

**Students' Perspectives on Social Studies Teachers' Views on Immigration and Nationalism**

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**Abstract:**

This mixed-methods study examines university students' reflections on their high school social studies teachers' views and pedagogy surrounding the issues of immigration, nationalism, and patriotism within the classroom. The article is based within the framework of critical pedagogy, particularly critical nationalism. The sample (N=58) comes from students enrolled in an introductory education course at a university in the American Southeast. The quantitative data revealed that students believed their teachers tended toward more inclusive views regarding immigration overall, but they were more exclusive toward undocumented immigration. They also tended to have high levels of patriotism and more moderate levels of nationalism. The qualitative data revealed a lack of discussion on immigration, which related to a larger fear of discussing contemporary issues of controversy within the classroom. This study has strong relevance for both educators and teacher educators in critically and thoroughly examining issues such as nationalism and immigration, particularly in more conservative settings like the American Southeast where these topics are often given little more than a cursory overview.

**Key words:** immigration, critical nationalism, teachers' attitudes, social studies education

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Particularly due to issues such as police brutality and a contentious political environment, racism has become more centered in the larger national discussion. Vibrant discussion has occurred about how issues of race have been taught in the social studies classroom, particularly with issues of critical race theory, the broader controversy surrounding the 1619 Project, which centers slavery in the understanding of U.S. history and society (Lee, 2020), and the reaction to these perspectives seen most clearly in the executive orders of Donald Trump (2020) to promote a patriotic education that decenters and largely ignores historical racism. While issues of race have at least become more central in the national discussion in social studies education, often the issues of nationalism and immigration have received less attention. In some ways, these issues are still seen as more ethically debatable. In some sectors of society, it is still seen as more acceptable to have openly xenophobic views than to have racist views (Author, 2018a). However, the reality is that in the modern context these issues cannot be separated, as the majority of immigrants entering the United States are now people of color, with 46% of new immigrants identifying as white compared to 26% who identify as Asian, 10% as Black, and 15% as some other race; additionally, 44% are Latino or Hispanic (Batalova, Blizzard, & Bolter, 2020). In light of this reality, issues such as immigration cannot be separated from issues of race. Issues of immigration and nationalism must be also centered in the larger discussion on a more critical and just social studies curriculum.

This proposal is based on a concurrent triangulation mixed-methods study (Creswell & Creswell, 2005), which examines education students' reflections of the teaching of issues such as immigration and nationalism within their high school social studies courses. The students were asked a range of quantitative questions regarding their teachers' views on immigration, patriotism, and nationalism and then asked to describe some of the most notable experiences in relation to these themes. Nationalism was defined in this context as the belief that the U.S. is superior to other countries, and patriotism was defined as love for one's country. Overall, we found that the students said their teachers had fairly strong patriotic views, leaned toward nationalistic views, and were slightly more inclusive on immigration. However, they also commented on the lack of discussion on immigration in the classroom, which was related to the larger hesitancy of teachers to discuss controversial political subjects from both the past and present.

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**Literature Review**

**Nationalism and Patriotism**

This research builds on previous scholarship regarding teachers' attitudes to nationalism, patriotism, and immigration. Gershon and Pantoja (2011) explored the issue of patriotism among a group of teachers in Los Angeles. They measured patriotism based on three items "(1) 'I find the sight of the American flag very moving'; (2) 'I have great love for the United States'; and (3) 'I am proud to be an American'" (p. 1529). Anglo-American teachers had the highest levels of patriotism, followed by native-born Latinos and then foreign-born Latinos. There was only a marginal difference between the Anglo-American and native-born Latino teachers, but there was a more significant difference between the foreign-born and native-born. They also found that patriotism was positively associated with more pro-English-only views.

In a different cultural context, Altikulaç and Sabanci (2017) studied the views of nationalism among Turkish pre-service social studies teachers. Overall, they found that teachers did not see nationalism as dangerous; only 24% said it causes violence, and only 27% stated that it divides the country. On the other hand, 70% said that they were "nationalist but not a racist" (p. 246). In a study of teachers of Greek heritage in Cyprus, Zembylas, Charalambous, Charalambous, and Lesta (2016) found that it was difficult for teachers to apply larger ideas of international human rights to their own national context with the past grievances and oppression from the Turkish government and a sense of nationalism that remained predominant. This trend is not unique to Cyprus, as the belief in human rights is at times inconsistent when one's own nation is at the center of the discussion.

In a study of teachers in South Korea, Chang (2015) found that teachers believed that "Korean ethnicity and pride" was an important aspect of the curriculum (p. 33). However, the author argues that this is problematic in regard to multicultural education and also highlights the unconscious biases of the teachers. As Chang states, "In preserving static national identity, it is likely that ethnocentrism is not being challenged, while other nations or ethnicities are being excluded" (p. 34).

**Immigration**

There have been several studies on the attitudes of teachers toward immigration and immigrant students. A study from Sas (2009) found that pre-service teachers had more inclusive immigration positions as a whole. She also found that there was a positive relationship between

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more inclusive immigration positions and more embracing positionality toward ESL students. Her analysis also showed that minority status, experience working with immigrants, and speaking more than one language were significant factors in attitudes toward immigration. The analysis showed that the levels of inclusive attitudes toward ELL learners were substantially higher than the positive views toward more inclusive immigration policy. This was a similar trend that the Author (2018a) found in a previous study. Some teachers have more inclusive immigration views when it centers around education or rights for their students while holding more exclusive views on broader immigration issues. This disconnect, however, often means that the more inclusive educational policies are not incorporated.

A study from Van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten, and Holland (2010) showed that Dutch teachers overall had significant differences in implicit attitudes regarding refugee students from Morocco and Turkey and non-refugee students. They also measured the role these attitudes played in student outcomes. They found that teachers' implicit biases (not their explicit biases) were significantly related to a detriment in students' academic outcomes. This research in particular has relevance in a current political setting where many educators may not admit to having exclusive immigrant views but may harbor implicit biases. This disconnect is one of the reasons why this study examining students' perceptions of their teachers' attitudes is relevant. Cruz (2014) found that teachers had more positive views toward immigration after attending a workshop that included information about the immigration system as well as first-hand accounts from immigrants. Similarly, a study from Howrey (2018) revealed that when pre-service teachers read literature that connected them to the experiences of Mexican immigrants, some of the attitudes of the pre-service teachers became more empathetic. She found that the strongest difference in attitudes came when participants allowed themselves to become immersed in the emotions of the readings versus those who more analytically examined the author's intent.

There has been additional research on views toward emergent bilingual students (de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Youngs & Youngs, 2001), with most studies showing more inclusive views of teachers toward emergent bilingual students overall. Dixon, Liew, Daraghmeh, and Smith (2016) found that pre-service teachers had neutral to slightly positive views toward emergent bilingual students overall with greater inclusive attitudes among Latino and African American teachers. Shim's (2019) qualitative study revealed that teachers had more deficit thinking and undermined the importance of the students continuing to speak in their native language. However, there is a caveat to be considered when studying attitudes toward emergent bilingual students: Emergent bilingual students and immigrant students are not

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synonymous, and the difficulties teachers may have in integrating ELL practices may be a unique issue from teachers' actual views toward immigrant students (Author 1, 2018a).

Though there has been some limited research on teachers' beliefs on immigration and nationalism, there had not previously been a nationwide study to examine these areas. In order to address some of these gaps in the literature, Author 1 (2018a) conducted a quantitative, nationwide study of K-12 teachers' (in all subject areas) views on the issues of nationalism/patriotism, broader immigration beliefs, and rights for immigrant students. He found that overall, teachers leaned slightly toward nationalism as a whole, more strongly toward patriotism, and tended against the more blatant forms of chauvinistic nationalism. On the issue of immigration, the author asked teachers about their abstract ideas about borders and migration. The results showed that teachers did tend to believe largely in the rights of migration but that they were also in favor of strong government regulations of the border. The same study found that teachers had more inclusive views toward education rights for undocumented immigrants in higher education. The analysis also demonstrated a significant correlation between nationalism and more restrictive attitudes toward immigrant students ( $r=.5$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Likewise, there was a significant correlation between more inclusive attitudes toward borders and migration and more inclusive attitudes toward rights for immigrant students ( $r=.73$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

This study as well as the previous studies have some limitations, particularly when examining the overall descriptive data, as the teachers who participated in these studies may tend to be more inclusive and less nationalistic. This relates to the larger issue of population validity (Bracht & Glass, 1968), which is often an issue with any type of broad survey data. One issue is that individuals who are more interested in the issue being examined may be more likely to respond to a survey (Sax, Gilmartin, & Bryant, 2003). There is also the danger of the social desirability bias (Nederhof, 1985) in which participants want to appear more tolerant or welcoming. Lüke and Grosche (2018) found that this bias was an issue when exploring issues of inclusive education at the university level. This study, on the other hand, asks students to give their perceptions of their social studies teachers, which helps frame this issue from a different angle.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is based in the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy with a special emphasis on a more critical form of nationalism. It is based in the realization that pedagogy is "a moral and political practice that is always implicated in power relations and must be understood as a cultural politics that offers both a particular version and vision of civic life (Giroux, 2004, p. 33).

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Critical theorists such as Freire (1970/1992) call for an education that calls those suffering oppression to become conscious so they can confront the social injustices they face. In some aspects a forebear to these critical theorists, George Counts (1932/1978) calls for teachers to take a proactive stance in not merely adapting to the social changes and influences but to be agents of change and not succumb to the oppressive status quo. In this framework, the critical is not just used to deconstruct but eventually leads to a more ethical, “reordered” framework (Rohr, 2017). Burbules and Berk (1999) highlight that critical pedagogy is highly distinct from mere critical thinking, as belief claims are “not primarily as propositions to be assessed for their truth content, but as parts of systems of belief and action that have aggregate effects within the power structures of society” (p. 47).

More specifically, this study is based in a more critical notion of nationalism, which seeks to undermine the xenophobia inherent in many nationalistic beliefs. As Jonathan French (1929) highlighted at the beginning of the 20th century, it is often harder to see nationalism in one’s own culture than it is to see it in other cultures. Buttle (2000) argues that nationalism is actually incompatible with the ideals of liberal democracy, as the national interests become supreme. Loewen (1995) contends that when it comes to poor social studies teaching, “Nationalism is one of the culprits. Textbooks are often muddled by the desire to promote inquiry and to promote blind patriotism” (p. 14). Other critical scholars like Howard Zinn (1995) highlight how the U.S. History curriculum painted an overly generous view of its own history and that in doing so it suppressed the stories of those who had suffered due to the actions of the nation. This form of nationalism means that we fail to confront our often problematic history.

The ideas of xenophobia are very much interwoven within the ideas of nationalism. As Spencer and Wollman (2002) state, ideas of nationalism “are processes of categorization that create and reproduce as enemies, strangers, and others who do not fit inside the nation” (p. 2). Hjerm (2001) found in his international study that there was a significant correlation between nationalism and xenophobia in all the nations studied. In the context of the populist movements in Greece, a recent study by Andreadis, Stavarakakis, and Demertzis (2018) found that there is a significant correlation between ethnic nationalism and xenophobia ( $r=.368$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Though it may not be able to be proven that nationalism causes xenophobia, it is likely that nationalism often comes first, as it is seen as more benign or even praiseworthy.

### **Methodology and Population**

The study (N=58) was conducted in the spring of 2019 in a mid-size state university in the American Southeast. The self-generated instrument, with both quantitative and qualitative

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items, was given to students during their introductory foundations of education course. Although not all of the students were education majors, the majority were focused in K-12 education. This study is based in a concurrent triangulation mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2005), which attempted to give relatively equal weight to both sets of data. The quantitative data was analyzed through SPSS by Author 1, and then qualitative data was analyzed by both authors using a more “holistic” form of coding, which seeks to understand the “essence of categorization of a phenomenon” (Adrasik, Frey, & Endeshaw, 2014, p. 11).

### **Research Questions**

1. What did students perceive were their social studies teachers’ views on nationalism, patriotism, and immigration? What were the relationships between these three areas?
2. What themes emerged from the qualitative data on students’ memories about how teachers approached these issues and how does this help to inform the quantitative data?

### **Quantitative Findings**

Students were asked to rate their social studies teachers’ patriotism and nationalism on a scale of 1-7. The students reported that their teachers tended toward support for patriotism with a mean of 4.79 (SD=1.09) and to a lesser extent toward nationalism with a mean of 4.20 (SD=1.51). These results not only show more support for patriotism, but also that there was less variance in comparison to nationalism. However, it should also be noted that the mean between the two is only .6, which is relatively small. In regard to patriotism, no students said that their teachers had a “very low” level of patriotism, with only one marking “low.” In contrast, 26 students stated that their teachers had high levels of patriotism, with 11 stating “somewhat high,” 10 stating “high,” and five students stating “very high.” Among the participants, 29 said the levels were average. In regard to nationalism, no students said that their teachers had very low levels of nationalism. However, nine participants said that their teachers had low (8) or somewhat low (1) levels. In contrast, 21 participants said their teachers had somewhat high (14) or high (7) levels of nationalism, while none had very high levels of nationalism. Among the participants, 26 stated that their teachers had average levels of nationalism.

Regarding views toward immigration, the students were also asked to rate their secondary teachers’ views on immigration—and undocumented immigration specifically—on a scale of 1-7 (with 1 being less embracing and 7 being more embracing). They reported that their teachers overall tended to lean in a slightly more inclusive direction with a mean of 4.36 (SD=1.16) but

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were more exclusive toward undocumented immigrants with a mean of 3.96 (SD=1.14). Between these two items, the standard deviation was similar with slightly more inclusive views toward immigration in general rather than undocumented immigration specifically. On the issue of immigration more broadly, 22 participants said their teachers were either very embracing (1), embracing (10), or somewhat embracing (11). In contrast, 12 respondents stated that their teachers were somewhat restrictive (11) or very restrictive (1), and 21 stated that their teachers' views were considered average. In regard to undocumented immigration in particular, none of the participants said that their teachers were very embracing, but 13 were embracing (7) or somewhat embracing (6). In contrast, 16 participants reported that their teachers were somewhat restrictive (11), restrictive (4), or very restrictive (1) in their views on undocumented immigration, and 26 reported that their teachers had average views.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics on Nationalism, Patriotism, and Immigration*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
What was the level of patriotism (love for country) overall among your high school social studies teachers?	56	4.79	1.091
What was the level of nationalism (belief that the U.S. is superior to other nations) among your high school social studies teachers?	56	4.20	1.151
What were the views of your high school social studies teachers on issues of immigration? (1: less embracing; 7: more embracing)	55	4.36	1.161
What were the views of your high school social studies teachers on issues of undocumented or illegal immigration in particular? (1: less embracing; 7: more embracing)	55	3.96	1.138

Students were also asked on a scale of 1-7 how their social studies teachers' views on immigration compared to their other teachers, with 1 being more exclusive and 7 being more inclusive. On

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this item, the students responded with a mean of 4.25 (SD=1.41); 22 students responded that their social studies teachers were more inclusive, 11 said they were more exclusive, and 18 said they had the same views as their other teachers.

### **Inferential Statistics**

Not surprisingly, there was a significant correlation between nationalism and patriotism ( $r=.396$ ,  $p=.002$ ). There was not a significant correlation between patriotism and either immigration item or between nationalism and immigration overall. However, there was a higher correlation of .248 ( $p=.068$ ) between nationalism and more exclusive views toward immigration. A larger sample may have shown evidence of the stronger relationship between these items. The research of Author 1 (2018a) revealed a significant relationship between patriotism/nationalism and attitudes toward rights for immigrant students. An analysis was also run to measure differences between students who went to school in the North and West versus the South. Although the means of patriotism and exclusivity toward immigrants were higher for those who went to school in the South, there was no statistically significant difference.

There was also an ANOVA analysis employed to examine the differences between students who went to urban, rural, and suburban schools. Given the smaller size of the sample, none of the items showed a statistically significant difference based upon geographical region. However, an examination of the data reveals some noteworthy trends. For example, when the patriotism and nationalism items were combined, students from rural schools had a higher mean of 10.22 (SD=1.99) compared to urban schools, which had a mean of 8.92 (SD=1.83), and suburban schools, which had a mean of 8.8 (SD=1.88).

### **Qualitative Findings**

Both researchers analyzed the qualitative data to look for certain themes that would emerge regarding students' experiences in regard to the issues of immigration and nationalism in the social studies curriculum. The data was analyzed using a more "holistic" coding (Adrasik, Frey, & Endeshaw, 2014, p. 11).

### **Lack of Discussion on Immigration**

One theme that emerged was the absence of the discussion of immigration in many of the students' social studies experiences, though the topics of race and nationalism/patriotism were brought up more regularly. As one student stated, "Immigration was never a topic that came up." Another student stated, "We didn't really speak much about immigration. We did speak a lot of

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nationalism/patriotism.” One student mentioned that this was potentially because “my teachers only taught the standards.” Another student discussed possible cultural factors that contributed to this, stating, “My high school social studies teachers completely avoided the topic of race and immigration. They were the typically southern teachers that said those conversations shouldn’t be had in the classroom.” Similarly, according to another student, “We really didn’t talk that much about immigration in high school. All of my high school teachers including social studies were white, so the issue of race was brought up, but from a white perspective.”

When controversial issues or debates were brought up in the students’ high school social studies experiences, it tended to be in advanced placement courses, where it was up for moderated debate. This issue of differences in advanced placement courses was seen in the data overall with advanced placement classes being one of the places where teachers were more willing to have discussions about controversial issues.

### **High Levels of Patriotism**

Another theme that emerged was the overall high level of patriotism of the teachers. Though a few students did mention that their teachers had a more critical approach on aspects of U.S. History, patriotism and to some extent nationalism tended to be strong overall. “Very patriotic” was a sentiment used to describe several social studies teachers. A student wrote, “...all of our teachers had an immense sense of nationalism for our country.” Another stated, “When [my teacher] would talk about nationalism, they were very biased to the U.S. in almost any situation.” Additionally, a student wrote, “It was always made to seem that the U.S. was this perfect nation that did nothing wrong when fighting for our freedom.” One student stated, “[My teacher] supported patriotic sentiments.” Another student stated that, “My social studies teachers were very patriotic but only taught from power points and were not that interesting.”

Some students did note that their teachers were patriotic and proud though still vaguely critical of the U.S. As one stated, “my high school teachers always were quick to point out where the U.S. had gone wrong in history/overstepped boundaries, but they were still very patriotic.” Some mentioned how their teachers reframed what patriotism means. One stated, “Nationalism and patriotism was expressed by my history teacher (as) wanting the better for [our] country.” Another stated that their teacher thought that “America had a lot to do in order to better our country...” This was reiterated by a second student, who noted that their teacher “believed that racism is still very prevalent and believed that the country has a lot to work on in order to have more nationalism and patriotism.”

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### **Fear of Discussing Modern Controversial Issues**

A third theme that emerged was the caution or even fear of some teachers regarding discussing highly controversial issues such as race and immigration. This was especially true in a current event context and mostly in regards to immigration. A student wrote, "I was in Economics when Trump was running for president. Our teacher did not want to voice his opinion about tax cuts or any political views." The study showed that while teachers tended to avoid controversial topics, they were more likely to discuss race than immigration. As one student stated, "From what I can remember, immigration was not discussed often. Racism was talked about often when we were discussing slavery and discrimination." As noted before, for many of the students polled there was a complete absence of discussion on immigration in their high school social studies classes. This includes discussion of both past and present immigration to the U.S.

Students strongly noted that controversial issues were only discussed in connection to the past. For example, their classes discussed the topic of race when studying the Civil Rights Movement and slavery, and nationalism and patriotism when studying World War I and World II, but immigration history was rarely mentioned. As one student stated, "We never really talked about current-day immigration or racism, but we did talk very little about racism during the Civil War and after, probably to like the '80s." Another stated, "We never really went through the topic of immigration and we touched on racism in the past. We never really talked about current racism." Many students said that if teachers did discuss these issues, they did not openly express their own views on the subjects. Several students remembered that their teachers would moderate debate and keep their personal opinions private. One wrote that their teacher "never gave his opinion on the issue, but allowed us to state ours and talk with each other about them." Another stated that the teacher "would state what it was objectively and then have us as a class discuss our views and opinions on it."

There were some notable exceptions to these trends. Some teachers were more willing to take a more critical approach, such as those who "supported immigration" or a teacher who dedicated an entire day to "the KKK, the Black Panther Movement, and the Black Lives Matter movement. It was an interesting day of class because he allowed all of us to voice our opinions and became very passionate about the subject of racism and social/racial injustice."

### **Limitations**

There are certain limitations that should be acknowledged in the study. For one, many of the teachers that students reflected upon may have been teaching history courses and thus may not

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have felt the urgency to bring in as many current social studies topics such as immigration. However, as Julian (2019) highlights, integrating current events in the history classroom can increase student engagement. It is worth noting that in the state where the study took place, all students are also required to take Economics and Government, and many students also take a World Geography course. If this study were to be expanded to a larger sample, it could be beneficial if students focused on one subject in particular (such as U.S. History or Government). There are also some unique disadvantages of having students reflect on past educational experiences instead of what they are experiencing at the moment. However, given the nature of the questions, it would likely be more difficult to gain a representative sample of students to answer these somewhat sensitive questions about their current teachers.

### **Discussion**

From an examination of both the quantitative and qualitative data, it appears that teachers had moderately high levels of both nationalism and patriotism, but leaned more toward inclusive beliefs on immigration overall and in comparison to other teachers. However, it was not common for them to bring up the topic or their opinions during class. If they did bring up controversial issues, they tended to tread very lightly on the issues. They were also hesitant to openly discuss their beliefs in the classroom. While this can be commendable, especially from a more Deweyan (1897) student-centered approach, there is some cause for concern, as the teachers may allow exclusive attitudes and/or false immigration narratives (Author, Author, and Author, 2018) to control the class debate without being willing to push for more inclusive immigration narratives or give information to challenge false immigration narratives. In this context, it could be argued that a more political approach based on Counts's (1932/1978) ideas could have some merit when there is a need for class discussion in a more inclusive direction but teachers are unwilling to express their own views.

Social Studies teachers also leaned toward patriotic and sometimes nationalistic views. It is interesting that on both the issues of nationalism and patriotism, there were no teachers with very low levels and few with low levels. At the same time, none of the students said their teachers had very high nationalistic views. It should also be noted that there is inherently a difficulty in deciphering the difference between nationalism and patriotism and what this meant for the students. Though a brief description of both was given to the students (patriotism is "love for country" and nationalism is the "belief that the U.S. is superior to other nations"), as Fonte (2017) argues, the line between patriotism and nationalism is very thin. This line might also be difficult to decipher during the current era, particularly during the Trump administration, when love for

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country might be more associated with a more stringent nationalism and American superiority. The qualitative data revealed this similar trend with a moderately high level of nationalism and patriotism, with some teachers being willing to reframe patriotism in a more critical light. It did seem that teachers were overall more willing to give a more inclusive stance in regard to immigration as opposed to a more critical nationalistic perspective in the classroom.

The context of the American South is especially relevant when considering this data, since most of the students came from this area of the country. The South notably does not have the same level of union protections and is a region of the country with more restrictive views on immigration and higher levels of nationalism. This could possibly be a reason for the lack of willingness to engage with controversial issues. It could also be due to the fact that immigration is often portrayed as a debatable, controversial issue as opposed to discussing immigration in more humanizing ways (Dabach, Merchant, & Fones, 2018). As referenced by the students, it could also be a feeling that being too political in the classroom was not appropriate. As both authors are social studies educators in the Southern context, this issue has certainly been seen firsthand. It is often difficult to take an inclusive immigration approach, much less a stance that is critical toward nationalism, in a conservative educational environment where few administrators will applaud a more critical approach but rather want teachers who focus on the standards and refuse to cause controversy. Even teachers that may have more critical approaches may stifle these views or pedagogical approaches in the classroom. This is especially the case in classrooms where the majority of students are white and come from a middle- to upper-class background. It may be easier to take a critical approach in the parts of the growingly segregated South that have primarily middle- to lower-class Black and Hispanic students (Felton, 2017). This might have also been relevant to the data from this study. Since the study took place at a four-year university, students that come from higher economic statuses and more white and wealthy schools likely disproportionately made up this sample. Although the class statuses of students were not measured, the race of the students was analyzed: five students were African American, one was Native American, and the rest identified as white. Though this is not far from typical at the university setting in the state, it is vastly different from the overall demographics of the state, where 33% of students are African American and 11% of students are Hispanic/Latino with only 50% of students being white (Dept. of Education, 2020).

### **Implications**

The authors believe from the results of this data that there needs to be a sense of autonomy given to teachers. Teachers should be free to not only delve into controversial issues such as

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nationalism and immigration, but also feel comfortable taking on a more critical approach and expressing their own views on controversial issues (Counts, 1932/1978). This sense of autonomy will come both through the support of administration and department chairs for such an approach and a sense of job security, which teachers may not feel in a state such as the one where this study took place due to the lack of union protections.

Furthermore, we believe that teacher educators need to strongly focus on these themes of immigration and critical nationalism within the methods courses and stress the vital importance of a social justice approach in general. Although teacher educators overall, particularly in the area of social studies, may have a more critical perspective, it is also true that the school environment and state, district, and school administrations often seek to minimize critical and social justice approaches. It is quite easy for teachers who come in with a more critical approach to slowly lose this as they become engaged in all the other issues of the classroom environment. It is therefore of even greater importance that teacher educators are bold in focusing on themes of social justice (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009). There is often a small window for educators to become truly engaged in this more critical framework, and if they do not receive this in the teacher education program, that opportunity could be lost.

### **Conclusion**

The authors contend that this type of study, in which students not only reflect on the teaching methods of their teachers but also their beliefs on social and political issues, should be expanded. In many ways, it could provide a more accurate view of teachers' beliefs than research focused directly on the teachers due to the reality that teachers want to appear more inclusive or give more socially appropriate answers (Nederhof, 1985) and the problems with population validity (Bracht & Glass, 1968) with a possible tendency of teachers with more outspoken and critical views to participate, which could skew the results.

With a nation that is rapidly becoming more xenophobic and violating human rights in regard to immigration, we contend that it is necessary that teachers discuss the issue of immigration and that they be bold in articulating at least some aspects of immigration as basic human rights and certain elements of nationalism as inherently dangerous. The hesitancy to critically discuss these issues in the classroom and beyond allows the most radical voices to gain ground (Author 1, 2018b). When teachers do choose to engage in these issues, it helps students grow in the democratic process of articulating and supporting their own ideas (Soley, 1996). Cranston and Janzen (2017) argue that this critical lens is vital as we "move beyond the instrumental sense of

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transmitting information and instead focus on questioning the ways in which knowledge and practice are constructed, evaluated, and used” (p. 13). Teachers have a serious task in teaching effectively about these controversial issues. This study reveals that while some teachers are doing this in an effective manner, many are failing at this important task. Changing this paradigm will not be easy, but it must start with teacher educators helping to raise a new generation of social studies educators with both the knowledge and courage to teach for social change.

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