout the interview sessions, all of the participants made comments related to the benefits of engaging in discussions in class on topics that could be considered controversial and emotive. They overwhelmingly saw the need for debate and dialogue as being necessary for the teaching-learning process to be successful. Participants also shared their opinion that engaging in classroom discussions actually was better for them professionally and was necessary for them to be successful teachers. They also saw the benefit to students because they felt that engaging in the debate of controversial and emotive issues improved their ability to practice civil discourse and develop their critical thinking skills. I extracted 16 significant statements from the participant interviews and participant questionnaires from nine of the participants that directly contributed to the development of this theme.

Discussing controversial and emotive issues in class was viewed as being a necessary part of education. Terrorism studies is filled with controversial and emotive issues that must be covered in class. Dr. Johnson said, “You cannot shy away from these topics. They need to learn this.” Dr. Johnson also felt like it was a necessary part of the education process. He commented, “The whole idea of the university is discussion of controversial topics. Taking the students from what they don’t know to what they know. You can’t do that without discussing controversial topics.” Mr. Cox added, “In teaching, if you don’t have controversy, you don’t have a discussion.” Mr. Ewing saw controversial discussions as being necessary and highlighted the fact that it was the responsibility of the teacher to be a facilitator. He said, “Students will challenge

you as they should, so you should come in prepared.” Mr. Ewing said, “My job is being an arbiter, someone presenting facts. I’m not going to quash conversation about these facts.”

The participants also spoke about the discussion of controversial and emotive issues in the classroom as being beneficial to the teacher and vital to job satisfaction. Dr. Allen said, “The students challenge me. If I quit getting challenged, I will lose all interest in teaching.” Dr. Johnson talked about how ignoring controversial issues to avoid offending someone was not productive. He said, “If you try to please everyone, you please no one, including yourself” Dr. Irving simply said, “Dealing with controversial issues makes me a better teacher.”

Engaging in the discussion of controversial and emotive issues was also seen as very beneficial to the students and their education. It taught the students how to engage in civil discourse and develop their critical thinking skills. Dr. Golden said, “It’s all about the dialogue and how they reach conclusions and how they defend their own points of view.” He also mentioned the need to keep the discussions at the intellectual level. Finally, Dr. Baker said, “Dealing with controversial issues teaches students civil discourse. Dealing with controversial issues teaches students to be critical thinkers.”

Summary

Chapter Four reported the participants’ lived experiences of teaching controversial and emotive issues in terrorism studies courses in an environment that can be politically-charged. Through semi-structured interviews and participant questionnaires, the 12 participants shared their perceptions based on their lived experiences in the classroom.

The participants in this study represented a wide variety of attributes in educational background and professional background. They also came from a variety of school types including public and private schools and from schools of various sizes, from very small to large.

They participated openly and freely in the semi-structured interviews and provided narrative information in the participant questionnaires. Over 150 pages of interview transcripts were collected in addition to 12 questionnaires and volumes of course materials.

An analysis was conducted using a process discussed in Chapter Three, and revealed seven themes: (a) teacher awareness of the classroom environment and students, (b) teacher perception of academic freedom, (c) teaching styles and adaptations to accommodate controversy, (d) fear of retribution, and (e) benefits of teaching controversial and emotive issues.

RQ1 asked, “How do instructors who teach courses in terrorism studies in higher education conceptualize controversy and emotion in the classroom that is politically-charged?” Two themes emerged after data were analyzed that address this research question. These were (a) awareness of the controversial and emotive environment, and (b) teacher perception of students. Throughout the interview sessions, all of the participants showed a keen awareness of what controversial and emotive issues were and could name several controversial and emotive issues that were prevalent in their classrooms. They were also aware of their students’ sensitivities to these issues. Participants strongly indicated that they were very focused on their students and developed a strong perception of their attitudes and beliefs. This awareness of the students’ views on issues related to how they conceptualized controversy and emotion.

RQ2 asked, “How do teachers in terrorism studies courses in higher education understand academic freedom, especially as this concept intersects with their own teaching experiences with regards to teaching about controversial and emotive subject matter in the politically-charged classroom?” One theme that addressed this research question was revealed after data were analyzed: teacher perception of academic freedom. Participants commented that they were very aware of what academic freedom is and shared various viewpoints about their perceptions and

experiences in their jobs. Their perceptions of academic freedom and the extent to which it existed in their classrooms significantly affected how they taught.

An analysis of the participants' comments revealed three elements to this theme. First, the participants understood what academic freedom is and had some expectation that it could be practiced in their classrooms. Second, they perceived an environment hostile to the study of terrorism, at least for their own departments and schools. This perception included an awareness of political correctness and the stifling of open discussion in the classroom. Third, this type of environment significantly limited the practice of academic freedom.

RQ3 asked, "How do instructors who teach courses in terrorism studies in higher education change their classroom teaching strategies based on their conceptions and experiences of teaching controversial and emotive issues?" Two themes that addressed this research question were revealed after data were analyzed: (a) teacher self-censorship and filtering, and (b) teaching styles and adaptations to accommodate controversy. Throughout the interview sessions, all of the participants stated that they practiced some form of censorship or filtering process when dealing with controversial and emotive issues in their classes. The word *careful* was used repeatedly when describing how participants addressed controversial and emotive issues in the classroom. The participants clearly were aware of controversy and emotion in the classroom when certain issues were discussed. They also realized the dangers of not handling these issues correctly. They discussed how this limited what they said in the classroom. The participants also shared how they made changes in their teaching styles and accommodated the effects of controversy and emotion in the classroom.

RQ4 asked, "How have changes in teaching strategies affected teacher job satisfaction and student learning in the terrorism studies classroom?" Two themes were revealed after data

were analyzed that addressed this research question: fear of retribution or discipline, and benefits of teaching controversial and emotive issues. An analysis of the data shows that the participants clearly had a keen awareness that a hostile environment often exists in the classroom where controversial and emotive issues are being discussed. They were aware that they could be held accountable if there were complaints, and that could have consequences affecting their careers and job security. To compensate for this, the participants often felt the need to practice defensive measures in the classroom to avoid complaints and would sometimes avoid discussion of controversial and emotive issues altogether.

All of the participants made comments related to the benefits of engaging in discussions in class on topics that could be considered controversial and emotive. They overwhelmingly saw the need for debate and dialogue as being necessary for the teaching-learning process to be successful. Participants also shared their feelings about engaging in classroom discussions actually was better for them professionally and was necessary for them to be successful teachers. They also saw the benefit to students because they felt that engaging in the debate of controversial and emotive issues improved their abilities to practice civil discourse and develop their critical thinking skills.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the phenomenon experienced by faculty members who teach controversial and emotive issues in terrorism studies courses in an environment that can be politically-charged. This chapter presents a summary of findings that provides an analysis of the data, which resulted in the identification of five themes that directly related to the teaching of controversial and emotive issues in terrorism studies courses. These themes were (a) teacher awareness of the classroom environment and students, (b) teacher perception of academic freedom, (c) teaching styles and adaptations to accommodate controversy, (d) fear of retribution, and (e) benefits of teaching controversial and emotive issues.

A discussion of the study findings in relationship to the empirical and theoretical literature is included. This discussion identifies areas where my research corroborated and expanded on the existing empirical literature. The findings are also discussed in relation to the theoretical frameworks that supported an understanding of the implications of this research study. These frameworks are Oliver and Shaver's (1996) Jurisprudential Inquiry Model and Thornton's (1991) Teacher as Curricular Instructional Gatekeeper Theory.

A section of this chapter discusses the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of this study and provides recommendations for school administrators, teachers, and students. Delimitations are discussed that were necessary to focus effectively on the problem statement. Limitations are discussed that identified potential weaknesses of the study that could not be controlled at this time. Finally, this chapter provides recommendations for further research in this area.

Summary of Findings

An analysis of the data resulted in the identification of seven themes that directly related to the teaching of controversial and emotive issues in terrorism studies courses. These themes were (a) teacher awareness of the classroom environment and students, (b) teacher perception of academic freedom, (c) teaching styles and adaptations to accommodate controversy, (d) fear of retribution, and (e) benefits of teaching controversial and emotive issues.

RQ1 addressed how instructors who teach courses in terrorism studies in higher education conceptualize controversy and emotion in the classroom that is politically-charged. An analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of one theme that provides answers in response to this question. The theme was (a) teacher awareness of the classroom environment and students.

Participants shared that they had a keen awareness of what controversial and emotive issues were and could name several controversial and emotive issues that were prevalent in their classrooms. Islam and the role Islamic teaching has in promoting violence and inspiring terrorism was, by far, the most controversial and emotive issue taught and discussed in terrorism studies courses. It also had the most significant impact in the classroom. Matters of religion and ethnicity were also subjects identified by the participants as being controversial and emotive. The analysis also showed that the faculty members perceived these issues as being highly polarized without much room for compromise. Students come into the classroom with some very deep-felt and extreme opinions on certain issues, which often contribute to situations of stress in the classroom.

The participants indicated an awareness of their students' attitudes and beliefs. They were aware of the students' political orientations and noticed that students in homeland security and law enforcement programs tend to be more politically conservative. The participants also

observed that Muslim students can be a source of stress in the classroom. They also felt that millennial students (those in their late teens and twenties) tended to lack curiosity. They were also quick to be a victim and were more prone to inappropriate discussion in class.

RQ2 addressed how teachers in terrorism studies courses in higher education understand academic freedom, especially as this concept intersects with their own teaching experiences with regards to teaching about controversial and emotive subject matter in the politically-charged classroom. An analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of a theme that provided answers in response to this question. This theme was (b) teacher perception of academic freedom.

Participants understood what academic freedom is and had some expectation that it could be practiced in their classrooms. They perceived an environment hostile to the study of terrorism, at least for their own departments and schools. This perception included an awareness of political correctness and the stifling of open discussion in the classroom. They felt that this environment significantly limited the practice of academic freedom. They often used the term, “political correctness” to describe their environments.

RQ3 addressed how instructors who teach courses in terrorism studies in higher education change their classroom teaching strategies based on their conceptions and experiences of teaching controversial and emotive issues. An analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of a theme that provided answers in response to this question. The theme was (c) teaching styles and adaptations to accommodate controversy.

All of the participants stated that they practiced some form of self-censorship or filtering process when dealing with controversial and emotive issues in their classes. They felt a need to exercise caution and hold back discussion on certain issues that they felt were controversial and

emotive. Much of this depended on the students in their classes and their reactions to those issues. The teachers made accommodations for their students' sensitivities.

The participants used strategies with their students when dealing with controversial and emotive issues. These strategies included establishing control of the classroom, engaging in dialogue with the students, maintaining neutrality when engaged in discussions, and accommodating student sensitivities on particular issues.

RQ4 addressed how changes in teaching strategies affected teacher job satisfaction and student learning in the terrorism studies classroom. An analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of two themes that provide answers in response to this question. These themes were (d) fear of retribution or discipline, and (e) benefits of teaching controversial and emotive issues.

Participants clearly expressed awareness that a hostile environment often exists in the classroom where controversial and emotive issues are being discussed. They were aware that they could be held accountable if there were complaints, and that could have consequences affecting their careers and job security. The participants spoke of a need to practice "defensive teaching" where they showed extreme caution when dealing with certain issues, or they avoided those issues altogether. They also document adverse events that occur in the classroom in anticipation of disciplinary actions by their school administrators.

All of the participants called attention to the benefits of engaging in discussions in class on topics that could be considered controversial and emotive. They overwhelmingly saw the need for debate and dialogue as being necessary for the teaching-learning process to be successful. Participants also believed that engaging in classroom discussions actually was better for them professionally and was necessary for them to be successful teachers. They saw the

benefit to the students because they felt that engaging in the debate of controversial and emotive issues improved their abilities to practice civil discourse and develop their critical thinking skills.

Discussion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the phenomenon experienced by faculty members who teach controversial and emotive issues in terrorism studies courses in an environment that can be politically-charged. This section provides a discussion of the study findings in relationship to the empirical and theoretical literature discussed in Chapter Two.

The Empirical Literature

The findings of this research study corroborated and expanded on the existing literature discussed in Chapter Two in several instances. This study did not present any contradictions of the empirical literature. Discussed below are items from the literature review that are corroborated and expanded on in the findings of this research, listed by the themes that were a product of the analysis.

Teacher awareness of the classroom environment and students. Four areas from the findings in this theme corroborate the literature. These areas are (a) the nature of controversial and emotive issues, and (b) issues in terrorism studies course that are controversial and emotive, (c) intellectual curiosity and civil discourse, and (d) student propensity to be victims and complain..

The nature of controversial and emotive issues. This research study corroborates the literature in this area. My review of the literature defined the nature of controversy in the academic setting as opposing viewpoints and conflict. Controversial and emotive issues are referred to as sensitive subjects requiring students to choose sides (Clabough, Philpott,

McConkey, & Turner, 2011). They can be offensive to some and provoke passionate discussions (Byford, Lennon, & Russel, 2009; Evans, Avery, & Pederson, 1999; Soley, 1996).

Participants in this study shared that they had a keen awareness of what controversial and emotive issues were and could name several controversial and emotive issues that were prevalent in their classrooms. The analysis also showed that the faculty members perceived these issues as being highly polarized without much room for compromise. Students come into the classroom with some very deep-felt and extreme opinions on certain issues, which often contributes to situations of stress in the classroom.

The existence of political correctness in the classroom. The results of this study corroborate the literature in this area in several aspects. The existing literature revealed that there is no clear definition of what is political correctness. The participants all offered some discussion of political correctness; however no single homogenous definition emerged. Additionally, the literature stated that the term political correctness is, in and of itself, especially controversial and emotive. This was corroborated in this research. Finally, the literature revealed that the term is associated with a restriction of free speech and academic freedom. This research strongly corroborated this finding in that all of the participants mentioned the existence of political correctness in the classroom and that it inhibited the free exchange of ideas and forced them to modify their teaching styles. Of particular interest in this research is that the researcher never used the term political correctness during the participant interviews. The term political correctness was offered solely by the participants of their own initiative.

Issues in terrorism studies courses that are controversial and emotive. The results of this study corroborate the literature in this area. The existing literature revealed several areas studied in terrorism studies courses that are considered controversial and emotive. A major area

identified in the literature is the relationship of Islamic teaching with violence and terrorism. There is a great variation of opinions in the public discourse on what role Islam and Islamic teaching play in modern terrorism. Many believe that religious motivations for terrorism are a thing of the past (Horowitz, 2009). There is a lack of agreement as to whether Islamic terrorism is even a correct term to use. Ethnic and religious profiling was also identified as a subject of much discourse that creates controversy in the public and academic arenas (Johnson et al., 2011).

The findings presented in this research study corroborate the literature because the analysis of the data shows that participants believed that Islam and the role Islamic teaching has in promoting violence and inspiring terrorism was, by far, the most controversial and emotive issue taught and discussed in terrorism studies courses. It also had the most significant impact in the classroom. Matters of religion and ethnicity were also subjects identified by the participants as being controversial and emotive.

Intellectual curiosity and civil discourse. This research study corroborates and refines the established literature in this area. The literature review cited a study conducted by Byford, Lennon, and Russell (2009) that examined teachers' attitudes towards teaching controversial issues in the classroom. They found that teachers believed it is necessary to teach students how to deal with controversial issues because they believed these issues confuse and frustrate the students (Byford et al., 2009). They indicated that students lacked the intellectual and social ability to engage in civil discourse.

This research study corroborates and expands these findings. This study agrees with the literature, but refines this assessment to students who are of the millennial generation (currently in their late teens and twenties). This study indicated that faculty members perceive students who

are millennials as especially lacking in intellectual curiosity and the ability to effectively engage in civil discourse.

Student propensity to be victims and complain. This research study corroborates and refines the established literature in this area. The literature review revealed that while some teachers experience a problem with getting students to participate in the discussion of controversial and emotive subjects in the classroom (Fournier-Sylvester, 2013), most educators fear the emotional reactions of the students and the problems that can occur with classroom control (Kello, 2015). A study conducted by Kello (2015) determined that some teachers avoided topics because of negative student reactions. These negative student reactions led to even greater problems for teachers when the students made complaints to the school or an outside organization. This research study identified a trait in the student population where they have a tendency to be offended and make complaints when they perceive their sensitivities are hurt.

Teacher perception of academic freedom. One area from the findings in this theme corroborated and expanded on the literature: academic freedom is limited to some degree by the institution and students.

According to the contemporary political philosopher John N. Gray (2008), “The essence of liberalism is toleration of different beliefs and of different ideas as to what constitutes a good life” (p. 86). This is the major philosophical basis for academic freedom. Gray’s statement proclaimed rights on behalf of the professors and the students.

Gray’s statement did provide some guidance on what is considered academic freedom. The statement said that, although teachers may be entitled to freedom of discussion in their classrooms, they should be careful not to introduce controversial issues that could have no relation to their subject being taught in the classroom (Buss, 1999). The statement cautioned that

academic freedom was not intended to justify uncontrolled commentary on any subject regardless of the content of the course. Buss (1999) also observed that the statement acknowledged, however, that academic freedom is a right that is limited to a great extent by an institution's curriculum requirements, institutional and contractual obligations, and the freedoms and rights of students.

The results of this research study suggest that institutions and students do indeed create limits to academic freedom. This study revealed that the participants understood what academic freedom is and had some expectation that it could be practiced in their classrooms, to the extent that it was limited by the institution and the students. This perception included an awareness of political correctness and the stifling of open discussion in the classroom. This environment significantly limited the practice of academic freedom. This study expands on the literature because the findings reveal that programs in homeland security and law enforcement are particularly susceptible to being under the pressure of political correctness.

Teaching styles and adaptations to accommodate controversy. Two areas from the findings in this theme corroborated and expanded on the literature: teachers engage in self-censorship to avoid conflict and teachers develop a specific approach to dealing with controversial issues.

The literature said that educators can feel restrained by their own values and beliefs regardless of outside pressures and expectations (Kello, 2016). Teachers often have an inherent fear of offending someone or being insensitive (Flinders, 2005). This is probably enhanced by the tendency of students to be more critical of teachers and to be easily offended (Elmore, 2010). These self-induced pressures can be just as real and have a detrimental impact as those pressures coming from external sources outside of the teacher's control. Philpott et al. (2011) found that

many teachers “almost instinctively want to avoid conflict in the classroom” (p. 32). In Nelson’s (2003) prominent study of teachers’ perceptions of academic freedom, he concluded that many teachers have misconceptions about academic freedom that lead to self-censorship.

This study clearly shows that all of the participants stated that they practiced some form of censorship or filtering process when dealing with controversial and emotive issues in their classes. The participants also shared that they did not like having to restrict their participation in class.

Hess (2005) identified four approaches that illustrate how teachers’ views influence their teaching of controversial issues. Hess’ four approaches have been cited extensively in the literature dealing with controversial issues in the classroom. These approaches included denial, privilege, avoidance, and balance.

These results of this study revealed that the participants adopted the approaches of avoidance and balance when they taught controversial and emotive topics, but they did not seem to adopt the approaches of denial and privilege. The participants spoke clearly that they often avoided certain topics because they generated too much emotion in the classroom. The literature says that avoidance happens when teachers believe a topic is a controversial issue and they sometimes decide not to include it in the curricula. Teachers decide not to include controversial issues for two main reasons. Some teachers were afraid that the issue will cause uproar in the classroom or community. More prevalent, however, is the influence of the teachers’ own views. They felt that their strong views about an issue prevented them from teaching their students about it in a pedagogically neutral fashion (Hess, 2005).

The results of this research study also noted that teachers sought to maintain neutrality to provide a balanced approach to the discussion. Hess (2005) said that the balance approach

typically involves applying a standard for determining whether a topic is a controversial issue and, if it is, teaching about it without favoring a particular perspective. This approach is clearly the most preferred method (Hess, 2005).

The results of this research study did not show that the practice of denial or privilege was implemented by the participants. In the denial approach, teachers deny that an issue is actually controversial at all. Hess (2005) provided an example in which a teacher discussed the death penalty in the United States not as being a controversial issue, but rather as a question for which there was only one correct answer that the students should be taught to believe. The teacher was a member of Amnesty International and deeply believed that the sanctioned capital punishment was wrong (Hess, 2005).

In the privilege approach, teachers believe a topic is controversial, but they want to stress a particular perspective in their teaching. Like denial, they teach or side with only one issue of the controversy. They are promoting their own perspective to their students (Hess, 2005). This practice was not observed in this study.

Fear of retribution or discipline. This theme strongly corroborates the literature. The literature revealed three common themes related to the fear of retribution for offending political sensitivities. First, there is a perception among teachers that there is a climate of political sensitivity present in the classroom and with society in general (Fournier-Sylvester, 2013; Hess, 2004; Kello, 2016; Misco, 2011). Second, educators fear repercussions when certain political sensitivities are offended (Misco, 2011; Philpott et al., 2011). Third, educators perceive that they do not have support from their school systems and administrators and even feel that teaching about controversial issues can bring retribution from their leadership (Clabough et al., 2011).

Analysis of the data in this study showed that the participants clearly had a keen awareness that a hostile environment often exists in the classroom where controversial and emotive issues were being discussed. They were aware that they could be held accountable if there were a complaint, and that could have consequences affecting their careers and job security. To compensate for this, they often felt the need to practice defensive measures in the classroom to avoid complaints, sometimes choosing to avoid the discussion of controversial and emotive issues altogether.

Benefits of teaching controversial and emotive issues. This theme strongly corroborates the literature. The literature concludes that incorporating the discussion of controversial issues in the learning process can have a significantly positive effect on helping students to develop critical thinking skills (Alleva & Rovner, 2013; Clabough et al., 2011; Davis, Zorwick, Roland, & Wade, 2016; Fournier-Sylvester, 2013; Hess, 2009; Hess & Gatti, 2010; Kruger, 2012; Levstik & Tyson, 2010; Misco, 2011; Misco, 2012; Parker, 2006; Payne & Gainey, 2003; Pollock, Hamann, & Wilson, 2011). The literature overwhelmingly shows that incorporating the discussion of controversial issues in the classroom can have positive effects on students' interpersonal skills (Barton & McCully, 2007; Byford, Lennon, & Russell, 2009; Harwood & Hahn, 1990; Hess, 2004; Misco, 2011; Misco & Patterson, 2007).

This research study documented that all of the participants made comments related to the benefits of engaging in discussions in class on topics that could be considered controversial and emotive. They overwhelmingly saw debate and dialogue as being necessary for the teaching-learning process to be successful. Participants also shared their feelings that engaging in classroom discussions actually was better for them professionally and was necessary for them to be successful teachers. They also saw the benefit to students because they felt that engaging in

the debate of controversial and emotive issues improved their abilities to practice civil discourse and develop their critical thinking skills.

The Theoretical Literature

Contained in this section is a presentation of the theoretical frameworks that supported understanding of the implications of the current research study. Oliver and Shaver's (1996) Jurisprudential Inquiry Model and Thornton's (1991) Teacher as Curricular Instructional Gatekeeper Theory provided the theoretical frameworks used to support this research study.

The Jurisprudential Inquiry Model. The Jurisprudential Inquiry Model is based on the exploration and reflection of everyday social issues about which people usually have conflicting thoughts and differences (Oliver & Shaver, 1966). The idea is that this model will help teachers guide students to explore social issues, encourage them to question social and political forces, encourage value clarification, and practice reflective thinking skills. The model holds to the assumptions that social values legitimately conflict with one another, that negotiation can help to resolve complex and controversial issues, and that a skillful citizen is like a competent judge. A judge listens to the evidence, analyzes the legal positions taken by both sides, weighs these positions and the evidence, assesses the meaning provisions of the law, and finally makes the best possible decision.

The Jurisprudential Inquiry Model provided a lens through which I studied and analyzed the experiences of teaching controversial and emotive issues. Teachers are looked upon as being in a position of authority, much like the authority Oliver and Shaver (1966) attributed to a court judge. This model helped me understand the nature of conflict in the classroom and the role teachers assume to deal with this conflict.

Teacher as Curricular-Instructional Gatekeeper Theory. The gatekeeper theory is based on Thornton's (1991) belief that classroom teachers have great autonomy in determining the day-to-day curricular content, instructional strategies, and learning objectives to be experienced by students. Gatekeeping, or the control and direction maintained by the classroom teachers over curriculum, is "more crucial to curriculum and instruction than the form the curriculum takes" (Thornton, 2005, p. 10). Thornton (1989) said that gatekeeping is important because it "determines both what content and experiences students have access to and the nature of that content and those experiences" (p.4).

The decisions made by teachers vary considerably based on each teacher's frame of reference, which is influenced by individual values, beliefs, and previous experiences. Often teachers are unreflective about the decisions they make and may even base their decisions on unexamined assumptions. Curricular-instructional decisions are the key determinants of what students take away from the classroom (Thornton, 1991).

The Teacher as Curricular-Instructional Gatekeeper Theory provided a lens through which I studied and analyzed the experiences of teaching controversial and emotive issues. Each teacher is an individual and responds differently to conflict in the classroom. Using this theory helped me understand how the teachers' individual values, beliefs, and previous experiences controlled how they managed their classrooms. This theory also helped me appreciate the autonomy teachers have in making changes to their teaching styles and accommodations for dealing with controversy in the classroom.

Implications

This section discusses the theoretical, empirical and practical implications of this study and includes recommendations for school administrators, teachers, and students.

Theoretical Implications

The Jurisprudential Inquiry Model (Oliver & Shaver, 1966) served as a lens for my study. The process of the Jurisprudential Inquiry Model includes the following elements: (a) orientation to the case; (b) identifying the issue(s); (c) taking a position; (d) exploring the stance; (e) refining and qualifying the position; and (f) testing the assumption about the facts, definitions, and consequences.

While the Jurisprudential Inquiry Model provided an adequate basis for the theoretical study of my research, the analysis of the data in my study indicates that applying the model in a practical application would be problematic. The process of the model includes the six steps noted above. While some of these steps seem to exist in practice, the data show that there are impediments to the steps of taking a position and exploring a stance.

This study shows that with teaching controversial and emotive issues in terrorism studies courses, there is fear of retribution and discipline on the part of the teachers. This fear serves as an impediment to the process of taking a position and exploring the stance, which is necessary for the Jurisprudential Inquiry Model to be applied in practice. Participants were clear of their awareness that a hostile environment often exists in the classroom where controversial and emotive issues are being discussed. This awareness of a hostile environment in the class and a readiness on the part of students to file official complaints led to a fear for job security because there was a perception that retribution, in the form of some adverse personnel event such as termination, could be administered by the school administration. To compensate for this, the participants often felt the need to practice defensive measures in the classroom to avoid complaints, or even to avoid the discussion of controversial and emotive issues altogether.

Empirical Implications

Empirical research that is specific to teaching controversial and emotive issues in terrorism studies courses with curriculum containing controversial and emotive issues in a politically-charged classroom is limited. The body of research only peripherally deals with this specific topic. This study contributed new information that can be helpful in developing teaching methods to more effectively deal with controversial and emotive issues in the classroom. This study served to identify and validate aspects of dealing with controversial and emotive issues as they relate directly to the teaching and learning of terrorism studies.

Practical Implications

This research study was conducted with practical applications in mind. Since the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, the demand for professionals in the homeland security and defense community has placed new demands and requirements on colleges and universities throughout the United States (Supinski, 2011). Homeland security is a national priority and there is a growing concern about the government's ability to detect and prevent future terrorist attacks (Moore, Hatzadony, Cronin, & Breckenridge, 2010). This study was conducted with an overarching goal to improve the quality of graduates of academic programs that prepare officers to serve in defense, intelligence, and homeland security organizations who have the mission of protecting the U.S. from foreign and domestic terrorist threats. The results of the analysis from this research study provide areas of recommendation for schools and faculty members, and students.

Commitment on the part of school administrations to create and maintain an environment of academic freedom. Several findings in this research study point to a breakdown of an environment that is supposed to promote academic freedom. Teachers go about

their daily jobs in fear of offending students and worrying about the results student complaints could have on their careers. The findings reveal that faculty members perceive that some students were looking for an opportunity of claiming victim status and making complaints. This creates an environment of mistrust and inhibits the honest debate of important subjects. School administrators should reevaluate their school's environment of academic freedom and make necessary changes in policy to ensure that an environment exists for both the teacher and student to openly and freely participate in discussions of topics that may be controversial and emotive without fear of retribution.

Teacher training to develop skills for dealing with controversy and emotion in the classroom. This research study identified that faculty members changed their teaching styles and adapted to accommodate the presence of controversy in their classrooms. While some of the adaptations restricted the open discussion of controversial and emotive issues, others served as best practices and seemed to be effective in the classroom. This study did reveal that the use of classroom control and the effective use of dialogue were effective in conducting a healthy discussion of controversial and emotive issues and furthering the teaching-learning process. Training on the skills of classroom control and facilitating classroom dialogue would benefit all faculty members who teach Terrorism Study courses.

Student training to understand the benefits of having healthy classroom discussions on subjects that may be controversial and emotive and develop a respect for the presence of academic freedom. This research study revealed that students' attitudes and behaviors often contribute to a classroom environment that is not conducive to the free and open discussion of controversial and emotive issues. Students have just as much a responsibility of creating a safe environment for discussion and debate as the school administration and faculty. Students should

appreciate the fact that open and free discussion is necessary for critical thinking to take place. The students need to understand the importance of listening to and respecting opinions different from their own. School orientation programs for new students could include instruction on respect for alternate opinions and listening skills.

Delimitations and Limitations

This section provides a discussion of the delimitations and limitations present in this study. The main delimitation in this study dealt with the limits imposed on participant selection. The limitations dealt with participant selection and a limitation to the collection instrument.

Delimitations

The delimitations applied to this study were necessary to focus effectively on the problem statement. The research setting and participants were selected to accurately address the problem statement. The problem statement says that college faculty members in homeland security programs are faced with the problem of teaching highly politically-charged issues that are often controversial and emotive in nature. Students come into the classroom with perspectives based on different worldviews that can be the source of conflict and emotion. Faculty members may be expected to teach from a worldview or position different from what they may personally believe—academic freedom notwithstanding. This dilemma creates a phenomenon in which faculty members must reconcile these two competing influences. The reconciliation of these two influences will undoubtedly have effects on faculty members and how they teach.

The overall setting for this study was limited to programs at institutions of higher learning throughout the United States that are affiliated with the Center for Homeland Defense and Security - University and Agency Partnership Initiative (CHDS-UAPI) and offer courses in terrorism studies. This setting was selected because the overarching goal of this research, as part

of the significance of the study, was to improve the quality of graduates of academic programs that prepare officers to serve in defense, intelligence, and homeland security organizations who have the mission of protecting the U.S. from foreign and domestic terrorist threats.

Participants for this research were limited to faculty members at colleges and universities in the United States who have at least two years of experience teaching terrorism studies as part of an academic program that has been affiliated with the CHDS-UAPI. Again, this was necessary to accurately address the problem statement and obtain findings that could improve the quality of graduates of academic programs that prepare officers to serve in defense, intelligence, and homeland security organizations. Including participants from other settings, such as terrorism studies courses taken as part of a Sociology or a Political Science program would not have been helpful in reaching my overarching goal and properly addressing the problem statement.

Limitations

There were some limitations to this study that may affect the transferability of findings. These include lack of gender diversity, use of video conferencing for participant interviews, and participants being limited to residential faculty. There were also omissions in the collection of data during the participant interviews that may have been helpful in better understanding this phenomenon

Gender diversity. There was a lack of gender diversity in the participants of this study. There was only one female faculty member who responded to the study recruitment announcement that was posted in the online forum sponsored by the CHDS-UAPI. I attempted to use purposeful sampling to obtain participants who represented a cross-section of faculty members who taught terrorism studies courses as part of an academic program that are affiliated with the CHDS-UAPI. The availability of only one female faculty member may or may not have

been indicative of the overall population. There was no data available with gender information of faculty members who teach terrorism studies courses as part of an academic program that are affiliated with the CHDS-UAPI. I have attended several conferences sponsored by the CHDS-UAPI, and my observation is that a significant male majority exists in its membership. I can only anecdotally conclude that this may be because a large number of the faculty members came from military, law enforcement, and homeland security career fields before entering academia. These career fields historically have a significant male majority.

Use of video conferencing for participant interviews. This study used WebEx, a video conferencing system, to conduct the face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. While this system allowed me to overcome the logistical requirements of including participants from various regions of the United States, it had its limitations. Nothing can take the place of a live, in-person, face-to-face interview. I had a career as an intelligence officer and have conducted hundreds of debriefings and interviews. I know the benefits of conducting these sessions live and in-person. Using a video conferencing system inhibited my ability to more fully develop rapport with the participants. It also did not allow me to fully observe non-verbal communication and body language that would have been possible in a live, in-person interview.

Participants limited to residential faculty. One criterion for the selection of participants was that they currently teach residential courses in the terrorism studies discipline. I limited the scope of my research to residential teaching because I realized that online teaching and residential teaching are two very different teaching modes. I felt it necessary for my research to focus on only one mode of teaching because I realize the phenomenon would be different in each mode. Programs in homeland security and law enforcement are heavily conducted in the online environment. Many of the students are working adults, and online education better fits their

needs. While many of the participants had online experience in addition to residential teaching experience, the differences and nuances of online teaching were largely missed in my research.

Collection of participant information. Only general information about the participants was collected and available for analysis. If more in-depth information had been collected on these faculty members, such as teaching philosophy and political views, a more rich description of the phenomenon may have been possible. While it is highly likely that the participants' experience and background influence their perception of the classroom environment, this study was not able to clearly identify or discuss this relationship.

Collection of data about the culture within the institutions. Only general information about the institutions where the participants taught was collected. If more in-depth information had been collected on the culture of the institutions or specific academic departments within those institutions, a more rich description of the phenomenon may have been possible. There may be relationships or trends between institutional culture and the participant perceptions of the classroom environment, especially as it relates to academic freedom.

Defining terms used by participants. Participants in this study used terms, such as "political correctness" and "academic freedom", during the interviews that are subjective in nature and whose specific meanings are critical to interpreting the participant's statements. The participants' use of these terms were not followed up on during the interviews and data regarding how the participants defined these terms was not collected or made available for analysis. Clear definitions of these terms, as used by the participants, may have led to a more rich description and understanding of the phenomenon.

Student population demographic information. Student demographic information was not collected during this study and was not made available for analysis. The availability of this

information may have identified trends and provided a more rich description of the phenomenon. There may have been a relationship between participants' perceptions of the classroom environment and specific student population demographics. This study was not able to make this connection or establish any trends.

Recommendations for Future Research

Focus on Online Learning

This study was focused solely on teaching terrorism studies courses in a residential setting. This was identified as a limitation to this study because many of the programs in homeland security and law enforcement are conducted in an online environment to reach out to the working adults in these career fields. The online environment has its own pedagogy and andragogy. The scholarship of teaching and learning has a branch specifically devoted to online learning. Future studies could include online learning, or focus entirely on the online learning environment. This is especially important because many academic programs in homeland security, intelligence, and law enforcement are very popular in the online format.

Include Student Experiences

This study was focused solely on teacher perceptions and only included teachers as participants. This took advantage of only the faculty members' opinions and only included student input as reported indirectly by the faculty members. Student behavior and perceptions are a critical part of understanding the teaching-learning process. Future studies could include direct student participation or focus entirely on student perceptions. Future studies may also include demographics and the composition the student bodies of institutions being studied. This could help determine if there is a relationship between specific student populations and teacher perceptions of the classroom environment.

Quantitative Research

I chose a qualitative methodology for this research because the primary goal of qualitative research is to understand human behavior and experience. I did not choose a quantitative research design for this study because so little is known about the phenomenon of teaching terrorism studies in an environment that can be politically-charged. I viewed this study as a form of exploratory surgery. Now that this study is concluded and more is known of this phenomenon, this subject may be studied using a quantitative methodology.

Role of University Culture in the Perceived Absence of Academic Freedom

This study revealed that there were several sources of outside influence on the faculty members that affected the teaching-learning process in the classroom. The specific sources of these influences may be further studied. Specifically, what is the role played by the culture of the institution in a perceived absence of academic freedom as expressed by faculty members. Also, the information about the relationship and communications between the school leadership and the faculty member would be helpful in better understanding this phenomenon. It would be helpful for future research to address these areas.

Common Definitions for Subjective Terminology

This study reported the use of several terms used by the researcher and participants that were subjective in nature that may create some ambiguity. For example, the terms “political correctness” and “academic freedom” did not have common definitions as they were used between the researcher and participant during the participant interviews. Future studies could standardize these terms as they are used by the researcher and participants to help better understand the phenomenon.

Role of Faculty Member Background in the Perception of the Classroom Environment

Future research should attempt to identify and describe the relationship between the faculty members' experience and background with their perceptions of the classroom environment, especially as they relate to academic freedom. While a teacher's perceptions are influenced by their unique experience and background, trends can be identified that may help better understand this phenomenon.

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the phenomenon experienced by faculty members who teach controversial and emotive issues in terrorism studies courses in an environment that can be politically-charged. An analysis of the data resulted in the identification of seven themes that directly related to the teaching of controversial and emotive issues in terrorism studies courses. These themes were (a) teacher awareness of the classroom environment and students, (b) teacher perception of academic freedom, (c) teaching styles and adaptations to accommodate controversy, (d) fear of retribution, and (e) benefits of teaching controversial and emotive issues.

These themes were used to address the research questions and provided a basis for making recommendations to school administrators, teachers, and students. These recommendations included a commitment on the part of school administrations to create and maintain an environment of academic freedom, teacher training to develop skills for dealing with controversy and emotion in the classroom, and student training to understand the benefits of having healthy classroom discussions on subjects that may be controversial and emotive and develop a respect for the presence of academic freedom.

The message that shouts out, loud and clear from this study is that there is a problem in today's college classroom where our next generation of FBI agents, intelligence officers, homeland security professionals, and military officers are being educated. The problem is best expressed by two quotes taken from the participant interviews.

Dr. Allen summed up the current state of affairs and said, "We have academic freedom to the extent that we are not offending someone." Academic freedom has been superseded by political correctness because educators are avoiding important subjects for fear of offending someone. As a result, future professionals are not getting the best education they deserve and are not being properly prepared to fight tomorrow's Global War on Terrorism.

Dr. Irving gave his assessment of the current classroom environment and said, "You are filtering everything. Humor is very hard to happen in the classroom anymore." Political correctness has changed the classroom for the worse and has created an environment that does not promote honest discussion and critical thinking skills. Institutions can better prepare students for their future careers by offering a more well-rounded education by fostering true academic freedom and developing both faculty and students' skills in civil discourse, notwithstanding their personal sensitivities.

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APPENDIX A: Official Biography of Blake D. DeVold

Blake D. DeVold is a professional intelligence officer with a career spanning over three decades in operational, leadership and staff positions. He is a lecturer and guest speaker on the subjects of intelligence, cyberwar, terrorism, and national security. He is an assistant professor for Liberty University's Helms School of Government in Lynchburg, Virginia, and serves as the school's subject matter expert for courses in Strategic Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Studies.

He most recently served on Dr. Ben Carson's presidential campaign staff as a national security policy analyst and advisor having the responsibility of preparing Dr. Carson's daily briefing, policy documents, and debate preparation materials on issues dealing with national defense and intelligence, cyber-security, and terrorism.

Mr. DeVold served for 20 years as an active duty intelligence officer in the U.S. Air Force and over seven years as a Department of the Air Force civilian intelligence specialist. He received his commission through the Air Force ROTC at The Citadel where he was designated a Distinguished Graduate. He began his career as a CIA-trained human intelligence (HUMINT) case officer assigned to locations in the Pacific and CONUS. Throughout his career, he has also served assignments in special operations, reconnaissance and surveillance, air defense analysis, foreign material exploitation, indications and warning intelligence, and international affairs. He served on the faculty of the National Intelligence University in Washington, D.C., where he was named Faculty Member of the Year. He was deployed in 2002 as the Operations Officer and Senior Interrogator for Joint Task Force - GTMO, Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, Cuba. While there, he supervised all interrogation operations and personally conducted hundreds of interrogations of senior Al-Qaeda and Taliban detainees.

He is a board-certified International Affairs Officer by the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force for International Affairs. He is a combat veteran and has numerous military and intelligence community awards including the National Intelligence Certificate of Distinction awarded by the Director of Central Intelligence. He is active in several professional organizations including the Intelligence and National Security Alliance (INSA), where he serves on the Cyber Council and Cyber Intelligence Task Force. He is also a member of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers (AFIO), the National Military Intelligence Association (NMIA), the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), and is an education partner with the Center for Homeland Defense and Security's University and Agency Partnership Initiative (CHDS/UAPI).

Mr. DeVold is a doctoral candidate with Liberty University's School of Education. He has an M.S. in Strategic Intelligence from the National Intelligence University, an M.S. from the University of Southern California and a B.S. from The Citadel. He is also a graduate of the Air University's Air Command and Staff College.

APPENDIX B: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Letter**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

May 18, 2017

Blake DeVold

IRB Approval 2876.051817: Experiences of Teaching Controversial and Emotive Issues in Terrorism Studies Courses in the Politically-Charged Classroom: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study

Dear Blake DeVold,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY.

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APPENDIX C: Participant Recruitment Announcement

To be posted to the Center for Homeland Defense and Security – University and Agency Partnership Forum under the category Items of Interest.

Title: Attention instructors teaching terrorism studies courses

As a graduate student with the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for the doctor of education degree. The purpose of this research is to investigate the experiences of faculty members who teach courses in terrorism studies that require the instructors to discuss controversial and emotive issues on a frequent and reoccurring basis in an environment that can be politically charged.

You are invited to participate in this study if you meet the following criteria:

1. Current faculty member teaching in a program/school that is affiliated with the CHDS-UAPI.
2. Currently teach residential courses in the terrorism studies discipline.
3. Must have at least two years' experience teaching these courses.
4. Agree to sign a consent agreement.

Participants will be asked to complete a short questionnaire, participate in an interview lasting approximately one hour, and review the interview transcript for accuracy. Participants will also be asked to provide syllabi for terrorism studies courses they teach. If you choose to participate you will be provided a \$50 gift card as an honorarium for your time. Participant confidentiality will be absolutely maintained.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please email Blake DeVolld at bddevolld@liberty.edu certifying that you meet the participant criteria listed above. You
will be provided with additional information and a consent agreement prior to your participation.

Sincerely,

Blake D. DeVolld

Doctoral Candidate

Liberty University

APPENDIX D: Participant Consent Form**CONSENT FORM**

Experiences of Teaching Controversial and Emotive Issues in Terrorism Studies Courses in the
Politically-Charged Classroom: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study

Blake D. DeVolld

Liberty University

School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of the experiences of teaching controversial and emotive issues in terrorism studies courses. You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently a faculty member teaching in a program/school that is affiliated with the CHDS-UAPI, currently teach residential courses in the terrorism studies discipline, and have at least two years' experience teaching these courses. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Blake D. DeVolld, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of faculty members who teach courses in terrorism studies that require the instructor to teach controversial and emotive issues on a frequent and reoccurring basis in an environment that can be politically charged. A better understanding of this phenomenon may contribute to a more informed perspective in teaching controversial and emotive issues. This study is a transcendental

phenomenological study with an emphasis on the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a brief participant questionnaire and provide a syllabus of the courses you teach that deal with terrorism studies. This task should take no longer than one hour.
2. Participate in an interview with the researcher via WebEx (a video conferencing system). This interview should last no more than one hour. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. The video will not be recorded.
3. Review the transcript of your interview for accuracy and provide any necessary corrections via email. At that time, your participation in the study will be concluded.

Risks and Benefits of Participation: The risks associated with this study are minimal and no more than those encountered in everyday life. There is a risk of a breach in confidentiality if identifying data were to become lost or stolen; however, strict safeguards will be taken to ensure the security of all research data (see **Confidentiality** below). There are no direct benefits to the participants for participating in the study.

Benefits to society include the fact that this research could help institutions develop curriculum and improve how this subject is taught in courses. Best practices can be developed by identifying successful teaching methods and classroom strategies. The overarching goal of this research is to improve the quality of graduates of academic programs that prepare graduates to serve in defense, intelligence and homeland security organizations that have the mission of protecting the U.S. from foreign and domestic terrorist threats.

Compensation: Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. You will be given a \$50 gift card as a thank-you for your time.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject.

Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

- Your confidentiality will be maintained and you will be referred to by pseudonym only in the published study. I will be the only person who will have access to your identity and personal information. I will conduct your interview from a secure office, and I will ask you to participate from a secure location to ensure privacy.
- All data will be handled and stored in a safe manner. Hardcopy and electronic data will be physically protected by being stored in a locked file cabinet. Electronic data and information systems will be protected using approved software and security protocols to include password protections. Physical and electronic security will be maintained at all times. All research data will be destroyed after three years. Hard copy data will be destroyed by shredding or burning. Electronic data will be erased using approved file deletion software.
- The audio recordings will only be used to construct written transcripts of the interviews to be used in data analysis. These recordings will be maintained in electronic files that will be password protected and will be destroyed after three years.
- This study will not use any focus groups or other situations where others could become privy to the information you provide.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Blake D. DeVolld. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at 937-408-8809 or bddevolld@liberty.edu. Mr. DeVolld will be working under the direction of Dr. Samuel Smith, who can be reached at (434) 592-4342 or sjsmith3@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION
WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

<hr/>	
Signature of Participant	Date
<hr/>	
Signature of Investigator	Date

APPENDIX E: Participant Questionnaire

1. What is the name and location of the institution(s) for which you teach?
2. Briefly describe your academic background and degrees.
3. Briefly describe your professional background.
4. What courses do you regularly teach that deal with terrorism studies? What level (i.e., graduate, undergraduate)?
5. Are there issues/subjects in the courses you teach that you consider controversial and that can cause an emotional response in the classroom? What are they, and why do you consider them to be controversial?
6. Are there any roadblocks or influences that hinder your ability to teach controversial and emotive issues? Briefly describe them.
7. What is your understanding of academic freedom?
8. Do you use different teaching strategies when you teach controversial and emotive issues? What are they?
9. What would you change about your teaching environment (inside or outside the classroom) that would help you more effectively teach subjects that are controversial and emotive?

APPENDIX F: Participant Interview Questioning Guide

Icebreaker question

1. Please introduce yourself to me as if we just met one another.

Descriptions of the nature of the classroom

2. What are your expectations of academic freedom in your classroom and does your current teaching environment meet these expectations?
3. What kinds of topics do you deal with in your classroom that you consider to be controversial and emotive in nature?
4. Why do you consider these topics to be controversial and emotive?
5. What benefits, if any, do you see in dealing with controversial and emotive topics in your classroom?
6. Describe any positive outcomes, including student reactions, you have experienced from dealing with controversial and emotive issues in your classroom.
7. Describe any negative outcomes, including student reactions, you have experienced from dealing with controversial and emotive issues in your classroom.

Reactions to the classroom environment

8. How does having to deal with controversial and emotive issues affect your teaching style and interaction with your students? Are there any changes to your teaching style? Have you had to adapt?
9. Describe how your students have reacted to dealing with controversial and emotive issues.
10. What classroom rules have you established for your students when discussing controversial and emotive issues? Have they been effective?

11. What have you learned about effectively dealing with controversial and emotive issues in your classroom? Do you have any best practices to pass on?
12. How have the challenges of teaching controversial and emotive issues affected your job satisfaction and your overall perception of teaching as a career?

Identifying sources of influence

13. Do you sense any external pressures or fears when dealing with controversial and emotive issues in your classroom? Explain.
14. Are there any limits imposed on your teaching, either external or self-induced, that could have an effect on your teaching effectiveness? How have you dealt with them?