YOUTH CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF EVIL:

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

by

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Abstract

Youth conceptualizations of evil are an important part of social studies education, particularly how the use of the term "evil" can evoke images, feelings, and thoughts in teachers and students. Students in high school social studies examine historical events that can be easily labelled as evil (e.g., genocides) and politicians continue to use evil in their rhetoric. All too often, such labels lead to a simplification of complex people and processes. Given this situation, examining conceptualizations of evil serves a pedagogical purpose of challenging the simplistic binary of good and evil, thus uncovering how we might productively discuss evil in social studies classrooms in ways that enhance students' sense of agency. For this exploratory study into how youths conceptualize evil, phenomenography was employed as the research approach at a non-denominational independent school in Western Canada. The procedure included individual semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and follow-up individual interviews with 15 participants from the 2014-2015 Grade 11 (junior) class, as well as an optional final group interview with eight of the original participants. The initial interviews began with a participant-generated stimulus regarding what first comes to mind when they hear the word "evil." Then, the participants were asked follow-up questions and as well as pre-planned questions. The next stage was a task-based focus group during which two to four participants collaborated to place images and snippets of text along a continuum of more to less evil. The point was not to arrive at a particular answer, but rather for the researcher to record the conversations that ensued around particular items. After all the focus groups met, each participant participated in another individual interview as an opportunity for member checking and clarification of ideas from the first two stages.

Participants requested an unanticipated fourth session, which consisted of a group interview where they could see the work of the other groups and discuss their views. The outcome space revealed five referential aspects: evil as images, evil as affects (bodily) and effects (cognitive), evil as something that is abnormal and/or extraordinary, evil as in the domain of humans, and evil as subjective. Nested within these themes are a variety of interconnected subthemes. Political theory and philosophy that shaped this research and its implications included Hannah Arendt, Alain Badiou, Jean Baudrillard, as well as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Arendt and Badiou illuminate the idea that ordinary people and processes have immense power through their interconnected actions. Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of *order-words* highlight the power inherent in naming evil, which has particular implications for political rhetoric and hate speech. In a more general context, Baudrillard provides a unique definition of evil that can help us rethink how society, and thus education, might function. The most salient implication of this study is that teachers, textbook authors, and curriculum designers need to more explicitly engage with naming and describing evil in the context of social studies education. In particular, an education attending to evil would include the information and skills needed to counter both the *politics of evil*, the invocation of evil in political rhetoric that stifles democratic debate, and can promote hate speech, and *villainification*, the process of creating a single villain as the face of systemic harm, with that villain losing their ordinary characteristics.

Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author, Cathryn van Kessel. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Youth Conceptualizations of Evil and Social Studies Education," No. 52993, approved on February 20, 2015.

Chapter 2 of this thesis informed a large section of the literature review for C. van Kessel and K. den Heyer, "Evil in Citizenship Education," a book chapter in A.A. Abdi, L. Schultz, and T. Pilay, *Decolonizing Global Citizenship Education* (pp. 57-68). This same literature review also contributed, in part, to K. den Heyer and C. van Kessel, "Evil, Agency, and Citizenship Education," *McGill Journal of Education, 50*(1), 1-18. I supplied the basic literature review, which was edited and supplemented by K. den Heyer. This same article expanded from the sections on Hannah Arendt and Alain Badiou in Chapter 3. Similarly, K. den Heyer and I worked in tandem to enrich the content and clarity of the original text. The section on Jean Baudrillard in Chapter 3 was published in part in C. van Kessel, "The Transparency of Evil in *The Leftovers* and its Implications for Student (Dis)Engagement," *Educational Studies, 52*(1), 51-67. Parts of Chapter 7 are in the process of forming my contribution to a journal article on villainification with R. Crowley, which will be submitted imminently.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my son, Jack. You bring light to my life.

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I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my PhD supervisor, Kent den Heyer. You have forever changed how I research, teach, and think. In addition to your immense guidance with my process of researching and writing, you have taught me the attributes of a mentor, guide, and friend that I aspire to exemplify in my life. I am incredibly lucky that I chanced upon your professional development session so many years ago. You have helped me grow both personally and professionally.

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INTRODUCTION

The research question for this study was: *What conceptions of evil do secondary school students hold?* Evil is not a word that is easily conceptualized, and yet the impact of this word permeates our lives. There are, of course, stereotypes of evil that rely on a simplistic binary of good versus evil, but the real power of evil lies not with one particular *representation* or *definition* of evil, but with what the word evil *does* (i.e., the effects and affects that occur when the word is used). I purposefully interviewed students without providing them with a definition of evil because it is clear from the philosophical and psychological literature that the definition is up for debate. Regardless of how evil might be defined (sadism, putrid defilement, bureaucratic non-thinking, etc.), my research points to particular affects (bodily) and effects (intellectually) of contempt when someone or something is labelled as evil (although evil, in itself, might be provoking in helpful ways). Everyone has a sense of what evil is, but many of us ponder neither its nature nor how it functions in relation to how we understand historical and contemporary events. In high school social studies, students examine historical events ripe with large-scale violence often labeled as evil (e.g., genocide). Examining conceptualizations of evil serves a pedagogical purpose of challenging the simplistic binary of good and evil, thus uncovering how we might productively discuss evil in social studies classrooms in ways that enhance students' sense of political and social agency.

In Chapter 1 I discuss what led me to this topic, as well as my intentions, identity, and influences. As a secondary social studies teacher, I wrestled with how to engage with historical atrocities, a situation which eventually led to the pursuit of this doctorate. An

initial engagement with Critical Theory morphed into a philosophical inquiry into how teachers and students might define evil in generative ways.

In Chapter 2 I outline educational literature and research relating to evil, and note that my research fills a gap in this scholarly literature by directly examining how youths conceptualize evil in the context of social studies curriculum and pedagogy. Extant Anglophone education research engages with evil only peripherally, although the approaches of difficult knowledge and historical trauma are productive ethical explorations.

Chapter 3 serves as background to the political theory and philosophy that underpins my understandings of participant responses, including Hannah Arendt (1963/2006), Alain Badiou (1998/2001), Jean Baudrillard (1990/1993), as well as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1980/2008). Arendt's (1963/2006) and Badiou's (1998/2001) understandings of evil illuminate that ordinary people and processes have immense power through their interconnected actions. Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/2008) conceptualization of *order-words* highlight the power inherent in naming evil, which has particular implications for political rhetoric and hate speech. In a more general context, Baudrillard (1990/1993) provides a unique definition of evil that can help us rethink how society, and thus education, might function.

In Chapter 4 I explain my research approach. I discuss the background, assumptions, and procedures of phenomenography, as well as my chosen methods and rationales for those choices. This study involved individual semi-structured interviews, focus groups, follow-up individual interviews, and a final group interview. I then created a web of conceptualizations from my phenomenographic analysis.

Chapters 5 through 7 detail my findings and their implications. The outcome space revealed five referential aspects: evil as images, evil as affects (bodily) and effects (cognitive), evil as something that is abnormal and/or extraordinary, evil as in the domain of humans, and evil as subjective. Nested within these themes are a variety of interconnected subthemes. In keeping with my commitment to uncovering ways we might productively discuss evil in social studies classrooms to enhance students' sense of political and social agency and responsibility, the most salient implication of this study is that teachers, textbook authors, and curriculum designers need to more explicitly engage with naming and describing evil in the context of social studies education. Based upon participant responses about how we might define evil and the effects of these definitions, an education attending to evil would include the information and skills needed to contest both the *politics of evil* (the invocation of evil in political rhetoric that stifles democratic debate, and can promote hate speech) and *villainification* (the process of creating a single villain as the face of systemic harm, with that villain losing their ordinary characteristics).

In the final chapter, I summarize this dissertation and its implications, and provide suggestions for further study into evil within social studies education.

CHAPTER 1: RESEARCHER BACKGROUND, IDENTITY, AND COMMITMENTS

1.1: Researcher Background

When we label a historical event as evil, how does that label resonate? I taught secondary social studies for a decade, and each year I struggled with how I might address the horrors of history in my classroom. In particular, the Alberta Social Studies 20-1 Program of Study is rife with difficult pasts; for example, there is a curricular outcome for an analysis of "ultranationalism as a cause of genocide (the Holocaust, 1932-1933 famine in Ukraine, contemporary examples)" to illustrate negative consequences of nationalism (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 22). With the best of intentions, I attempted to create a series of lessons to help my students understand the weight of these horrors. To my chagrin, instead of creating a "socially just" classroom of activists, often I watched my students descend into a blend of anger and despair. Roger Simon (2014) aptly identifies this problem in the context of exhibitions as "undirected emotions" (p. 194). How might I engage with historical and contemporary tragedies in a respectful way, neither reproducing emotional pornography nor limiting discussions to cliché or surface-level information?

This tension eventually led me to pursue my doctoral work on evil. I have encountered a range of ways that researchers and educators have addressed issues of systemic harm (see Chapter 2). Although many of these works contain valuable insights into curriculum and pedagogy, my pursuit has required different conceptual resources. My topic morphed into one that asked not only what youths are thinking *about* evil, but also how a variety of philosophies might help us think *through* evil. In other words, my

educational pursuit, in part, involves using evil as a conduit for thinking. As such, I chose to undertake a phenomenographical study of Grade Eleven students to explore this topic.

1.2: Researcher Intentions

Studying evil is more than just qualification or socialization; it is about what Gert Biesta (2010a) calls *subjectification*—fostering subjects who think and act independently from authority, but at the same time interdependently with others (Biesta, 2010a). While socialization initiates people into preexisting orders and situations, subjectification provides the potential to create something new. In many ways, subjectification is the opposite of socialization because independence is valued over conformity. This independence, however, is not a selfish type of individualism; rather, it behooves subjects to think in a public sense. I return to this idea in Chapter 3 when I discuss Arendtian *action*.[1] I see social studies as an opportunity to arrange curriculum and pedagogy for subjectification, with a driving question: *How might we live together?* This question is derived from what Todd May (2005) deems to be the primary question of philosophy: How might one live? As humans, we have tried different ways of relating to each other, and there is potential for other ways, some of which have not yet been conceived. The use of "might" is intentional—the question cannot be how "should" we live together because that is prescriptive and quite possibly imperialistic in intent. While researchers and philosophers engage the question of how we might live together in a variety of ways, my research stance pivots around the idea of evil.

Richard Bernstein (2005) notes that while the discourse of evil has provoked inquiry in philosophy, religion, and literature historically, in contemporary times the

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[1]When referring specifically the Arendtian *action*, I will italicize the term. Otherwise "action" (not in italics) will refer to the word's common meaning.

concept of evil has been used to stifle genuine thinking and public discussion. The goal of my research is to provoke thinking *about* and *through* the concept of evil in the spirit of subjectification; i.e., examining not only what evil *represents* but also what evil *does* and can *do*. Through speaking with youths about evil and engaging with philosophies of evil, I have been pondering how educators might address disturbing violent processes and systemic harm, thus rethinking how we might live together. In his presentation, "All Things Considered: Immanence, Ecology, and Education," Hanjo Berressem (2016) talked about being "adequate to the world" in the sense that we might act in a way that increases the potential to act. I interpret this expansion of choice on both a personal and collective level—our choices about how we might live together on this planet, including our daily interactions with all entities as well as broader structures, such as political and educational institutions. I contend that thinking through the conduit of evil can help that process.

1.3: Researcher Identity and Influences

1.3.1: Researcher identity. My identity as a researcher affects what I am studying, how I will conduct my research, and what I will do with the results (Usher, 1996b, p. 36). I self-identify as a postmodernist, in the sense that I reject the "values, practices, and goals of Enlightenment humanism as they play out in Modernism;" in particular, I place less faith in the foundational assumptions that underpin Enlightenment projects such as the concepts of "progress" and "rational Man" (St.Pierre, 2011, p. 616). I identify as a human being who is a feminist, anti-racist, postmodernist, and an innate skeptic of government, and these associations inform my research process. I assume that the world in which we live is socially constructed in a way that privileges certain human

groups over not only other humans but also other entities on Earth. I recognize that knowledges are situated socially (Harding, 1993, p. 53), and so it behooves me to understand and explicitly articulate the impact I have personally on my research endeavors:

> [T]he fact that subjects of knowledge are embodied and socially located has the consequence that they are not fundamentally different from objects of knowledge. We should assume causal symmetry in the sense that the same kinds of social forces that shape objects of knowledge also shape (but do not determine) knowers and their scientific projects. (Harding, 1993, p. 64)

In other words, researchers cannot fully separate themselves from what they are researching. There can be no objectivity in the sense of a lack of bias, judgment, or prejudice. Instead, there is a higher standard of objectivity, one that requires the recognition of subjectivities and their impact on research. Such *situated knowledges*, a phrase introduced by Donna Haraway (1988), require researchers to discuss how they are positioned and then seek knowledges that are translatable across subjective locations. For my study, this entails an explicit naming of my intentions and commitments, and, during my interviews with participants, encouraging them to speak as freely as possible instead of following my lead while constantly keeping my own purposes in check.

1.3.2: Influence of Critical Theory. Critical Theory primarily informed my teaching prior to 2013, but since then has been augmented by (and shifted because of) my more recent philosophical and posthuman commitments. I value interactive processes that challenge, redefine, and transcend differences among humans, but also between humans and other entities. Because of my commitment to anti-racism and my recognition of the

political nature of teaching, I have had a stake in both critical pedagogy (e.g., Freire, 1989; Giroux, 2011) and reconceptualism (e.g., Pinar, 1999; Apple, 1993 & 2001), both of which continue into my present work. I contend that "there is no transhistorical, culture-free, disinterested way of knowing" (Lather, 2004, p. 207). Critical theory also informs the purpose of my work, as I am interested in deconstructing systemic oppression:

> The knowledge interest involved in Critical Theory is *emancipatory*—the unmasking of ideologies that maintain the status quo by restricting the access of groups to the means of gaining knowledge and the raising of consciousness or awareness about the material conditions that oppress or restrict them… understanding the causes of powerlessness, recognizing systemic oppressive forces and acting individually and collectively to change the conditions of life. (Usher, 1996a, pp. 22-23, emphasis original)

For teachers, such an unmasking requires a classroom with an atmosphere within which students feel comfortable discussing systemic issues that likely implicate them. Once such classrooms of care are created, it is then vital to encourage students to develop both the disposition and capabilities needed for such tasks:

> [P]edagogy as a critical practice should provide the classroom conditions that provide the knowledge, skills, and culture of questioning necessary for students to engage in critical dialogue with the past, question authority (whether sacred or secular) and its effects, struggle with ongoing relations of power, and prepare themselves for what it means to be critical, active citizens in the interrelated local, national, and global public spheres. (Giroux & Giroux, 2006, p. 28)

(Re)thinking evil can encourage the critical dialogue that Henry Giroux and Susan Giroux (2006) mention, including questioning authority and supporting active citizens. When I began my teaching career, I had a very simplistic definition of a good citizen—I focused on voting and awareness. Since my doctoral work, I have engaged with a more nuanced definition of active citizenship in the sense of Joel Westheimer (2008) and Kent den Heyer (2009a). Citizenship education curriculum and pedagogy in Canada seems to focus on what Westheimer (2008) names as *participatory* and *personally responsible* citizens (i.e., those who will participate in the socially conscious activities of others and perhaps even initiate their own activities); for example, students who will donate to charities or organize a charity drive themselves. Although these are admirable qualities, they can be pressure valves that give us the misguided feeling that we have adequately addressed injustice on a local, national, or even global level. These actions, however, do not address why such charity work is needed; the systemic reasons for injustice are not addressed. Westheimer (2008) defines a *justice oriented* citizen as one who will seek to inquire into the deeper root causes, such as questioning why some people starve in a world of plenty, rather than only seeking the immediate remedies (e.g., donating to food banks) produced by systemic inequalities. Recent conversations with Dr. Carla Peck have developed the idea of social justice citizenship further, including pondering how less privileged students might engage as socially-just citizens, given that their voices are already suppressed and thus their potential as socially-just citizens can be subverted by existing power structures (C. Peck, personal communication, August 14, 2014). These nuances of how educators might define a socially just citizen have influenced my engagement with the power the label of evil has, particularly in political discourse.

Rather than simply debating who or what should be labeled as evil, it is important for those of us who are striving for social justice to engage with the effects such labels might have.

1.3.3: Beyond Critical Theory. Since beginning my doctorate, I have been exploring a variety of philosophies that take the goals of Critical Theory further. Notable influences include posthuman thought as well as approaches shaped by the recognition of the Anthropocene/Capitalocene.

1.3.3.1: Posthuman thought. Critical theories, such as Critical Race Theory, involve interactive processes that challenge, redefine, and transcend differences among humans; however, there are still hierarchies in play because of the confinement of thought to the human realm—humans are often assumed to be superior to other animals as well as other entities. One vehicle to rethink differences is posthuman thought because hierarchies can be more thoroughly abandoned—humans are equal to other animate or inanimate beings. If humans are equal, not superior, to other entities on Earth, then (by extension or on a micro level) humans must then be equal to each other, regardless of gender, sex, “race,” ethnicity, age, ability, or other historical sources of division.

The rise of humanism, with its ideology of liberalism that emphasizes rationality, has ironically entailed that not all homo sapiens are considered as human (Braidotti, 2013, p. 1), which partially accounts for systemic racist practices such as slavery:

> As the Renaissance gave way to the Enlightenment and its aftermath, humanism emerged as a properly secular logic. If God is a *deus absconditas*, then the meaning of life has to be found in human pursuits. Out of this nexus, which included the beginnings of Western colonialism and racial slavery, was born the

> idea that we must pursue becoming "fully human" …. For if one had rights simply by virtue of being human, then not being recognized as human—something that women, black slaves, and colonized natives faced with horrifying regularity—was enough to relegate these inhumans to the status of things, objects to be used by humans. (Snaza et al., 2014, p. 42)

Once humanness is dependent on one way of knowing (e.g., rational thought), humans who partake in other ways of knowing or who are considered to be a barrier to rationality are excluded. Césaire (1955/2000) states that humanism, or "pseudo-humanism" as he calls it, ironically has decreased the rights of humans as the conceptualization of those rights has and continues to be narrow, fragmentary, incomplete, biased, and racist (p. 37). Césaire (1955/2000) illustrates his point by referring to the outrage and popular imaginary about Hitler as fuelled by the horror that Hitler turned "European colonialist procedures" against other white Europeans (p. 36). This view is still valid given history since Césaire wrote his book, such as the relative lack of international concern for the Rwandan genocide.

If, as a human, I think of myself as equal to non-human animals, as well as other entities, then it becomes impossible to perceive myself as superior to any other human. What makes posthuman thought helpful is that it broadens the discussion without forgetting about our human concerns:

> [P]osthumanist thought does not require abandoning a concern with the human, but instead requires us to think of the human as the result of ontological entanglements with a multiplicity of nonhumans and their agencies. Human agency, then, is only ever possible in relation to a radically inhuman set of

> agencies that enable it. We need to figure out how to educate in ways that attune to the human as entangled with the more-than-human without hypostasizing "the human" as if it were separate or separable. (Sonu & Snaza, 2015, p. 262)

Thus, posthuman thought can lobby a strong critique of anthropocentrism (individual humans) and nationalism (groups of humans), while providing us (as humans) with an opportunity to free ourselves from the "provincialism of the mind, the sectarianism of ideologies, the dishonesty of grandiose posturing and the grip of fear" (Braidotti, 2013, p. 11). For me, posthuman thinking changes how I frame my commitments and my questioning of the status quo. As an educator, I seek to contribute toward the public good—that has remained unchanged since my early stages of teaching; however whom and what I include in my sense of "public" has radically changed. Without a confinement to the human realm, there is an opportunity to reveal the absurdity of human inequality. If my cat's existence is just as valued as my own (e.g., she is my cat as much as I am her human in the sense of Haraway's (2003) "companion species"), then it is ridiculous to assume that my existence is more important than another human's just because they look, act, or think differently than me. That leap in perspective beyond the human has provided me with an invigorated commitment to equality on a planetary scale.

1.3.3.2: The Anthropocene/Capitalocene. Eugene Stoermer coined the term *Anthropocene* in the 1980s to signal the human processes that are changing Earth, largely the dependence on fossil fuels since the Industrial Revolution. The Anthropocene "is about the consequences of the production and reproduction of the means of existence of social life on a planetary scale" (Wark, 2014, §2). Although climate change, perhaps better worded as climate catastrophe, is the "iconic signifier" of the Anthropocene, there

are many other indicators such as ocean acidification, fresh water use, and declining biodiversity (jagodzinski, 2013, p. 31).

My response to this, however, is not fatalism and despair (although those are both appropriate responses in many ways). Instead, I desire to reject aspects of humanism that I interpret as unhelpful while calling for us, as humans, to take this accelerated existential timeline of crisis as an opportunity to rethink how we might treat others (human and otherwise) in more respectful ways. Much like the musicians who played music for the Titanic passengers in an attempt to calm them as the ship sank, we (as humans) have an opportunity to live out our limited time on this planet with more grace. I use the word "grace" in Patricia McCormack's (2014) sense of how we might "unthink the self in order to open up the thought of the world" (p. 13). This unthinking requires humility, as we are called upon to attend "to the infinite heterogeneity of life without the hubris of claiming knowledge of its vastness" (MacCormack, 2014, p. 15). As such, I am more interested in ethical relations than moral ones. While morality gives us rules to live by, ethics provide a conversation of what kinds of relationships we might have with humans and other entities on this planet. Posthuman ethics calls for us "to be 'worthy of the present' and thus be part of contemporary culture, embodying and embedding the subject of *this* particular world" (Braidotti, 2013, p. 189). Such an endeavor calls for us to "remov[e] the obstacle of self-centred individualism on the one hand and the barriers of negativity on the other" (Braidotti, 2013, p. 190). A reactionary response to contemporary times limits the discussion to what *was* and perhaps *should* be, rather than what *might* be. Using a modal verb like "might" opens up the potential for something new, which is exactly what we need during these troubled ecological times.

There are many ways to reject humanism. After all, both fascism and communism did; however, they rejected what I see as the productive and valuable aspects of liberalism (e.g., liberty and equality). For me, this means rejecting the perspective point of liberalism, not its values. Humanism assumes the world to be "for us," but Earth is a "world-in-itself," and as a planet it can operate as a "world-without-us" (Thacker, 2011). By changing the vantage point, the values of humanism can be expanded beyond the human, and although we may focus on aspects of being a human or being part of human society (as my research project largely does), there is an important underlying assumption that we are not the most important entities on this planet. Some aspects of Enlightenment-derived humanisms are worth salvaging. After all, not all humans created the Anthropocene, which is why some scholars prefer other terms; for example, Haraway (2014) engages with the word and concept of the *Capitalocene*. The logic of this Capitalocene involves the accumulation, extraction, and misdistribution of capital, seeing profit over any other measure of value (Haraway, 2014). The anarchist Emma Goldman (1917) aptly described the amassing of property as inciting a "gluttonous appetite for greater wealth, because wealth means power; the power to subdue, to crush, to exploit, the power to enslave, to outrage, to degrade" (p. 60). Extending this claim in the context of the Anthropocene/Capitalocene by thinking of Earth's entities as property—land, genetic code, plants, animals, fossils, even other humans—has led to an imbalance of power that has literally and figuratively degraded the planet. Steeped in hierarchy, with humans at the top and certain humans above other humans, such gross inequality has produced a situation intolerable to bear. The Anthropocene/Capitalocene calls for critical thought to be "problem-centered rather than tradition and discipline centered" while

avoiding its own "discursive games" (Wark, 2014, §8). As such, we need to think using frameworks that allow something new to emerge, which I claim is facilitated more helpfully by posthuman thoughtfulness in the context of the Anthropocene rather than Critical Theories alone.

As Oscar Wilde (1891/2007) states: a "practical scheme" is one that either exists already or "could be carried out under existing conditions. But it is exactly the existing conditions that one objects to; and any scheme that could accept these conditions is wrong and foolish" (p. 1062). Goldman (1917) expands Oscar Wilde's claim, arguing that when these existing conditions are objectionable the only criterion for a practical scheme is sufficient vitality "to leave the stagnant waters of the old, and build, as well as sustain, new life (p. 55). Critical Theory has indeed shaped how I approach this research topic, and my engagement with more general questions of curriculum and pedagogy; however, I am attempting to avoid falling into the trap of seeking a practical scheme that considers only existing conditions. My response to that concern is my engagement with posthuman thinking in the context of the Anthropocene. Our world requires us to rethink human institutions, but we benefit from also considering inhuman (mineral, animal) and non-human (technological) entities as part of our interconnected milieu. Although the concerns of this dissertation are largely confined to the human realm on account of participant responses, my posthuman commitments have undoubtedly shaped the study, and will inform future work.

1.3.4: Engaging with philosophy. Philosophy and political theory are also integral to how I am approaching my research. I have a passion for philosophy without a devout adherence to only one thinker. Following Arendt (1963/2006) and Badiou

(1998/2001) I seek to encourage critical thinking about human agency and responsibility to counter the processes of evil present in our everyday lives. Through Baudrillard (1990/1993) and his views on *Symbolic Evil,* I see a potential to foster radical thought in and out of the classroom. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2008) provide a meaningful way to rethink political literacy and action through such concepts as order-words. I will engage with each of these theorists in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Other notable philosophers with ideas about evil are not included because my focus is on politics and systemic violence, as well as the ideas and themes that emerged from my participants (not to mention the limits of my own knowledge at present). There are many meaningful ways to engage with the topic of youth conceptualizations of evil—this dissertation is by no means exhaustive or the final word on the subject.

1.4: Defining Evil?

Evil is difficult to conceptualize, and yet the concept is pervasive. Although definitions of evil are interesting in themselves, I focus on what different definitions might generate. That having been said, I will discuss definitions briefly. The word "evil" comes from the Old English word *yfel* and stems from Proto-Germanic *ubilaz*, acting as "the most comprehensive adjectival expression of disapproval, dislike or disparagement" (Oxford English Dictionary, qtd. in Harper, 2014, para. 1). Anglo-Saxons used the word to refer to notions of "bad, cruel, unskillful, or defective" but as the language developed into Middle English, the word "bad" encompassed most of these ranges of meaning and "evil" was reserved for "moral badness" (Harper, 2014, para. 2). According to a Catholic dictionary, evil is an absence of good:

> The privation of a good that should be present. It is the lack of a good that essentially belongs to a nature; the absence of a good that is natural and due to a being. Evil is therefore the absence of what ought to be there. (Hardon, 1985, p. 136)

There are multiple philosophical understandings of evil, some of which (Hannah Arendt, Alain Badiou, and Jean Baudrillard) will be discussed later in this dissertation as they relate to the conceptualizations that my participants reported. It should be noted, however, that I purposefully interviewed without providing the students a definition of evil.

1.5: Summary

In this chapter I have outlined my background to and intentions for this study, my identity as a researcher, as well as some introductory comments about defining evil. My experiences as a teacher, the influence of Critical Theory, as well as my engagement with philosophy and posthuman thought via the Anthropocene have shaped my intentions and commitments.

CHAPTER 2: EVIL AND EDUCATION LITERATURE REVIEW

As a perennial concern throughout human history, there is much scholarly work on evil. This literature review is limited to the topic of evil published in English in the context of education, with particular interest in the usage of the word and concept in social studies education spanning the years 1979 to present. I have not included my own publications that are based on this dissertation.

To ascertain the state of educational research on evil, I searched for the word "evil" in a variety of combinations with other words and phrases, including "social studies," "history," and "education" using the EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) and Google Scholar. From the thousands of results, many authors employed the word "evil" as a descriptor or catchy title, rather than interrogating the actual topic of evil. For those who engaged with the idea of evil in the context of education, I grouped the literature into five interrelated categories within social studies education:

1) using the label evil (without interrogating whatever definition of evil might be employed),
2) addressing difficult knowledge,
3) engaging with historical trauma,
4) performing simulations of historical injustices, and
5) ascertaining the nature of censorship and ideological schooling.

Additionally, I found three other categories pertaining to education, but outside of the social studies:

1) employing evil as a medium for character and religious education,
2) exploring student worldviews, a portion of which relates to evil, and

3) analyzing a college-level political science course regarding evil.

Most of the education-related scholarly works label historical events or figures as evil, and/or explore how we might teach evils as part of curriculum (e.g., teaching about the Holocaust/Shoah). These will be discussed in the next section (§2.1). Until my research study, there had not been an in-depth exploration of student conceptualizations of evil, and of how those conceptualizations might inform curriculum and pedagogical practices.

2.1: Evil & Social Studies Education

In social studies education, teachers and students explore historical and current events, as well as people, sometimes labelled as evil. The task of addressing the notion of evil is challenging. While evil is a familiar social signifier in politics and popular media, it is rarely defined. Philosophically speaking, there are numerous (and, at times, contradictory) definitions, some of which will be explored in Chapter 3. Students' nascent understandings of evil, undoubtedly formed through many different influences, inform how they interpret historical and current events, and whether they see such events as inevitable, thus affecting their sense of future possibilities. Teachers might be reluctant to deconstruct the notion of evil for a variety of reasons; for example, they might want either to avoid conjuring up feelings of guilt or to maintain emotional distance from their students as a dispassionate expert delivering curriculum. Regardless of the intent, failing to interrogate the meaning behind a label of evil (and the effects thereof) can result in "rather glibly brand[ing] various political movements as 'evil' or as 'terrorist'" (Purpel, 2004, pp. 54 & 63). Simply using a term like evil without exploring its meaning can oversimplify the context and significance of that label.

2.1.1: Using the label of evil. Within the context of social studies education research, scholars have employed the word evil; however, the definition of evil is often not explicit. Rather, some sort of common understanding of evil is usually implicitly assumed. One notable exception is a brief article by Parsons (1998) calling for the need to label and discuss historical evils in the context of social studies and religious education. He provides a clear definition of evil as "a malicious disregard for others," and sees its presence in the reign of Saddam Hussein and in the lives of impoverished children (Parsons, 1998).

Some educational scholars use the term "evil" in specific historical contexts by either groups or individuals. For example, Reis (2003) mentions notions of evil as the motivation for targeting women in the Salem witch trials. Egan (1979) incorporates emotional and moral confrontations between good and evil in his proposed first stage of social studies curriculum in which elementary students are in a mythic stage. Young children's minds are easily engaged by stories of "witches, dragons, and talking animals in bizarre places and strange times" (Egan, 1979, p. 6), in part because these stories "are organized on those fundamental moral and emotional categories children know so clearly—love and hate, good and bad, fear and security, and so on" (Egan, 1979, p. 7). A minimal subjective interpretation of what might be good or evil is key because "young children require binary opposites" (Egan, 1979, p. 11); they "seem to grasp things initially in terms of polar opposites" before understanding nuances and middle ground (Egan, 1979, p. 8). Thus, for practical reasons, Egan (1979) calls for an elementary curriculum that engages with a relatively simple understanding of evil, as opposed to what I am advocating—shunning overcoded binaries or good versus evil and moral

versus immoral in favour of thinking through how different notions of evil produce different intellectual effects and bodily affects.

Evil can also serve as a criterion. Parton (2000) examines student evaluation of the communication strategies of historical figures using criteria for effectiveness including whether the result of their persuasion was for good or evil. Historical evils, such as the Vietnam War and stories of racism in the United States can serve as cautionary tales to foster democratic citizens who will take appropriate actions (Nelson, 2005). Similarly, many scholars look to the industrial-level horrors of the Holocaust/Shoah to foster a better world, postulating methods of teaching the evils of hatred and prejudice (e.g., Christensen, 1999; Goldstein 1995; Lovett, 1999; Mosian, Hirsch, & Audet, 2015). This latter category relates to the following two categories: difficult knowledge and historical trauma—how do we teach about evil? Although the definition of evil is implicit rather than explicit, these two approaches provide meaningful insights into social studies education.

2.1.2: Addressing difficult knowledge. Deborah Britzman's definition of "difficult knowledge" develops as a conceptual frame over time. In 1998, the term represented how teachers and students mourn historical events (war, slavery, genocide, famines, etc.) or social hatred (bigotry, injustice, etc.) that reveal suffering to be caused by human indifference or even disdain for life (Britzman, 1998). Such events and hatred can be, and are, very easily labelled as evil. Many scholars have engaged with Britzman's approach; for example, H. James Garrett (2011) studies the complexity of feelings and emotions as a pedagogical opportunity to engage with difficult historical events such as Hurricane Katrina. In this work, the suffering and death due to the natural disaster, paired

with the injustices perpetuated by humans that exacerbated the disaster, serve as a powerful illustration of difficult knowledge inherent in aspects of the social studies (Garrett, 2011).

More recently, Britzman (2013) employs her concept of difficult knowledge to address problems inherent in how we might symbolize a range of challenging emotions through the lens of attending to rapprochement:

> More generally and across the lifespan, scenes of rapprochement give a different flavor to symbolizing the pushes, pulls, and emotional boundaries of learning. This is another way of describing learning as involved in a time of emotional uncertainty: wishing to approach new experiences and new knowledge, feeling both the fatigue of limit and the excitement of potential, and then solving this ambivalence by seeking continuity with the safety of the old objects yet still agitated by the crisis of dependency. (p. 101)

Using a psychoanalytic[2] perspective, Britzman (2013) studies difficult knowledge in terms of "what falls away when education discards the things it cannot master" (p. 111). I argue that the concept of evil falls into this category. If "the emotional situation of education" is to guide pedagogy (Britzman, 2013 p. 113), then students' conceptualizations of evil warrant further study as part of that emotional situation.

2.1.3: Engaging with historical trauma. Somewhat similar to Britzman's (1998) call to address difficult knowledge is the responsibility to document and witness historical trauma such as the Vietnam War and the Holocaust/Shoah (e.g., Simon & Eppert, 1997; Simon, Rosenberg, & and Eppert, 2002; Simon, 2005; Gaudelli, Crocco, &

[2] Although "psychoanalytic" is the preferred term in educational research and, to an extent, philosophy, in psychological terms the meaning here is equivalent to "psychodynamic."

Hawkins, 2012). Learning about such events can be done in either a respectful or disrespectful way, and thus there are ethical obligations that arise from learning about the past through personal experience. Creating communities of remembrance through witnessing testimonies of social violence like genocide, colonialism, and slavery might help transform society by “affirm[ing] life in the face of death” (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 189). Pedagogy based on testimony and remembrance is a way of addressing evil in history through an understanding derived from Levinas:

> To speak to testimony means to attend to the limits displayed when recognition of another's experience lies in the mis-recognition of that experience as something one already knows. In the confrontation with such limits lies the possibility of experiencing what Levinas (1969) refers to as the "traumatism of astonishment" (p. 73), the experience of something absolutely foreign that may call into question what and how one knows. (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 180)

The ethical obligation then lies in working through the event in a self-reflexive way and in being attentive as both a judge and an apprentice (Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 180). Encounters with traces of the past create opportunities to imagine a present and future potential of human society:

> While remembrance does not ensure anything, least of all justice, it can concretize human aspirations to make present a world yet to be realized, thus present us with claims of justice and the requirements of compassion. (Simon, 2005, p. 102)

Roger Simon (2005) eloquently navigates an ethical response to evil by calling upon students and teachers to both witness and respond to historical trauma.

2.1.4: Performing simulations. Related to historical trauma is the practice of simulating tragic historical situations, some of which are often associated with a similar sense of the "evils" of the past, such as genocide and racism. Such simulations can be beneficial because they "enliven discussion of complex issues and perspectives, particularly around topics which may be difficult for students to grasp conceptually or empathetically through other means" (Wright-Maley, 2014, p. 18). Despite such potential benefits for understanding and engagement, the danger is that emotional trauma may result from simulations particularly if students are not properly prepared and debriefed, or the classroom atmosphere is not a safe space for emotions to be discussed, and/or parents are not informed about the simulation beforehand:

> Educators need to approach these activities with emotional and cultural sensitivity, be wary of early signs of psychological distress, have the tools to support students as they navigate any stress and strain they may feel, and know how to prepare both parents and students to make sense of the experiences before, throughout, and after the simulation is enacted. (Wright-Maley, 2014, p. 22)

Before any sensitive lesson is undertaken, simulation or not, care must be paid to what must happen before that lesson can occur; both intellectual and emotional needs must be anticipated.

Another concern about simulations is the potential to trivialize past horrors. Trotten and Feinberg (1995) examined Holocaust simulations and found the benefit of fostering empathy to be overshadowed by the cost of oversimplification of complex events. Wright-Maley (2014) acknowledges that concern as legitimate, but adds that simulations can achieve a balance between gross oversimplification and confusing

complexity in order to foster both empathy and learning (p. 20). In particular, the layer of morality in the simulation must remain complex, which can even help the students gain insight regardless of their prowess at the historical details (Schweber, 2003; Wright-Maley, 2014, p. 20).

Controversial approaches to the evils of history such as simulations—the Holocaust/Shoah, slavery, or other past horrors—have merit, but they must be implemented with care. Logistically, there are numerous concerns and there are no fewer emotional concerns. Linking back to the previous section on historical trauma, it behooves educators undertaking simulations to consider the ethical implications of witnessing and remembrance.

2.1.5: Ascertaining the nature of censorship and ideological schooling. A variety of research exists that deals with the presence (or absence) of evil in school curricula. Marshall (2012) examines controversial content labeled as evil, namely the shift in the state policy of Victoria in Australia between the 1970s and the present regarding schools using books seen as fostering homosexual behaviour. This debate was partly a response to fundamentalist Christian groups such as the Citizens Against Social Evil. As such, the idea of evil can easily be related to school censorship.

An extension of censorship relates more directly to the teaching of history and involves issues of teaching contested or ideological history. Teaching history involves questions of the proper place of the ideological as it relates to political incantations of evil. According to Schär and Sperisen (2010), in Switzerland the political literacy of its population has changed along with the changing focus of the curriculum about the Second World War. These scholars examined the oscillating interpretations of the

country's role in the Holocaust/Shoah from a neutral nation resisting evil to a complicit one faced with moral dilemmas. The concern for Schär and Sperisen (2010) lies in how historical memory is affected by the current political realm, particularly such a change in citizens' interpretation of their country's past from the immediate post-war narrative of resisting evil "prevent[ed] critical investigation into the nation's war history" to the new narrative highlighting "moral challenges" (Schär & Sperisen, 2010, p. 650). Evil (in this case, a the narrative of a nation simply reacting to it) is deployed as a means to avoid more complicated historical realities. The assumption is that countries who examine the moral challenges faced by them as part of history education might be able to "combine their efforts to prevent such crimes in the future," but the aspect of agency discussed by the authors is that of those who teach contested history (Schär & Sperisen, 2010, p. 665). I argue that citizens' agency and sense of responsibility might benefit from not only examining these moral challenges, but also by dissecting the very notion of evil.

In a U.S. context, Schrum (2007) examines ideological teachings present in higher education in the late 1930s as movements sought to inculcate the sense that the United States is a leader of the free world, particularly as a counterforce for evil dictatorships. Carlson (1985) examines a different era of ideological teachings, that of the Cold War. Carlson (1985), like Schär and Sperisen (2010), sees the semantic power of "evil" as preventing critical examination of history. He issues a strong critique of the simplistic and even misleading curricula about U.S.-Soviet relations in History textbooks for U.S. schools:

> Whether there is some validity to these charges [e.g., Communist plots for world domination] is not at issue here. What makes these texts primarily ideological is

> their intent to simplify and distort a complex situation since events are presented in an uncontested, taken-for-granted manner. (Carlson, 1985, p. 58)

There are educational scholars who have also made the opposite claim—that the United States needs more ideological teaching. In a more recent context, Ravitch (2002) advocates for lessons about patriotism and recognizing the presence of evil in the post-9/11 world:

> Part of our postmodern view of the world has required us as educators to assert that good and evil are old-fashioned terms and somehow obsolete. We have now seen acts of wanton evil, akin to what earlier generations saw perpetuated by the Nazis and Communists… As educators, we have a responsibility to the public, to the children in our schools, and to the future. The public expects the schools to equip students with the tools to carry on our democracy and to improve it. (Ravitch, 2002, pp. 7-9)

Although Carlson (1985) and Ravitch (2002) disagree regarding their support for ideological teaching in U.S. schools, it is clear that both see the power of ideological teaching using the notion of evil. The naming and scope of ideological teaching is dependent on implicit assumptions about good and evil largely left in the realm of religion. Thus, questioning the idea of evil in a secular and educational setting offers a means to explore its ideological deployment more critically.

2.2: Character and Religious Education

Many scholarly works on evil in education lie outside the realm of social studies education. In the context of character education, Gilead (2011) argues that this subject teaches more about virtues than vices, and thus evil inclinations should be addressed

more openly and fully. Moral education has come under criticism for its "inability to reduce violence, crime, abuse, vandalism, thievery and more… [and so] this has brought many to conclude that moral education must redirect its attention and focus on the development of moral character" (Gilead, 2011, p. 272). Aligning with Kantian ideas of radical evil, Gilead (2011) sees natural human inclinations such as "selfishness, cowardice, cruelty, envy, malice, jealousy… [as] the most controllable form of evil" and so the evils of undeserved harm must be openly addressed in moral education in order for students to gain self control (pp. 274-276). In a Russian context, Askarova (2007) argues that incorporating religious and ethical education encourages students to explore philosophy and their worldview more actively; for example, students and teachers should explore issues such as the nature and origins of good and evil with a view to "correcting" social and moral problems. Similarly, other scholars argue for the need to incorporate religious education in secular contexts in order to prepare students for dealing with death (e.g., Miller, 1989).

2.3: Research into students' conceptualizations of evil

Some research exists that involves students' views on evil, but the concept of evil itself has not been the focus. Rather, these studies have assumed a definition of evil and the notion of evil is related to some other research focus or merely part of those belief structures.

2.3.1: Student worldviews and evil. I located two studies in Anglophone educational research that involve students' views on evil. Neither of these, however, had evil as a main focus of study (i.e., the idea of evil was a taken-for-granted part of a broader worldview), nor do they examine what students mean by the word "evil" and

what effects such a label can have, which are the foci on my study. Mau and Pope-Davis (1993) note, as part of their examination of the worldviews of students in counseling programs, that undergraduates were more likely than their graduate counterparts to perceive human nature as evil. This notion of human nature was only one of many questions posed to the students; other areas included the focus on the past, the nature of human relationships (linear vs. collateral, and hierarchical vs. mutual), and the power of nature (Mau & Pope-Davis, 1993, p. 1).

Specific cultural value orientations affect a variety of attitudes, including those regarding human nature as evil, as evidenced by Carter, Yeh, and Mazzula (2008) in their study finding that Latinos with negative beliefs about their heritage seem more likely to view human nature as evil. Based on the premise that "value orientations or worldviews are viewed as culturally specific systems or perspectives for making sense of the world," the authors used the Kluckholm and Strodtbeck model of value orientations to explore Latino/a values (Carter, Yeh, & Mazzula, 2008, p. 7). By evil human nature, the authors refer to the value orientation that: "[p]eople are born with evil inclinations. Little can be done to change this state. Control of evil behavior is the only hope" (Carter, Yeh, & Mazzula, 2008, p. 8). There were 107 Latino/a college students (73 women and 34 men) with an age range from 17 to 49 and a mean age of 22. These participants predominantly self identified as working class (51%, n = 54). Using the 43-item self-report instrument, the *Visible Racial Ethnic/Identity Attitude Scale* (VREIAS) and the *Intercultural values inventory* (ICV), the authors catalogued values and attitudes as well as the relationship between worldviews to five aspects of humanity: human nature, humans relating to the natural world, perspectives on time, human expression, and social relations.

Limitations on the study by Carter, Yeh, & Mazzula (2008), however, should be noted. It is difficult to account for all of the influences on the attitudes and values of Latinos/as, such as religious influence and degree of conformity to a racial identity. Furthermore, a psychology study has noted cross-cultural similarities in stereotypes of good and evil, although this study also revealed a variety of interpretations of how good and evil manifest themselves in everyday life (Funkhouser, 1991). The authors also note that their study did not include reference to skin colour, which can vary considerably within the Latino/a population and could affect their sense of conformity with views about evil and other items they measured (Carter, Yeh, & Mazzula, 2008, p. 17). Furthermore, the instruments used by this study (as well as those for any questionnaires) are not beyond criticism. The American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education (1999) note that individual interpretations of survey items and other psychological processes can affect reliability (Carter, Yeh, & Mazzula, 2008, p. 12; cf. Wilkinson & APA Task Force on Statistical Inference, 1999). Another limitation is that the findings may not generalize to samples of the population other than college students who identify as working class. Generalizability is a perennial issue with research. Although the correlation of ethnic identification and notions of human nature and evil is plausible, so are other possible groupings for worldviews, such as religious views, socio-economic class, or even gender.

2.3.2: Evil in a political science classroom. A third study makes a case for teaching about evil through cases of genocide in a political science course at a private liberal arts college in Virginia (Meinke, 2010). Unlike the previous two examples of student conceptualizations of evil (Carter, Yeh, & Mazzula, 2008; Mau & Pope-Davis,

1993), Meinke (2010) advocates for shaping students' notions of evil through the voices of both victims and the victimizers, with a view to shaping our political interactions and preventing future genocides. Although there is a nod to what students might be thinking regarding evil in the form of a pre-test at the beginning of the course, the instructor tests only a basic knowledge of what genocide is and select historical examples, not what conceptualizations exist prior to the instruction (Meinke, 2010, p. 18). It should be noted, however, that this document was from a conference in 2010 that mentioned that more detailed results would be available after the current semester was over (Meinke, 2010, p. 20); however, no such document appears to exist.

2.4: Summary

There is a distinct lack of research into students' conceptualizations of evil and the use of "evil" as a concept in social studies classrooms. I have outlined a variety of ways that evil has been addressed in an educational context in English-speaking research. The approaches of difficult knowledge and historical trauma have provided valuable ways to refine our pedagogy based upon a moral imperative to address the evils of history, while other research has illuminated issues of ideology and censorship on personal and systemic levels. Research thus far on personal views has been limited to broader categories such as human nature, rather than the nature of evil itself and its manifestations. I believe that it is critical to take the research idea of personal adherence to worldviews further. Specifically, it is fruitful to examine contemporary youth conceptions of evil with a view to their interpretations of the social studies curriculum. My desire is that adding complexity to discussions of what we label as "evil" will contribute to more effective teaching of social studies as well as methods to help students

cope with the difficult knowledge involved by refusing to let the word “evil” be used to shut down analysis and debate. Such research has not been undertaken yet, although a variety of contributions and related research is present. Mark Helmsing (2014) notes the power of social studies to open up meaningful complexities:

> to enable students and teachers to examine and erode dichotomies, such as us/them, inside/outside, individual/collective, here/there, and private/public … [which are] often constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed through emotional and affective forces. (p. 128)

Helping to add meaningful complexity to evil is a long-term goal for my research, including examining the affective force of evil in social studies education.

CHAPTER 3: PHILOSOPHICAL COMMITMENTS

Once I had decided to pursue a phenomenographic study, I felt that I had to increase my own knowledge about the variety of definitions in existence so that I could develop my semi-structured interview questions to tease out a variety of conceptualizations. To accomplish this, I began by reading secondary sources, beginning with Peter Dews' *Idea of Evil* (2008) and Susan Neiman's *Evil in Modern Thought* (2002/2015), and then moved on to original sources. I largely focused on western philosophy on account of its influence on Canadian society and popular media, but I also inquired about local Indigenous conceptualizations; for example, traditionally peoples of the Prairies, such as the Cree and Blackfoot, have seen a constant flux between good and evil, with neither operating wholly on its own, and yet evil is nonetheless seen as something very destructive to life and a transgression of the laws of creation (D. Donald, personal communication, May 31, 2014). Although the task of mapping out philosophies of evil could easily have been a dissertation in itself, my commitment was (and continues to be) in the realm of education.

During and after this task of learning about philosophy, I began to formulate my own opinions about definitions of evil and related topics that can generate thought in the context of social studies. Following Virgina Woolf's imperative, "think we must" (as cited in Haraway, 2014), certain philosophical engagements with evil present~~s~~ ~~an~~ opportunities to open up our thinking processes. The philosophical literature review in this chapter reflects the theorists who have been the primary influence on the educational implications for the outcome space of my study. For my discussion of evil in relation to social studies education, I have chosen to engage with five: Hannah Arendt, Alain

Badiou, Jean Baudrillard, as well as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Thus, I neglect notable philosophers and their contributions to the understanding of evil, such as Nietzsche and Spinoza, among others. This is not to say that they could not have contributed to my arguments; rather, I have opted to make judicious choices for now based upon the educational context of senior high social studies in Alberta, a program of studies with an emphasis on war and genocide, while leaving open the potential to engage with additional thinkers for other projects.

Early in my doctoral work I developed a commitment to Arendt and Badiou. I was exposed to Badiou's (1998/2001) definition of evil through coursework, and I saw a potentially productive way to modify curriculum and pedagogy regarding war, genocide, and many other issues prevalent in social studies. At a conference on citizenship education, a fellow presenter mentioned Arendt's (1963/2006) theory regarding the banality of evil after we had spoken about the drawbacks of seeing Hitler as a cartoonish villain. It quickly became clear to me how compatible Badiou and Arendt's ideas were. Arendt's (1963/2006) and Badiou's (1998/2001) remarks about the nature of evil highlight ordinary people and processes as the focus of inquiry, a focus which provokes thought about industrial-scale violence, such as genocide and other manifestations of systemic injustice. I began my phenomenographic research knowing that these two theorists were part of my thinking process and commitments, educational and otherwise.

What came as a surprise to me was my eventual inclusion of Baudrillard, Deleuze, and Guattari. After the first round of individual interviews, I began to ponder including Baudrillard in the dissertation. One participant and I conversed about Baudrillard for quite some time after his interview, which actually led him to choose the

pseudonym "Jean." After that chance occurrence, I could not shake the influence on my thinking at the time. Baudrillard (1990/1993) provides a generative definition of evil to rethink how society, and thus education, might function, which was a link in my mind to Arendtian *action* (see §3.1.1) in the sense that potential could be opened up rather than shut down or ignored. Finally, I felt compelled to add Deleuze and Guattari to my dissertation. During one of many work sessions with a fellow graduate student, I was struggling out loud with how to articulate participant responses that indicated the tremendous effects of labelling someone as evil. My colleague suggested I look more closely at the concept of *order-words* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2008). This concept illuminates the problematic that is the strict binary of good versus evil inherent in contemporary political discourse as well as hate speech.

By intention and by chance, Arendt, Badiou, Baudrillard, as well as Deleuze and Guattari have helped me make sense of participant responses and their educational implications. This mosaic of theorists allowed me to preserve the beautiful untidiness of participants' conceptualizations. Because through this research I am seeking to preserve the complexity of evil in educational discourse, it is in many ways appropriate that my theoretical underpinnings are similarly multifarious. I am not advocating for one definition of evil; rather, I am seeking whatever definitions of evil generate thought regarding violence and systemic harm. My choices of a variety of theorists and the method of phenomenography speak to my attempts to avoid sterilizing participant responses to fit a single Truth or "best" practice. Much has been written about these theorists in a variety of contexts, educational and otherwise, but not how their understandings of evil are helpful to social studies curriculum and pedagogy.

3.1: Hannah Arendt

Evil is a word commonly, and quite aptly, employed in relation to the Holocaust/Shoah. Millions of people were murdered, and many others suffered beyond what most of us can imagine. Hannah Arendt was a political theorist who attempted to think through the complexities of such an atrocity. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951/1966), she employs a conceptualization of radical evil; however, after witnessing the trial of Adolf Eichmann, Arendt (1963/2006) engages with a different understanding—the *banality of evil*. Before engaging with these two ideas of evil, it is important that I first talk about her notion of *action* in order to position her ideas of evil accordingly.

3.1.1: Action. In her foundational work, *The Human Condition* (1958/1998), Arendt articulates a conception of politics based on an innate human capacity to do something new, something unexpected. Arendt dubs this as *action*, which forms a triad of components of the human condition alongside *labour* (what humans need to do in order to sustain life) and *work* (what we need to do to create and maintain our world).[3]

Examples of *action* include resistance movements against Hitler's regime during the Second World War. Individuals did the unexpected. They interrupted their routine, private activities to create a new public space to (re)claim some freedom and to serve as an exemplar for future action. It is this public space that underlies the thrust and significance of *action*—our interconnectedness with each other. This emphasis on thinking in a public sense also reveals her intimate connection to classical Greek thinking. Our word, "idiot," comes from the Greek word for "private person" (ιδιωτης), a

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[3] Although Arendt (1958/1998) takes *work* specifically as creating a world for human beings, my personal interpretation of "work" expands that definition in a posthuman sense to maintain a world for all animate and inanimate entities.

person who is not working toward the state (Liddell & Scott, 1996, p. 819). Here, the "state" must be understood as the Greek *polis*, which is a composite of the interconnected citizenry, not simply the government or the physical land per se. An "idiot," then, is someone who is not working toward a public good.

Importantly, anyone can take *action* in an Arendtian sense. No special powers, status, or genealogy is required. Also drawing from ancient Greek thought, and here, specifically, Homeric literature, Arendt (1958/1998) articulates that a hero can be an ordinary person: The hero a story discloses needs no heroic qualities; the word "hero" originally, that is, in Homer, was no more than a name given each free man who participated in the Trojan enterprise (p. 186). Although anyone is technically capable of *action*, not everyone will. What is necessary for this public thinking is a sense of interconnection among us. Harsh individualism prevents *action*:

> The popular belief in a "strong man" who, isolated against others, owes his strength to his being alone is either sheer superstition, based on the delusion that we can "make" something in the realm of human affairs—"make" institutions or laws, for instance, as we make tables and chairs… or it is conscious despair of all action, political and non-political, coupled with the utopian hope that it may be possible to treat men as one treats other "material." (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 188)

Taking *action* necessitates ordinary people working collectively to make the world into a place suitable in which to dwell; it creates relationships as it transgresses limitations and boundaries, which is why the *polis* is not really a city-state but rather the connections among the people resulting from their *actions* (Arendt, 1958/1998, pp. 190 & 198).

Although we cannot take *action* every moment of our lives, it is imperative that we know of what we are capable and that we think critically in order to strive for *action*.

3.1.2: Radical, *a priori* evil. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951/1966), Arendt articulated her belief in radical evil—an idea largely bequeathed to contemporary Western society from Immanuel Kant's (1793/1838) discussion of humans having an innate tendency for evil and self-love over moral law. For Kant (1793/1838), humans have a propensity for evil and self-love over moral law because we are sensuous beings; "Every human, even the best" has this propensity (6:36). According to Kant, "propensity" is deeper than an "inclination," which Eddis Miller (2015) explaines through the analogy of having an inclination towards lollipops because of a propensity for sweets (p. 41). Humans possess inclinations either to subordinate moral law to self-love or to the opposite, and so ethically we are good or evil (but not both) depending on whether or not we subscribe to moral law. Someone may be inclined towards evil for the following reasons: a frailty, meaning a sort of weakness of will (e.g., they cannot resist the lollipop); an impurity, which means doing the right thing for the wrong reason (e.g., buying a child lollipops not to make them happy but so that you can have one, too); or a perversity, a selfish sort of wickedness to prioritize self-love over moral law (Kant, 1793/1838, 1:24-26). Perversity will result in wrongdoing when self-love conflicts with moral law, such as wanting so many lollipops that you demand more production from a factory reputed to have horrific working conditions due to the quest for maximum output. Continuing the lollipop example, the management of the factory would be evil, not because of their self-love, but rather for their treatment of workers solely as *laborans,* those who function towards an already determined end.

Kant, as part of the Enlightenment movement, did not seek to prove a transcendental evil (e.g., he does not examine the Devil); rather, he examined situations in which humans prioritize natural desires (the propensity and inclinations for self-love) over the moral law to which he posits rational beings also ascribe. Although we may not choose our propensity for good or evil, we can control whether or not we act upon our inclinations. We can reform our character through a revolution in our mode of thought to follow moral law. Radical evil for Kant, thus, was not "extreme;" rather, it was radical because it is at the "root of human action, the fundamental choice of maxim that subsequently influences our choice of particular maxims" (Miller, 2015, p. 30).

Self-love is our propensity to use our *subjective* reference point as an *objective* determining ground of a general will. In other words, humans can easily fail to see the world from other perspectives (self-love over mutual recognition and respect). This state of affairs can be destructive when combined with evil inclinations. According to Kant, however, humans can overcome this situation through their attention to ethics based on rationality and moral law. Stated differently, evil exists as part of the natural order of things, and thus being "good" requires that we combat radical evil through adherence to an idealized rational morality. Although some commentators interpret Kant's idea of radical evil as paradoxical to his ideas of moral autonomy (perhaps as a vestige of his own religious views or as a simplistic anthropological statement regarding human nature), McMullin (2013) sees a radical evil as part of Kant's moral theory because *a priori* evil "accounts for how the agent first comes to take responsibility for that fact that she is claimed by the moral law and yet is inclined to prioritize other incentives" (p. 50). People will choose evil because they can subordinate moral law to their own innate evil

inclinations, and so being a "good" person results from a reaction to evil, namely that one must reject it and adopt moral laws.

Although Arendt (1951/1966) rejects Kant's idea of "comprehensible motives" for a "perverted ill will," she embraces radical evil nonetheless: "We may say that radical evil has emerged in connection with a system in which all men have become equally superfluous" (p. 459). This understanding led to Arendt to an interpretation that the Nazis were conduits for an evil force:

> Totalitarian regimes have discovered without knowing it that there are crimes which men can neither punish nor forgive. When the impossible became possible it became the unpunishable, unforgivable absolute evil. (Arendt, 1951/1966, p. 459)

This evil was what "corrupted the basis of moral law, exploded legal categories, and defied human judgment" (Elon, 2006, p. xiii).

3.1.3: The banality of evil. Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962) was a Nazi logistics manager during the Holocaust/Shoah, who was in charge of deporting Jews to ghettos and death camps. After the Second World War he escaped to Argentina, where he lived until 1960 when Israeli intelligence officers captured him. He faced trial in Jerusalem for war crimes, and was hanged. Hannah Arendt reported on his trial for *The New Yorker*. These reports were eventually published as *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963). Although the word "banal" is only used in the subtitle and on the final page of the book, Arendt's observations and analysis of Eichmann continually reinforce the banality of evil. After observing his trial, Arendt's previous understanding of evil was shattered and replaced with a strong belief that evil could not ever be radical

because it has no depth or "demonic dimension" (Elon, 2006, p. xiii). In fact, only good has depth, an idea that relates to the philosophy of Alain Badiou, which I take up in detail later. Like *action*, anyone is capable of evil. Such ordinary people are evil because they do not think in a public sense—the banality of evil is anti-*action*. So, it is not that evil itself is banal or that people are mindless drones; rather, normal people can be wrapped up in their individual, daily lives to the point that they can do great harm to humans as well as other entities. Here, I extend Arendt's thought into the posthuman realm. Although Arendt's meaning of "public" seems confined to the human realm, I take her ideas of *action* (and thus banality) into human conduct vis-à-vis other entities as well.

Arendt (1963/2006) saw Eichmann as a thoroughly shallow and mediocre bureaucrat, not a demonic, intimidating force. He did not appear to be perverted, sadistic, or an ideologue. The Holocaust/Shoah and other such "evil" deeds are not mundane; in fact, it is quite the contrary. While the evils are astonishing, the people who instigate and continue these evils are not. Eichmann was far from a demonic monster, but he was "repulsive in a new way" (Whitfield, 1981, p. 475). Indeed, according to Arendt (1963/2006), evil resides in the lack of thoughtfulness, as is evident in her description of Eichmann:

> The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else. No communication was possible with him, not because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such. (p. 49)

His crimes were significant, and yet he himself lacked any extraordinary qualities. For Arendt, evil is not only organized violence against targeted people, but also the bureaucratic and banal non-thinking routines that underlie such violence. In Arendt's sense, banality of evil does not mean that is an everyday occurrence, but rather that these horrors can be thought of (in part) as the culmination of deeds by non-monstrous people (Novick, 1999, p. 135). Although some scholars interpret this non-thinking as being "mindless" (e.g., Waller, 2007, p.100), I prefer "thoughtlessness" to convey the pervasive danger of shallow thinking. Eichmann, of course, was more than a drone just following orders; however, the thoughts he had were only for himself; there was no thought of the public good. He was not stupid: "When Arendt says he was thoughtless, she means that Eichmann could not and did not think from the perspectives of others" (Berkowitz, 2014, section VI, para. 1). The banality of evil, thus, is a sort of anti-*action*.

The implications for past and present ordinary human beings are profound. Complicity for evil can be active or passive, and this latter sense—remaining unaware of the repercussions of our actions or inactions—can be just as destructive:

> Indeed, her indictment of Eichmann reached beyond the man to the historical world in which true thinking was vanishing and, as a result, crimes against humanity became increasingly "thinkable." The degradation of thinking worked hand in hand with the systematic destruction of populations. (Butler, 2011, para. 10)

Eichmann's example illustrates that any human being can be an active participant in evil, regardless of whether or not they intend to inflict evil consciously. If there had been no Eichmann, someone else could have easily filled his shoes—Eichmann himself was not

exceptional. This lack of monstrosity is disconcerting, as now much of society is implicated in the horrors of genocide. For social studies education, and indeed education in general, it is important to address this disconcerting conclusion in order to foster real possibilities that such horrors are not predetermined. If evil occurs when humans fail to think about their part in the world around them, then we can feel a sense of agency and responsibility to eliminate, modify, or control evil.

We must take seriously one implication from Arendt's observations: our potential to retreat from thinking or engaging with the plight of others in ways that allow violence to start or continue. Conversely, thinking about consequences and implications predisposes us to take *action* that can have a dramatic effect. Arendt (1963/2006) notes how the Nazis "possessed neither the manpower nor the will power to remain 'tough' when they met determined opposition" (p. 165). Thus, when the Nazis encountered resistance from groups, such as the fully informed Belgian Jews or the majority population of Denmark, the extermination of the Jews in that area was thwarted (Arendt, 1963/2006, pp. 166-175).

Although a controversial argument for Arendt to make at the time, she refuses to ascribe genocidal evil to religious or *a priori* grounds. Rather, as she is at pains to point out, we are not dealing here with transcendent evil but banal everyday choices. The Danes, in particular, revealed the power of disobedience to authority, even one as ruthless as the Nazi regime, as the majority of the Jews in Denmark escaped the Holocaust. The sense of agency and responsibility among many Danes—their sense that they could do something about their situation—was their strongest weapon against the Nazi plan for Jewish annihilation.

When we assume that evil is an obvious presence, such as its embodiment in the devil or in historical individuals like Hitler, we might fail to see the mundane actions and inactions that facilitate industrial-level atrocities:

> The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal. From the viewpoint of our legal institutions and of our moral standards of judgment, this normality was much more terrifying than all the atrocities put together, for it implied [that this new type of criminal] commits his crimes under circumstances that make it well-nigh impossible for him to know or to feel that he is doing wrong. (Arendt, 1963/2006, p. 276)

Contrary to what “we” think we should see, Eichmann was not a devilish figure but rather a very ordinary human being. What is potentially more frightening than how the devil might trick us into serving him, but how we ourselves can become a sort of devil ourselves, as what happened to Eichmann.

3.1.4: Relevant critiques and extensions of Arendt. Some notable historians have refuted Arendt’s interpretation of Eichmann as being completely ordinary; however, regardless of whether or not Arendt was duped by Eichmann’s self-representation, such a ruse was only possible because there were indeed “so many perpetrators of the kind he was pretending to be” (Browning, 2003, pp. 3-4; cited in Bernstein, 2005, p. 9). Hannah Arendt has faced harsh criticism over the years (e.g., Rosenbaum, 2009), particularly for perceived victim blaming. Conceptualizing Nazis like Eichmann as ordinary people instead of villains, however, does not place the responsibility on the victims. To address

such criticisms, Elizabeth Minnick (2014), a former student of Arendt, breaks down banal evil into two categories—intensive and extensive.

Intensive evils are massive in scale and perpetuated by a limited number of people who "stand in shuddering contrast with the lives others are leading around them in their times [and w]hen they burst into our lives, we are genuinely spectators, not participants, not enablers, and not perpetrators" (Minnick, 2014, p. 169). An example of this sort of evil would be a psychopathic mass murderer. Intensive evils are not systemic and thus are "precisely not ordinary" (Minnick, 2014, p. 169). In contrast, *extensive* evils are systemic and pervasive:

> the massive and monstrous harms carried out by many, many people for significant periods of times—months, years, decades, and more (slavery and sexualized violence: when has humanity been without these and others?). They are the evils of which we would not speak, of which we so often say, "unthinkable." (Minnick, 2014, p. 170)

Ordinary people considered to be decent citizens perpetuate extensive evil and the systemic level of the evil requires that sustaining it "be conventional to do its work as one's job, daily, day after day after day after day, with supper at home and picnics on the weekends" (Minnich, 2014, p. 170). Extensive evils would include Indian Residential Schools and lynchings in Canada and the United States. Minnick's extension of Arendt serves the very Arendtian purpose of promoting genuine public thinking:

> In general, now, "the banality of evil" means that "ordinary people," and not just Grand Villains, are capable of doing excessive harm. That is not wrong, but it is utterly inadequate, sliding as it does toward a notion that goes even further than

> collective responsibility toward once again swamping individual responsibility. If everyone is guilty, then no one bears actual responsibility. But collective responsibility and guilt together create an appealing position. The combination gives us company, lots of it, and that is a fine way to avoid those dark nights of the soul in which we take account of our lives. But moving in close, we cannot sustain that step outside, the already-clichéd "we're all capable…" in order to think afresh. Try this—find out that your loving uncle spent 30 years killing squirrels in the basement to rid the world of these vermin, and you will not just say, Ah, yes: we are all capable of that. We are all alike is not what Hannah Arendt meant; an avoidance of demonizing Nazis can go too far, just as imagining them as radically different from the rest of humanity in their unmatched monstrousness does. It is not an either/or judgment, monster, or every person. We need to think more carefully than that. (Minnick, 2014, pp. 164-165)

We can think and act in the space between blaming a single individual and diffusing blame to an amorphous "society" within which no one takes responsibility. It is all too easy to simplify our thinking, shutting down difficult knowledge. Existing in the tension is key to supporting our capabilities for *action* and thus avoiding the banality of evil. Refraining from postulating either/or scenarios reveals that there is both an individual *and* collective responsibility. There are larger systems in play for which one person cannot be held accountable, and yet individuals have some culpability for their role within those systems. People like Hitler and Eichmann are not solely responsible for what they did (e.g., they did not invent anti-Semitism or genocide), but they are not without responsibility either (e.g., Eichmann chose to pursue his occupation as logistical

manager). Extensive evils require a degree of complexity of thinking involving both a broad analysis of the ways evils emerge and an examination of individual roles. As such, I designed part of my research study (the task-based focus group) to ascertain the extent to which participants included views about individual and collective processes.

3.1.5: Educational Literature on Arendt. Arendt's influence on education has largely been focused on ideas related to *action* in terms of plurality and human potential, not on her idea of the banality of evil. Although existing scholarship provides valuable contributions to educational discourse for individual empowerment, direct engagement with Arendt's conceptualization of evil might similarly inspire students and teachers to embrace significant critical thinking about broad systems at work and our place within those systems.

3.1.5.1: Plurality and human potential. Biesta (2010b) examines the relationship between education and politics via Arendt to argue that democracy education should not be about preparing future citizens; rather, it should focus on learning from our political existence of plurality and difference. Similarly, Jones (2016) has conducted a seminar for practicing teachers during which they read Arendt's political theory in the context of the need for genuine thinking in classrooms, as education is an integral part of civilization and our potential renewal for a common world. Because Biesta (2010b) and Jones (2016) emphasize the sort of thinking that is independent from authority, but interconnected with other humans, they serve as an important reminder of what has the potential to be educational, rather than simply thoughtlessly plodding through the routines of schooling.

Other scholars have linked Arendtian thought to the purposes of education, particularly in terms of future potentials. Levinson (2010) deftly explains the shift from

education's purpose as about and for the development of the world to being for our individual lives, and thus argues that education needs to examine this problem of world alienation directly. In a more specific context, Kreber (2015) examines vocational education's potential to foster Arendtian *action* as a form of community education and agency while Duarte (2010) argues for a conceptualization of "educational thinking as a preparation for world-caring…. as the production of new metaphors, new ways of seeing the world" (p. 506). Along similar lines, Rømer (2013) engages with Arendt (among other philosophers) to emphasize that both thinking and action are vital "both individually and together in the educational renewal of society" (p. 272).

Conversely to the above discussion about what good education might look like, it is also important to examine the negative examples—what not to do in education. To this end, Spector (2014) thoughtfully examines the lessons from Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* as they apply to political and educational circumstances in the United States. Thoughtless routines of schooling are evident in a critique of increasing standardization by Hayden (2012), who engages with Arendt's notions of *plurality*, *natality*, and *action* to support creativity and unpredictability. Plurality is the natural state of political life that manifests in classrooms, a situation which arises from our uniqueness as human individuals despite our common humanity, thus prompting humans to ask questions about morality (Arendt, 1958/1998; Hayden, 2012, p. 243). *Natality* assumes an equal human ability to take *action* in the world (Hayden, 2012, p. 246), with *action* defined as a conception of politics based on a capacity to do something new, something unexpected (Arendt, 1958). Fostering *action* is paramount to thinking in an interconnected way with others, while remaining as an independent thinker who does not

follow others blindly. Hinchliffe (2010), like Hayden (2012), also engages with Arendt's notion of *action*, but extends it as a call for teachers to take up the task of fostering the capability for *action* among their students. Similarly, Veck (2013) calls for educators to invite their students to be thoughtful participants in the world. In the specific realm of citizenship in higher education, Lange (2012) interprets the incorporation of Arendtian *action* and *understanding* (the capacity to use knowledge meaningfully) as vital to counter neoliberal and market forces. Regardless of the context and focus, the aforementioned scholars find value in Arendt's political theory as it applies to education, particularly her theory of *action*. Contemplating the promotion of Arendtian *action* provokes thought into both curriculum and pedagogy. Why are we teaching what we are teaching? How are we interacting with others in the classroom? How might teachers think about those two questions with a view to encouraging inquiry and independent thinking?

Such ponderings are facilitated by thinking through teachers' potential. To this end, Wilson (2003) examines the capacity teachers have for agency and imagination through Maxine Greene's engagement with Hannah Arendt, particularly how teachers shape public spaces. In a conference paper, the same author, now published as Strong-Wilson (2016), explores the relationship between thinking and judging in the context of *natality* and *action*. Despite different foci, these two engagements with Arendtian thought work toward the potential that teachers have to create classrooms that are thoughtfully educational.

3.1.5.2: The banality of evil. While the many Arendtian educational scholars engage with the positive side of her political theory, such as *action* and natality, there are

a few scholars who have examined the implications of Arendt's banality of evil in terms of education. Lange (2012) gives a brief nod to the "thoughtlessness" that is part of the banality of evil in the context of preventing it through education for *action* (p. 6). Thus, the discussion of the banality of evil is relatively short and not the main focus. Gordon (1999) discusses the banality of evil in terms of day-to-day pedagogy. He calls for educators to avoid indicators of thoughtlessness in their teaching practice such as: using "clichés and stock phrases" as responses to student input, encouraging students' "blind devotion and admiration" to the teacher, and creating climates of "falsehood and self deception" (Gordon, 1999, pp. 26-28). Lange (2012) and Gordon (1999) provide valuable insights into pedagogy, but neither in the specific context of social studies nor in terms of students' perceptions of the processes of historical atrocities. Teaching students directly about Arendt's idea of evil, particularly in the context of social studies and history curriculum and pedagogy, is not addressed by current scholarship, but I discovered one curriculum document by a school district with such an engagement.

The Utica City School District (1976) in New York issued a curriculum redesign and teacher in-service document called, "The Nature of Good and Evil," which engages with Arendt's concept of the banality of evil directly. As part of Project SEARCH for an interdisciplinary humanistic curriculum, the authors of the document call for students to define good and evil for themselves and accept responsibility for their actions (Utica City School District, 1976). Through literature, film, and other media, Grade 10 students would develop an understanding of how their own (in)actions impact the world around them. This document provides a reading list for teachers, reading/viewing lists for students, as well as classroom activities and assignments. Although dated in some ways,

this is an exemplary work into exploring what it might mean to live together as human beings. As an extension of this dissertation, I have the goal of creating a similar teacher-oriented document for our contemporary Canadian context.

3.1.6: Summary of Arendt. Arendt's philosophical works, particularly *The Human Condition* (1958/1998) and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963/2006), reveal a banality of both good and evil. Arendt (1963/2006) challenged what had been commonly accepted at the time both morally and legally: "namely, that people who do evil deeds must have evil motives and intentions" (Bernstein, 2005, p. 7). I claim that discussing the *banality of evil* as it emerges in a classroom can also contribute toward a fruitful pondering of the processes of evil in historical and contemporary events. Ordinary humans perpetuate large-scale violence and thus it seems fitting that ordinary humans can take action and prevent or stop such violence. The heroes and villains of the past possessed no special qualities, just their willingness to think (or, in the case of villains, not think) about their interconnections with other human beings and the world around them. Heroes will break free from the banalities of their lives to create freedom; villains and their henchmen will not. Freedom in Arendt's sense is so much more than the freedom of mundane choices that liberalism cherishes. The assumption is that humans, *any* humans, can take *action*. Being *beneath* good and evil (rather than a Nietzschean sense of *beyond*) is an idea also espoused by Alain Badiou.

3.2: Alain Badiou

Like Arendt, Alain Badiou also refuses to simplify evil as a demonic force or an *a priori* fact. Rather, Badiou defines evil as the result of humans perverting what he calls *truth procedures* or *processes* (Badiou, 1998/2001). While Arendt (1963/2006) focuses

on the deeds of a particular man during the Holocaust/Shoah and the evil of not thinking, Badiou (1998/2001) looks not only to the Nazi regime but also to contemporary events to examine the nature of evil as a perversion of a truth procedure. Badiou (1998/2001) supplements Arendt as he, too, dissects a banal sense of evil. Evil results only from the potentialities of human good.

3.2.1: Background to Badiou's philosophy of evil. This section focuses on aspects of his philosophy pertinent to his understanding of evil; by no means is this section a comprehensive survey of all his ideas. Badiou begins with the ontological premise that all differences are insignificant: ''since differences are what there is, and since every truth is the coming-to-be of that which is not yet, so differences then are precisely what truths depose, or render insignificant'' (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 27). In the context of following a truth procedure, we must ponder our ethical subjectivity in relation to the void (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 25). The void is an inconsistent multiplicity, a sort of exponential multiple of multiples—a vanishing point. An encounter with the void is an opportunity to rethink all the points we took as the realities of our situation; we question what we had taken for granted. Our concept of reality is ruptured, opening up space for new thinking. As such, an encounter with the void metaphorically wakes us from the complacency of our daily lives. A person, thought, or really anything can instigate such an event, but we cannot predict or manufacture an event. We can, however, be attentive to an event's possibility (den Heyer & Conrad, 2011).

Events supplement our ordinary circumstances; we are what Badiou names "becoming subjects" taking part in a "trans-individual act" via an event, which is a "subjective" but "not individual… moment of creation whose radicality consists in the

fact that it does not originate in any structure supported within being or the situation, such as the socio-economic" (Critchley, 2012, p. 26). We must therefore remain steadfastly faithful to this event by moving within the situation, thinking about it in relation to the event, and finally inventing this new way of being whether it be in love, art, science, or politics (Badiou, 1998/2001, pp. 41-42). The uncontrollable nature of an event opens up potentialities that we did not previously realize; it does not set a firm path for us to follow. Unlike a law that must be followed, often in a very particular way, an event creates opportunity:

> [An event] is merely a proposition… The event creates a possibility but there, then, has to be an effort – a group effort in the political context, an individual one in the case of artistic creation – for this possibility to become real… Events are the creation in the world of the possibility of a truth procedure and not that which create this procedure itself. (Badiou & Tarby, 2010/2013, p. 10)

For Badiou, the only prescription is a call to be faithful to the truth procedure. In this sense Badiou is not constructing a philosophical system, but rather "a general anthropology of truth" (Barbour, 2010, p. 253). When an "event" occurs, we must remain faithful to this event by thinking about the present situation from the perspective of the event as "becoming subjects" (Badiou, 1998/2001, pp. 41-42). A new truth is one of many truths, not the only Truth, and thus many more events can happen. For example, Haydn had a truth procedure that broke through Baroque music, but this classical style is not an endpoint, but rather an example of a "truth that *forces* knowledges" (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 70). By "forces" Badiou is indicating that there is a struggle for a new truth to emerge; it must be forged despite the conservatism of the present situation. These new

truths do not negate those of the past, and similarly are not less true as other, newer truths emerge; rather, truths are more helpful in their contemporary context. There have been other truth procedures since the advent of classical music, as new knowledges continually emerge. Classical music remains, while new forms inspire new ways of being.

Badiou gives an illustrative example of an event by describing falling in love. Once this event happens, you reconsider who you are as a person and what you are doing in this world. You are no longer a single individual; you are intertwined with another in both physical and non-physical ways. This can be a terrifying prospect. You can then choose (or not) to pursue a truth procedure that results from an event and breaks through what you had previously considered to be common sense. Fidelity to a truth procedure is the essence of ethics. There is always only one question in the ethic of truths: "how will I, as some-one, *continue* to exceed my own being? How will I link the things I know, in a consistent fashion, via the effects of being seized by the not-known?" (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 50). Failing to follow a truth procedure is what Badiou characterizes as evil and can result from betrayal, mistaking simulacra for truth procedures, as well as the arrogance to impose your truths upon others.

3.2.2: Badiou on evil. *Betrayal* is the most mundane of the evils Badiou identifies. It is a failure to follow a truth procedure for such ordinary reasons such as corruption, exhaustion, or social discouragement. For example, Haydn could have easily given up on classical music when he faced opposition from those loyal to the normative Baroque style. Following a new path can be frightening to a becoming subject and the effort required to maintain a new way of thinking is no easy task.

A *simulacrum of truth* is a very dangerous form of evil. It occurs when a radical break in a situation convokes not the void but the "full" particularity or presumed substance of the situation with which we are dealing (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 73). The supposed novelty is, in fact, part of the situation already in existence. Thus, the pseudo-event, the simulacrum, "then become[s] *identified* with an already established group" (Smith, 2006, p. 96, emphasis original). This already established peoples, the pseudo-subjects, are the only ones addressed by the simulacrum, in contrast with an event that is open to any becoming subject. As previously noted (§3.2.1), a truth procedure results from an event, an encounter with the void, and this void is "the multiple of nothing, [and thus] neither excludes nor constrains anyone" (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 73). If we believe that we are on the path of truth but have not engaged in the void, then we are adhering to a simulacrum, not a truth. A simulacrum only appears to be an event: What the individual names as the site of the event, is only what superficially appears to be the site. Thus the individual remains an individual, and does not become a subject (Smith, 2006, p. 96). Whereas an encounter with the void is an opportunity to rethink all the points we took as the realities of our situation, thus opening up space for new thinking for anyone willing to engage with the truth procedure, a simulacrum reinforces something already in existence for a select group of people, thus preventing new thinking.

Badiou's primary example for a "simulacrum of an event" is the German Nazis of 1932–1945, which is one reason that Badiou's definitions of evil are directly pertinent to social studies education. Instead of seeking a break with the contemporary situation and the production of a new truth, the Nazis invoked the same sort of petty nationalism with which history is rife; the Nazi pursuit of truth really was nothing more than a "continuity

with [that which came] before…faithful only to the alleged national substance of a people" (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 73). The Nazis assumed one way to be German, one way to be a Jew, and so on. Becoming subjects could not be created because the Nazis had already preordained who was included (Aryans) and who was not (non-Aryans), and furthermore these tapped into preexisting notions of identity and politics. Thus, the Nazi "event" was a pseudo-event, a simulacrum.

Related to simulacrum of truths is Badiou's notion of *terror*. Those who challenge the adherence to a simulacrum are simply discarded as detrimental to the promised day-to-come. An example of terror would be the Jacobin Committee of Public Safety who guillotined not only those who were opposed to their version of the revolution but also those who were moderates. Some scholars of Badiou see some issues with the identifying something as simulacrum; for example, Taubman (2010) arguing that one might see the U.S.-led war on Iraq after the events of September 11, 2001 as equally as an event or a simulacrum (p. 202). In my interpretation of Badiou, I agree with Taubman that, given the details and duration of the invasion, it might be difficult to determine the status of that occurrence; however, I interpret the war on Iraq as *disaster*, the third and final of Badiou's evils, as the supposed quest for democracy was imposed.

We might consider *disaster* as the most obnoxious form of evil. Disaster consists of the imposition of a truth out of arrogance, attempting to make this truth objective and absolute; trying to make a single Truth applicable to everyone. In terms of the war on Iraq, members of the U.S. government believed that their vision of democracy was the one Truth for the rest of the world (but it should be noted that assumes completely "good" intentions, and thus the case to define the invasion as evil might be even more

heightened). Like victims of the mythological figure of Procrustes who literally forced his houseguests to fit the guest bed exactly by means of the tortures of stretching or amputation, populations can be seriously harmed by a one-Truth-fits-all that confuses subjective truth with objective knowledge, such as Charlemagne forcing people to convert to Christianity or die at the sword. Even supposedly good intentions can result in evil.

Evil, then, is a perversion only possible as a potential result of truth procedures in the form of *betrayal*, simulacrum-*terror*, and *disaster*: ''terror, betrayal, and disaster are what an ethic of truths... tries to ward off... And [it] is certain that there can be Evil only in so far as there proceeds a Good'' (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 71). It is not a matter of resisting evil but preventing it. Persevering with a truth procedure despite hardships and with a mind alert to the dangers of simulacra and hubris could subvert the creation or continuation of evil.

3.2.3: Educational literature on Badiou. Many scholars recently have engaged with Badiou's philosophy in the context of education. Although existing and emerging research on Badiou's relation to education in terms of ethics and equality provides valuable contributions to education, I argue that engaging specifically with Badiou's conceptualization of evil in terms of social studies curriculum and pedagogy is also valuable. Although some scholars address Badiou's definitions of evil (e.g., Taubman, 2010), these discussions are confined to the practices of teachers in general. I propose that teaching students these definitions of evil in the context of historical and contemporary events would be helpful.

An edited collection by den Heyer (2010) elaborates on Badiou's critique of contemporary education as based upon surveillance, identity as alienation and state ethics, and posits how we can instead develop an education by truths. The introductory chapter comments upon Badiou's significance, summarizes his ethics of truths, and relates them to education. Subsequent chapters relate Badiou to art education, to Lacan and the ethics of teaching, as well as to Dewey and curriculum leadership. Further elaboration of Badiou in the context of art education can be found in jagodzinski's (2010) article that examines the notion of *inaesthetics* to challenge both capitalist design innovation and Romantic idealism. Like jagodzinski (2010), Petersen (2010) calls for a new teaching paradigm based on Badiou's implicit ontology of learning, but in the context of poetry and the arts. The final two chapters of den Heyer's (2010) book provide a strong critique of contemporary economic management and power structures of education, highlighting the equality inherent in truth procedures and the beauty of creating a classroom open to eventualities. Attempts to reform education can be as exclusionary as the system they are trying to counter; however, integrating Badiou's ideas of truth procedures creates a classroom where many possibilities are present.

Bartlett (2006) exposes the rivalry between education by the state and an education by truths, an idea that he expands upon in his later book, *Badiou and Plato: An Education by Truths* (2011). He presents a new reading of Plato in light of Badiou's idea of education, which juxtaposes the common contemporary fascination with *state* schooling (i.e., training without wisdom or truth) and *opinions* (in Badiou's sense of the encyclopaedia). With Badiou's six components of truth procedures as chapters (state, site, event, fidelity, subject, and the generic), Bartlett (2011) relates Badiou's philosophy to

Plato's subjective, offers a conceptualization of non-state education, and affirms the link between truth and education. Like the many scholars of Arendtian *action*, Bartlett (2011) provides a meaningful framework to rethink pedagogy. In this case, Bartlett (2011) calls for an education based upon wisdom instead of sophistry (p. 3; den Heyer, 2014). Specifically, he engages with Plato's critique of sophistry:

> Plato's criticism of sophistry turns on two related things; ignorance and conceit. What the sophist is ignorant of is that his belief or opinion (they are the same thing) is not knowledge. In this sense the sophist imitates in ignorance of the fact that he imitates. (Bartlett, 2011, p. 44)

I relate such ignorance to the banality of evil; thoughtlessness is an ever-present danger to society in general and education specifically. Hollow thinking is schooling/sophistry, not education. Sophistry involves reasoned arguments, even logic, but not truth—and especially not a truth procedure in Badiou's sense. There is no openness with sophistry, only a defined outcome. Thus, an inquiry-driven classroom open to truth procedures must be wary of sophistry, which is, in a sense, a form of banality of evil due to its lack of thinking in a public sense.

The notion of equality is another valuable extension of Badiou in an educational context. Barbour (2010) engages with Badiou and Rancière to challenge the politics of difference and encourage a democratic approach to education. In Barbour's reading of Rancière, he understands equality as "an equal capacity to generate a new distribution of the sensible" (p. 261) and is "the condition rather than the goal of genuinely democratic political statements" (p. 260). By distribution of the sensible, Barbour (2010) is referring to Rancière's aesthetic regime, or form of organization, that determine the possibilities

for what people can think and do. Democracy, then, occurs when there is a new distribution of the sensible. As Barbour (2010) states: "[P]olitics involves a moment of 'dissensus', or an antagonism that is not containable within 'the opposition of interests and opinions'" (p. 260). In Badiou's terms, there is a political event, which similarly does not require anyone to have special status or characteristics. What is required is the sort of thinking that is independent from authority:

> Truth, then, is not the result of a laborious process of self-reflection, *much less something that can be arrived at through the protocols of instruction or submission to a master*. Instead, a truth-event is something that almost miraculously happens. (p. 253, emphasis added)

Truth cannot be imposed; it must emerge. How might we take this up in our system of education? For den Heyer and Conrad (2011), the theory of truth procedures from events can frame curricula in a way that supports meaningful social justice aims. By seeing differences as moot and arranging knowledge so that students and teachers encounter their privilege-ignorance nexus, both personally and structurally, enables them to see their agency in, and responsibility for, the world. Any human is capable of a truth procedure, just like anyone can fall in love. Thus, identity politics can shut down the possibilities for truth-events, such as the principles of inclusion and representation, both of which suggest that "all subject-positions are reducible to interests, or can be located within a grid of recognizable power-relations" (Barbour, 2010, p. 253). Instead, it is better suited to embark on an ethical journey to foster an environment of equality and insight, both of which are fundamental aspects of a socially just society.

Such ethical journeys call for an "arrangement of knowledge," as explored in den Heyer's (2009a) article on "education as an affirmative invention." It behooves us to consider and debate how we might organize curricula and create "institutional space for truths to emerge from such creative and inventive potential" (den Heyer, 2009a, p. 460). As such, den Heyer (2009a) points to examining "probability reasoning about futures more desirable and those less so" as a site of educational potential (p. 460). It is all too easy to merely predict the future, without a close examination of why we deem one scenario more probable than other (i.e., how the situation might feel prescribed), and thus limiting discussion over how things might be different. It is valuable to devote time to such discussions because new ideas, and thus new truth procedures, have the space to emerge. It should be noted, however, that looking to universal human capabilities, although inspiring on a number of levels, must nonetheless be careful not to shut down the lived experiences of those underserved by our present system:

> Applying Badiou to education requires a vigilance to ensure that his work is not used to diminish the voices, perspectives, or agency of those who bear the brunt of all the forms exclusion takes. Just as importantly, anyone using his philosophical concepts must refuse the "disaster" that is to hear others only through prescribed categories. (den Heyer, 2009a, p. 463)

It is imperative that an educational (or any) engagement with Badiou's philosophy is not used to perpetuate existing divisions among humans. Much like Arendtian *action*, while the focus is on humans' equal capacity, we ought not forget that external factors can work to limit those capacities. An ethics of teaching thus emerges, which can take a variety of forms. Taubman (2010), for example, engages with Badiou and Lacan to critique

mainstream ethics of teaching, particularly conceptualizing evil as *a priori* instead of Badiou's sense of evil as a failure or perversion of a truth procedure. Instead, Taubman (2010) posits that an approach to teaching based on questioning and analysis is a more fruitful educational endeavor.

Such classroom environments, with careful thought to curriculum and pedagogy. are important to consider on a larger scale—the scale of districts and systems. Schooling has been undergoing a process of "customerization" in the same vein as the service industry. Teachers, instructors, and professors are responsible for helping students obtain the grades and/or training with the main goal of earning income and status, but Badiou's philosophy can be a basis to think politically rather than managerially (Strhan, 2010). Through an analysis of the purposes of schooling and Badiou's idea of the event, den Heyer (2015) elaborates on possible ways to engage in *education* rather than more managerial aims like qualification and socialization, including meaningful engagement with Indigenous perspectives. Like Taubman (2010), I call for an examination of Badiou's ethics of evil in an educational context; however, part of my argument is to directly engage with Badiou's philosophy with students to foster an environment that both questions our political status quo and fosters discussion of how else we might exist together in potentially less-harmful ways.

3.2.4: Summary of Badiou. Badiou's philosophy, particularly as it relates to evil, provides a potentially fruitful path to open up the educational aspect of schooling, rethinking the "social" of social studies. Education scholars have engaged with the heart of Badiou's philosophy—our capacity for truth procedures—as well as ethics of evil to reimagine both structures and attitudes inside and outside the classroom. An extension of

these scholarly endeavors is to engage with Badiou's ethics of evil directly in the classroom, in conjunction with Arendt's banality of evil.

Dramatic historical atrocities like the Holocaust/Shoah, among others, have highlighted the dangers of individual citizens following the dictates of their political leaders without questioning or even thinking. How might we return "thinking" to politics? Thinking of past atrocities as manifestations of radical evil has failed to prevent them from happening again, as there have been other genocides in Rwanda, Bosnia, Darfur, Cambodia, and other places. Perhaps considering a more human evil might provide an incentive to hold our leaders accountable and prevent the slippery slope of violence and horror. Such a human evil could be conceived as a banal perversion of a truth procedure; for example, by thinking of the banal reasons Arendt (1963/2006) provides to explain why one might betray a truth procedure or even adhere to a dangerous simulacrum resulting in terror and disaster.

3.3 Jean Baudrillard

Jean Baudrillard calls for a distinction between *Symbolic Evil* and *moral evil*, a distinction that relates to his interpretation of our postmodern condition. While the ideas of Arendt and Badiou, I argue, are directly and obviously related to social studies curriculum, Baudrillard relates more to a question of pedagogy. If, as teachers, we want our students to feel capable of taking Arendtian *action*, how might we foster a sense of possibility for radical change? Baudrillard provides a provoking response to that question.

3.3.1: *Symbolic Evil* and moral evil. According to Baudrillard (1990/1993), there have been troublesome developments in our notion of evil. Our current paradigm is based

upon autonomous individuals and the incorporation of consumerist “values” (e.g., buying/acquiring more “things”), while progressing toward an antiseptic society of boundless growth without evil:

> We are now governed not so much by growth as by growths. Ours is a society founded on proliferation, of growth which continues even though it cannot be measured against any clear goals. An excrescential society whose development is uncontrollable, occurring without regard for self-definition, where accumulation of effects goes hand in hand with the disappearance of causes. (Baudrillard, 1990/1993, p. 34)

We increase in population, territory, use of natural resources, and accumulation of objects (including land and even people, in some cases). Meanwhile, we attempt to eradicate evil and create an antiseptic society without misfortune.

Evil, for Baudrillard, denotes something very particular. He defines it as a vital force of radical change that can reinvigorate our world. In this sense, Evil is entwined with Good instead of being its opposite. This definition stands in marked contrast with the more mundane conceptualization of evil as merely a “bad” or “unfortunate” thing that happens. Following Baudrillard (1990/1993) and William Pawlett (2014), I will use Evil (with an upper case “E”) when it is discussed in Baudrillard’s sense of a mythic, religious or symbolic sense, and then I will use evil (with a lower case “e”) to refer to a more generic moral sense of evil. This distinction between Evil and evil is important in Baudrillard’s philosophy as he views Good and Evil as inseparable, not as rival forces; rather, it is only their abstractions into good and evil that they become oppositional as moral categories, seeking to eradicate each other. Thus, the construction of good guys

versus bad guys is not the same as a creative and productive Evil. Symbolic Evil diverts and reverses, and is “intelligent…in the sense that it is implied automatically in every one of our acts” (Baudrillard, 2004/2005, p. 160). Evil cannot be reduced to anything in particular, but rather is omnipresent. As such, Evil understands us (rather than the other way around) and is a force for metamorphosis and “becoming” and thus can be seen positively in great revolutionaries who tap into Evil as “the energy of challenge, defiance, creativity, and renewal” (Pawlett, 2014, §3, para. 1). Evil exposes humanity and all of its metaphorical warts, which gives us an opportunity to change. This sense of Evil is then necessary to avoid stagnation, such as breaking paradigms in art and creating something unexpected by challenging contemporary norms of aesthetics, as well as to act out against oppression, such as those who engage in civil disobedience against cruel governments. Moral evil (with the lower case “e”), unlike Symbolic Evil, is perceived as a malign force projected as a product of the actions of an other (i.e., someone else, never “us”), such as a villain doing his/her/its evil deeds.

Both Evil and evil have disappeared from contemporary society because the “culture of global techno-modernity” enforces a “hegemonic culture of happiness” (Pawlett, 2014, §3, para. 2; cf. Baudrillard, 2004/2005, p. 139). We are commanded to be happy and enjoy. This culture reveals an “excess of positivity so exacerbated that negativity has been forbidden altogether” (Boldt-Irons, 2001, p. 84), thus creating an artificially antiseptic environment as we seek to expunge evil from the world. What is unpleasant becomes evil and therefore must be eliminated and never spoken of again. Baudrillard (2004/2005) sees this dispersion of evil as a source of confusion resulting from associating happiness with good and misfortune with evil. Such a confusion arose

from the assumption that human beings are naturally good—the doxa of rational Man present in secular humanism and some forms of Christianity (p. 139). In other words, when “we” (as humans) feel smugly superior in our ways of being, and deny the radical power of Evil, we focus on the wrong things. Those who consider themselves to be good fail to see the ambivalence or blurring between Good and Evil; rather, they create an “illusory identity” based on minimizing or eliminating misfortunes such as poverty, violence, and death (Pawlett, 2007, p. 129). We identify ourselves as “good” people if we help soften current miseries instead of seeking to create something new by thinking radically. Instead of seeing Evil as a potential creative force, evil is relegated to the sidelines with the hopes of obliteration, such as the War on Drugs.

The imposition of control over Evil, despite some minor successes over misfortune, inevitably will fail. For Good to rise above bureaucratic authority it requires Evil’s creative energy for defiance and renewal, and yet the system of law, designed to combat evil, does everything in its power to eliminate it: “The great religious and political revolutionaries (Jesus, Che Guevara, Nelson Mandela) are clearly ‘Evil’ from the perspective of the system of law and order they challenge, and they are punished accordingly” (Pawlett, 2014, §3, para. 1). Such bold actions, however, are not always for the public good—the Unabomber or Osama Bin Laden arguably are also working in service of Symbolic Evil, neither of whose actions would be argued as “good” things. Thus, Symbolic Evil may, in fact, overlap with moral evil—but conflating the two does not allow for generative rethinking of how we might live together.

According to Baudrillard, modern Western society divided good and evil in the hopes of eliminating evil, but the association of evil with misfortune and good with

happiness does not prevent duality from reappearing and fracturing happiness, “making it unbearable, diverting happiness and misfortune into despair—the despair of having everything and nothing” (Pawlett, 2014, §5, para. 2). The management of evil has dispersed it throughout the world:

> [T]he anamorphosis of modern forms of Evil knows no bounds. In a society which seeks—by prophylactic measures, by annihilating its own natural referents, by whitewashing violence, by exterminating all germs and all of the accursed share, by performing cosmetic surgery on the negative—to concern itself solely with quantified management and with the discourse of the Good, in a society where it is no longer possible to speak Evil, Evil has metamorphosed into all the viral and terroristic forms that obsess us. (Baudrillard, 1990/1993, p. 81)

Baudrillard’s use of the phrase “accursed share” stems from Georges Bataille’s theory of consumption (1967/1988). The accursed share is the excess, the superfluous energy that must be vented in some way in order to avoid catastrophe. There is a choice to vent it through such things as artistic endeavors, non-procreative sexuality, and public events, or through violent means such as war. The Romans recognized this, giving us the phrase “bread and circuses,” as the emperors distracted the people with free food and gladiatorial games to vent the accursed share in a way that did not threaten societal hierarchies. Although Baudrillard and Bataille disagree over where this excess of energy originates (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 194), both agree that to deny the accursed share is dangerous. Whatever we do, evil is transparent in the sense of showing through; it “transpires through everything that strives to ward it off” (Baudrillard, 2000/2003, p. 36). Our society does not allow for generative violence that has a clear origin/cause and

end/effect—instead, the violence is “virtual” and “reactive;” it “gives birth to nothing whatever, neither founds nor generates anything whatever” (Baudrillard, 2000/2002, p. 92).

The U.S.-led War on Terror sought to eliminate the evil of terrorism, where extreme defiance, and the equally extreme management of that defiance, takes an enormous toll of not only human life, but also all other entities on Earth. By striving for an antiseptic society free from evil, we create a new problematic:

> [W]e become even more vulnerable to new forms of the accursed share that we secrete as a defense mechanism against a greater danger, the catastrophe of unchecked growth and a liberation that continues to radiate in all directions. This new form of accursed share is comprised of an energy source that is violent, that opposes, that resurrects what is other, what is foreign. (Boldt-Irons, 2001, p. 85)

Using a medical example to elucidate Baudrillard’s thought, as a society we have been using superfluous antibiotics for a perceived threat, something we saw as evil and yet was merely a common virus that keeps immune systems in check. Now, by seeking to eliminate such threats, we have created superbugs immune to our antibiotics and thus wreak havoc on our bodies and minds and revealing reality to be something other than what we believed or hoped.

3.3.2: Simulacra. Peter McLaren (1999) states: “Learners must learn how to actively make connections between their own lived conditions and being, and the making of reality that has occurred to date” (p. 51). But what is reality? In our contemporary times, we have the hyperreal, which is “more real than real” (Gane, 2010, p. 96). We

have models of what is supposedly real, but there is no original for those models. According to Baudrillard (1983), the successive phases of the image are as follows:

> –it [the image] is the reflection of a basic reality
>
> –it masks and perverts a basic reality
>
> –it masks the absence of a basic reality
>
> –it bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.
>
> (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 11)

Once images no longer reflect basic reality, they correspond with three orders of simulacra: *counterfeit*, an imperfect copy of reality; *production*, a copy that is equivalent to the original reference (and thus the copy can obliterate the original referent); and *simulation*, a pure simulacrum that creates hyperreality (Baudrillard, 1983). Modern humans are living in a time of this final phase of the image, the third order of simulacra: "It is reality itself today that is hyperrealist" (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 147). Thus, according to Baudrillard (1979/1990), harboring the idea that there is a real world is, in itself, a cultural construction. [4] Baudrillard's understanding of simulacra is not that it is a copy of something real, but a truth in itself that obscures that *the truth* does not exist. One of Baudrillard's best examples of this is Disneyland. Many assume that Disneyland is a fiction based upon a particular, idealized version of real life, but this theme park is no different than institutions that are considered to be legitimately representative of one's situation; they all "reinvent and recycle lost dreams and illusions" (Gane, 2010, p. 96). One's supposed *reality* is just as fake as Disneyland; or, Disneyland is just as real as what is often referred to as "reality." With Hollywood actors like Reagan (with his Strategic

[4] Baudrillard, here, has a strong link to Lacan: "Lacan's *Real*, *imaginary* and *symbolic* can be found specularly inverted into Baudrillard's *obscene*, *imaginary* and *real* respectively" (Proto, 2013, para. 2)

Defense Initiative program nicknamed "Star Wars") as former presidents and the video game-esque nature of the media coverage of the two Gulf Wars, it is easy to see the "(con)fusion of science fiction and reality" in our supposedly "real" lives (Genosko, 1999, p. 79). Other examples of the degree of hyperreality and simulation are advertisements, films, and products that tap into norms of masculinity and femininity, while simultaneously creating those norms:

> It is impossible, then, to separate a true or original form of masculinity or femininity from a false or imaginary form. All postures of masculinity and femininity are "simulacra," in Baudrillard's terms—copies that refer to no original but that ceaselessly generate new copies. He calls the resulting environment—one in which we can pinpoint no reference points for truly interpreting people, objects, and situations—a "hyperreal" one. (Baudrillard & Lane, 2012, p. 287)

Our hyperreal world throws many of our comforting ideals about reality into disarray.

3.3.2: Educational literature on Baudrillard. There are several provoking works that engage with Baudrillard in the context of education, but none that work directly with Symbolic Evil. Most published material on Baudrillard and education engages with his idea of simulacrum as well as his critique of contemporary capitalism.

Some extant articles deal with simulacrum in the context of education and educational research in general, such as Moran and Kendall (2009), who claim that even the most rigorous quantitative research *produce* rather than *report* on reality:

> [I]t is interesting to observe that they [referring to two representative education scholars] are both oriented by the assumption that there is a something called

> education that exists independently of the methodologies, comments, curricula designs, testing regimes, forms of discrimination and eventual economic differentiation that education supports and so on. (p. 333)

Moran and Kendall (2009) question the seemingly constant thrust of research to uncover something real, a sort of “truth game” (p. 334), thus failing to see the simulacrum of education. Other scholars also engage with simulacra, but in specific educational contexts. Brabazon (2011), for example, engages with the confusion, antipathy, and amorphous mix of images and ideas resulting from the layers of simulacra to explore a new matrix for media literacy, one that can help move learners from one stage of literacy to another with active inquiry that recognizes complexities. Through an examination of how models of literacy (and culture) have been flattened and reified, Brabazon (2011) turns to Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulation*—in particular, the irony of the oft-cited “quotation” from Ecclesiastes that is fake (p. 216). In a way Brabazon (2011) seems to articulate an underlying and resolving sense of reality, which runs contrary to Baudrillard, but nonetheless there is an important lesson about media literacy, such as developing the awareness that clichés in media have largely replaced journalism.

In addition to the specific idea of simulacra, educational researchers have tapped into Baudrillard’s critique of contemporary capitalism. Casey (2011) critiques the imposition of the needs of the capitalist economy on public education via Baudrillard’s idea of commodity fetishism; i.e., socially-constructed needs divorced from actual human needs, an obsession with accumulating items without an actual function. Students’ needs are often cited as the justification for changes in schooling, and their needs are interpreted as serving a capitalist end, such as Obama seeing the purpose of schools as job

qualification (Casey, 2011, p. 77). This hearkens to Biesta's (2010a) question of what is educational about education. Mere qualification is not enough to constitute an educational pursuit. Students ought not to be commodities.

There is another critique of commodification, capitalism, and schooling in a brief article by Humphreys (2010) about virtual classrooms. His article engages with Baudrillard's connection between power and the mastery of simulated space. Through an examination of *Second Life* (a 3D virtual world), particularly virtual classrooms in held in that arena, Humphreys (2010) explores the goal of corporations to increase their profits outside of *Second Life* by mapping behavior within that virtual space. This particular example speaks to the broader problematic discussed by Casey (2011)—the pervasive commodification of schools and schooling. Norris (2006) accepts Baudrillard's account of commodification, and sees Arendt's concept of natality as the appropriate response. Our public realm is endangered by our need "to differentiate ourselves from others and assert our identity, to mark ourselves as different and unique" (Norris, 2006, pp. 475-476), especially through capitalist consumption. Rather than seeing students as purchasers of commodities, or even commodities themselves, Norris (2006) prefers to view them as a "social investment" (p. 471). Our ability to hoard objects or money does not define our human capabilities. An education involves natality and *action*—the fostering of our innate abilities to think in a public sense.

3.3.3: Summary of Baudrillard. Although not a popular choice among education scholars, Baudrillard provides an opportunity to meaningfully rethink social studies pedagogy. Through discussions about Symbolic Evil and moral evil, as well as questioning our assumptions of reality, there is potential to foster a sense of

empowerment in our classrooms for teachers and students alike. The recognition of Symbolic Evil reveals that there is always the potential for something new—our future is not prescribed. I see this as an important addition to Arendt's political theory. What is the point in taking Arendtian *action* if we see a prescribed future? Opening up the possibilities for radical change is a fruitful path for education, particularly if we (as general members of society as well as educational researchers and teachers) see students as social investments rather than economic ones. This is not to say that we ignore qualification and socialization; rather, this is a call for subjectification as a more helpful educational aim (Biesta, 2010a). Just as Badiou's philosophy ought not to gloss over the very real struggles that result from identity issues (particularly racism and other forms of bigotry), the call for Baudrillard's Symbolic Evil does not negate the horrific occurrences of poverty and violence (what we might label as "misfortunes"). Although an illusory identity predicated on eradicating all misfortunes (as opposed to challenging deeper issues in play) is not helpful to ameliorate our human condition, neither is allowing others to suffer.

3.4: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

These two philosophers have written both together and separately with a variety of foci. For my purposes, I will explore Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of *order-words* from their joint publication, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980/2008). This book, the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, explores a variety of subjects—for the sake of brevity I am limiting my discussion to this one topic. While Arendt, Badiou, and Baudrillard help me conceptualize what might be educational about education in the context of social studies,

Deleuze and Guattari's order-words are helpful for my more specific purposes of dissecting political rhetoric of evil and its affects and effects.

3.4.1: Order-words. Language does not function only to represent or as a connective vehicle to some external referent. According to the philosophy of Deleuze and intellectual activism of Guattari (1980/2008), language transforms us, not physically, but in terms of our social position, or how we interact with others (Bryant, 2011, para. 7). For example, when a judge deems someone "guilty," the verdict changes a *person* into a *convict*. There is an "incorporeal transformation" that involves a change in *status* of a body or the change in its *relations* to other bodies; for example, when this person is on trial, the proceedings and the sentencing directly affect the body and its relationship to other bodies, most notably being "the transformation of the accused into a convict [as] a pure instantaneous act or incorporeal attribute that is the expressed of the judge's sentence" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2008, pp. 80-81), and also when the convict's body is confined and submitted to prison routine and the accompanying threats to that body within that structure.

Order-words are "not a particular category of explicit statements (for example, in the imperative), but the relations of every word or every statement to implicit presuppositions…" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2008, p. 79). In other words, we are not defining order-words grammatically as a particular type of command; rather, we are defining them by the assumptions they both tap into and create. They are like computer passwords—they give power, and take it away. Order-words can shut down freedom and even the act of thinking itself, and thus are distinctly political.

Evil is an order-word. This word morphs an ordinary human into a *villain*. The application of the word "evil," like the word "guilty," can change social positions in a profoundly negative way. In the context of social studies education, evil as an order-word is particularly relevant to issues of political rhetoric and hate speech. The political invocation of evil can have catastrophic consequences. An extreme example would be Hitler's description in *Mein Kampf* (1925/2001) that "the personification of the devil as *the symbol of all evil* assumes the living shape of the Jew" (p. 293, emphasis added). Labelling a group as evil taps into powerful images from religion, popular media, and other sources. However, most importantly, this label of evil is its own force that influences what we think and what we do.

3.4.2: Educational literature on Deleuze and Guattari. Numerous educational scholars have drawn upon Deleuze's solo and collaborative works with Guattari to engage with their singular philosophy of difference in generative ways. This brief literature review will focus on key authors in the field at present, and thus is by no means exhaustive.

Carlin and Wallin's edited collection, *Deleuze & Guattari, politics and education: For a people-yet-to-come* (2014), mobilizes the revolutionary nature of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy in the context of educational theory and practice. A diverse variety of chapters work together to challenge the educational clichés, philosophies of transcendence, identity politics, and nihilism that plague Western education. Along a similar vein, Wallin (2010) invites educational researchers and artists to rethink what *currere* might do vis-à-vis radical difference and thus challenge the legacy of transcendence and representational present in education.

Inna Semetsky has produced numerous volumes linking Deleuze and education together. Semetsky's book, *Deleuze, Education and Becoming* (2006) explores a variety of becomings (other, sign, language, rhizome, nomad, and child) in the context of education. An edited collection, *Nomadic Education: Variations on a Theme by Deleuze and Guattari* (Semetsky, 2008), explores a philosophy of education linked to Deleuze and Guattari, providing historical background, encouraging creative explorations in education, and providing provocations for future research. Semetsky and Masny then continued this trajectory of educational becoming with an edited collection, *Deleuze and Education* (2013). This collection consists of four assemblages: "The Art of Teaching/Teaching the Arts"; "Inside/Outside Classroom"; "Mathematics and Science"; and a less subject-specific curriculum exploration in "Life, Sign, Time".

Masny's edited collection, *Cartographies of Becoming in Education: A Deleuze-Guattari Perspective* (2013), maps curricular and pedagogical pursuits by engaging with bodily affects in a variety of contexts—ethology, teaching, learning, curriculum, teacher education and technology in relation to visual arts, music, mathematics, theatre, workplace literacy, second language education, and architecture. A similarly varied collection edited by Davies and Gannon, *Pedagogical Encounters* (2009), discusses learning spaces in diverse settings with a view to ethical encounters with difference.

Cole (2011) reveals opportunities to escape "the program" (i.e., the confines of the status quo in education and politics) by engaging with the interstices and crossing points between the known and unknown. Thus, this work is steeped in the potential for new ways of teaching and learning. Cole (2011) seeks to "think through the questions about life with respect to education" (p. 2), such as the dangers of utilitarian and

thoughtless teacher training. I interpret this work as very much in the spirit of Arendtian *action*, despite the fact that it stems from a different philosophical basis.

There are also books that engage with Deleuze and Guattari in more specific educational contexts; for example, Kaustuv (2003) examines teacher becomings in an innovative urban school. In the context of early childhood education, Olsson (2009) examines movement and experimentation, and Sellers (2013) that “re(con)ceives” curriculum, exploring what it might mean to children. On the other end of the spectrum, the lifelong learning sector, Beighton (2015) examines discourses of creativity and ethics using an analysis of the cinema of Michelangelo Antonioni. Jorgensen and Yob (2013) engage with Deleuze and Guattari in the specific subject area of music education, judging some of the metaphors from *A Thousand Plateaus* as potentially sparking insight about educational thought and practice, although deeming the book unsuitable as a complete philosophy of music education. Thompson and Cook (2013) engage with Deleuze’s concepts of series, events, copies, and simulacra to critique standardized audit practices in schools. A final example would be Genosko’s (2002) examinations of Guattari’s thoughts on pedagogical interventions in clinical, rather than traditionally educational, settings. These works speak to the open system apparent in Deleuze and Guattari’s works in a variety of contexts, an education of the senses that avoids being prescriptive.

There is little scholarship, however, in the context of Deleuze and Guattari’s relevance to social studies education. This is an emerging field. A recent doctoral dissertation provides insights into economics education, economic subjectivity, teacher education, and teacher subjectivity (Crews Adams, 2016). Drawing upon Deleuze and Guattari’s theories of desire and becoming as well as theories of capitalistic production to

theorize her data, Erin Crews Adams' (2016) findings provide powerful counternarratives for secondary and undergraduate education, particularly discussions that are key to social studies, such as militarization and intolerance coexisting amid commitments to peace and nonviolence. By critiquing capitalism, a driving force behind not only military activities, but also peaceful consumerist ones, Crews Adams (2016) calls for a questioning of the neoclassic basis upon which economics education is founded (pp. 228-229). Drawing from Deleuze and Guattari's theories of desire and becoming, Crews Adams (2016) examines everyday experiences with capitalism and the oppression within such experiences, even an experience as simple as walking around a grocery store.

Education scholars have engaged with Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy in a variety of contexts, many of which rely on ideas of becoming, desire, and ethical encounters with difference. These works provide ways we might rethink our educational situation, allowing students to experience an inquiry-driven classroom where ideas and activities can emerge.

3.4.3: Summary of Deleuze and Guattari. The work of Deleuze and Guattari as well as the educational scholars who engage with their ideas, are varied and numerous. For my purposes, the concept of order-words is of particular significance in the context of social studies education, given the discipline's focus on political literacy in a meaningful way. Certainly it behoves social studies educators to ask students to learn political parties and how to vote; however, in the service of thinking independently from authority, but interconnected with others, students benefit from learning how they might navigate political rhetoric and the material effects of language.

3.5: Summary of Philosophical Commitments

What might make systems of schooling more educational? Hannah Arendt, Alain Badiou, Jean Baudrillard, as well as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari combine together to provide potentials for new ways we might imagine education generally and social studies specifically. Through conceptualizations of evil and ideas related to evil, the educational question can thus become: How can we arrange knowledge in such a way as to affirm life, instead of stopping at studying and perhaps redeeming past horrors? (den Heyer, 2009a).

Arendt (1958/1998, 1963/2006) speaks to human capacities to take *action*, and the consequences when we do not (the banality of evil). This call for thoughtfulness, as opposed to thoughtlessness, relies on a profoundly egalitarian premise—that all humans are capable of taking *action*, regardless of age. It is often glibly stated that "kids today" are somehow inferior or troublesome; thus, the discourse that youths are capable of *action* (and thus its opposite, banality of evil) is profoundly different and necessitates a different attitude in and out of the classroom. For my work, this attitude is the core of a disposition I wish to foster in general, as well as in my own classroom. I argue that seeing historical and contemporary figures who perpetuate systemic harm in light of the banality of evil helps foster such a disposition, because the ordinary elements of what we might label extraordinary (e.g., a genocide) are exposed. My desire, then, is to instigate the sort of thinking that questions authority while supporting a public good.[5]

Exposing the ordinary elements of past and present extraordinary events, in my view, requires thinking about the processes in play. Although it is fruitful to look at the individual level of thoughtlessness, I contend that more explanation is needed. For this

[5] And here, I extend Arendt's sense of "the public" beyond the human, to both the inhuman and nonhuman.

task, I turn to Badiou. To emphasize Arendt's premise that men like Eichmann were not mindless drones, but rather self-absorbed, it behooves us to ponder the complexities of intentions. Badiou's identification of evil's simulacrum is beneficial in this context. If one is not thinking about how others are affected, what is one thinking about? Fidelity to a fake truth process, a simulacrum, demands the sort of adherence that denies thinking in a public sense.

Another way that critical thoughtfulness can be diminished is through political rhetoric of fear (which may or may not be linked to simulacrum). Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2008) can help the general population dissect political rhetoric, providing a meaningful avenue for political literacy and the sort of awareness that is required for thinking in a public sense. By assessing the bodily affects and cognitive effects that the word evil has as an order-word, students and teachers can guard against these political invocations.

Arendt (1958/1998; 1963/2006) calls for independent thoughtfulness, while Badiou (1998/2001) actively seeks ways to encourage "affirmative inventions of alternative personal and social realities" (den Heyer, 2009a, p. 441) and education can be one of those avenues. If students and teachers are to affirm life and take *action* during these dark times rife with systemic injustice, Baudrillard's (1990/1993) theory of Symbolic Evil is helpful in discouraging a sense of fatalism. The recognition that radical change can, and should, be encouraged is the sort of thinking that I feel we all need in our contemporary context. Living in the Anthropocene can take two broad paths. One path is to trudge along like nothing is wrong, with corporate capitalism and consumerism remaining intact. My preferred path, however, is to provide the spaces and places for new

ways we, as humans, might live together. This reimagining, although not prescriptive, requires rethinking the "social" in social studies. My educational pursuit involves engaging with evil as a conduit for thinking. Which definitions might be helpful for reimagining how humans interact with each other as well as other entities, which ones are not? I claim that Arendt's banality of evil, Badiou's three types of evil, and Baudrillard's Symbolic Evil are all generative definitions that can provoke thinking in a public sense, despite the differences in those definitions and the philosophies that underlie them. Each of these definitions of evil, as well as Deleuze and Guattari's concept of order-words, provide theoretical bases for interpreting participant responses from my research. The combination of provoking commentary by high school students and a philosophical engagement establish an area of research in social studies education that engages with the effects and affects of evil in relation to curriculum and pedagogy concerning historical and contemporary events.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH APPROACH

I prefer the term “research approach” to “methodology” for two main reasons. Firstly, the appeal of phenomenography to me is as a method, not its later development as a methodology (See §4.1.2). Secondly, “research approach” better captures the idea that I am always approaching the participant responses; I can make no claims that I will fully capture their understandings. Rather, the situation is a constant dance between participants and the researcher. The openness that phenomenography has for gathering exploratory responses makes it preferable for my study over a survey or other methods that rely on researcher-determined definitions of evil.

Before deciding upon phenomenography, I had an idea for a quasi-experimental design to ascertain how teaching a particular definition of evil might change how students interpreted and extrapolated from social studies content. However, given that there was no baseline for youths’ conceptualizations of evil (as explained in Chapter 2), I felt that the best way to proceed was to ascertain these, and this is how my central research question (*What conceptualizations of evil do secondary students hold?*) came into being. Thus, I intended for my philosophical process (as described in Chapter 3) to enable me to formulate analytical questions that differentiate ideas of evil from each other (See Appendix B), probe my participants further about their own views during the interviews, and then formulate appropriate educational implications for my study (See Chapters 6 & 7), based upon a combination of my phenomenographic outcome space and my philosophical commitments. Because of my motivations for this study it was important for me to analyze and theorize how participants’ conceptualizations of evil might function in the context of social studies education, rather than stopping at merely

identifying those conceptualizations. Thus, phenomenography as a method was an important initial step in that process. This chapter describes phenomenography and how I applied it to my study, Chapter 5 describes the outcome space of that study, and Chapters 6 and 7 contain my theorizing about what I contend are educational implications of that outcome space.

4.1: Background

Phenomenography is a qualitative approach based on the ontological and epistemological assumptions that there is no objective Truth or closed reality; rather, knowledges and conceptions are relative and subjective. I examine the variety of conceptualizations of evil held by secondary school students, without naming any of them as a single Truth (i.e., I am not advocating for one, universal definition of evil). To ascertain these conceptualizations, this study involved individual semi-structured interviews, focus groups, follow-up individual interviews, and a final group interview. Before I describe my procedure, I will first introduce relevant information about phenomenography.

4.1.1: Introduction to phenomenography. My exploratory research on youth conceptualizations of evil is complementary to phenomenography, which describes how a population has "qualitatively different ways of experiencing various phenomena… of seeing the world around them" (Marton, 1981). In other words, this research tradition seeks to reveal how a population, represented by the participants, conceptualize and interpret aspects of their worlds. For the purposes of this study, the term "conceptualize" is used specifically to reflect how students interpret the word and the concept of evil as well as how they apply that interpretation implicitly or explicitly to historical and

contemporary examples. According to Marton and Pong (2005), a “conception” has two intertwined aspects, referential and structural. The referential aspect refers to the meaning the subject places upon the object while the structural aspect refers to the features the subject discerns and then focuses on, but both can relate to theoretical or physical experience. The word “experience” (e.g., how students experience evil) is used in two contexts. One context is students reading about past situations (e.g., the Holocaust/Shoah) and developing their conceptualization based upon the descriptions by sources and the sense-related feature of the conceptualization. The second context might occur when students recount their own interactions with something or someone they would consider evil, thus tying into a more personal definition of experience. Whether or not a phenomenographical study is looking at ways of experiencing or conceptualizing, the researcher is discerning and focusing on features as well as core meanings identified in participant responses (Marton & Pong, 2005, p. 336).

Phenomenography’s etymological roots are from the Greek noun φαινομενων (phainomenōn), referring to what has been acquired from appearance in a sensory experience or become mentally apparent, and γραφειν (graphein), the verb “to write” (Liddell & Scott, 1996, pp. 360 &1913). Thus, through its roots, the research approach involves researchers writing down what participants sense or realize. Phenomenography, however, involves more than simply recording participants’ interpretations. The researcher can focus on particular words and phrases to illuminate the analysis rather than being held to the entirety of the transcript. Having said that, it is important to remain faithful to the context of the quotations, attempting to avoid inserting the researcher’s ideas into the participant responses.

4.1.2: History and assumptions of phenomenography. Phenomenographical research first appeared as an empirical method in the 1980s to examine the variation in understandings and conceptions (Marton, 1981; 1986) and since then has been utilized as a methodology primarily in Sweden, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Hong Kong (Åkerlind, 2005b), as well as in recent Canadian research (Zhao & Thomas, 2016). In the late 1990s, the methodology was supplemented with epistemological and ontological assumptions (Åkerlind, 2005b; cf. Bowden & Walsh, 1994; Marton & Booth, 1997; Bowden & Marton, 1998), eventually resulting in Variation Theory (Marton & Tsui, 2004). The extension of the method into a methodology is based on the principle of intentionality, which is the internal experience of being conscious of something, requiring the recognition that the meaning of self and the world cannot be separated (Husserl, 1913/1931, pp. 243-244; Moustakas, 1994, pp. 28-29). According to Marton and Neuman (1989), reality exists by how a person conceives their experiences, and so reality is extended only so far as experience allows. Although I agree with Marton and Neuman (1989) to a substantial extent, I consider it important to qualify this view. Although much of our world around us may be shaped by our perception of it, there are certain occurrences that are independent of our interpretations. In other words, there are unmediated experiences (e.g., it is raining) and mediated experiences (e.g., rain can make some people sad), and mediated experiences involve encounters with the unmediated. When it rains, the ground becomes wet regardless of how we interpret it or name it, and yet we can have different explanations for why it rains or what rain means to us. Phenomena like evil tend toward the subjective because the concept is socially constructed, and so Marton and Neuman (1989) assertions about the construction of

reality, as well as other phenomenographical underpinnings, are suitable for this study. It should be noted, however, that subjectivity and questions of reality as they relate to historical exemplars of evil are discarded; for example, I uphold that historically documented genocides (e.g., the Holocaust/Shoah) have really occurred; however, there might be variations in how these situations are understood as evil or not.

4.1.3: Choosing phenomenography

4.1.3.1: Why not a survey? To inform a conference presentation, I conducted a small-scale inquiry to discern what conceptualizations of evil that youths held. The survey ran through August and September 2013 with a total of 107 Canadian and U.S. youths aged 15-25 completing an online survey. The survey was created through SurveyMonkey®, a cloud based (software-as-service) web survey development company, and was distributed by Amazon Mechanical Turk, a crowdsourcing Internet marketplace based in the United States. Participants read 23 statements that reflected a range of possible interpretations of evil and then indicated their response using a typical five-level Likert Scale item (i.e., “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “agree”, or “strongly agree”). Statements discussed human nature, humans and/or actions as evil (or not), possible definitions of evil, taking action against violence and evil, and the possibilities of future violence and evil. The goal of the data collection was to lump responses into categories previously determined by the researcher prior to that data collection: a religious sense of radical evil, a non-religious sense of radical evil, a banal sense of everyday evil, or a postmodern sense of everyday evil.

Using the online software provided by SurveyMonkey®, statistical results were examined for correlations among questions; i.e., tendencies for participants to answer

certain questions similarly. Interestingly, many participants' responses were combinations of different or even seemingly incompatible philosophical interpretations of evil. For example, 65% of respondents agreed that some people are evil to their core, but 87% of those who agreed to this statement also believed that any person can do evil things in certain situations (which I interpreted as meaning that people were not evil to their core, but rather capable of either good or evil depending on the context) and 74% believed that evil people could change their evil ways. These responses reflect elements of the aforementioned philosophies of Immanuel Kant (1793/1838) and Hannah Arendt (1963/2006). Some of the participants' responses reflected the philosophies of both Kant and Arendt, despite the inherent contradiction between radical and banal evil; for example, some participants agreed that some people are evil to their core but also agreed to the everyday aspect of evil and even possible redemption. Of those participants who agreed that only actions (not humans) are evil, 32% also agreed that some people can be evil to their core and 12% agreed that humans are naturally evil. It was not possible to draw statistically significant comparisons between philosophies of evil and participants' own views. This situation is likely the result not only of sample size, but also of predetermined categories that did not adequately reflect the complexities of participants' conceptualizations, thus leading me to pursue phenomenography as my approach in order to better ascertain participant responses.

This previous preliminary study suggested to me that categories must arise from the researcher's interpretation of participants' responses, and not be created in advance by the researcher. Predetermined categories of evil require the flattening of complex participant responses, thus decreasing the possibility for open-ended thinking; for

example, a participant in my phenomenographic study, Tom, would not have had his thoughts honoured by a survey. I asked in the interviews whether or not someone could be born evil. Tom responded:

> No. Being born evil specifically means a certain genetic disposition to being evil. There are certain genes which have been found that cause people to commit more crimes and such, but these genes are triggered in response to certain troubled situations.

Were Tom to simply answer this question in the survey I had conducted, he might likely have put “somewhat disagree,” and thus this potentially generative line of thinking that blurs a simple either/or binary would have been lost.

My research question (*what conceptualizations of evil do secondary students hold?*) required a method that allows for categories to emerge because youths’ conceptions would likely vary from categories I might have created from the literature about evil in philosophy or popular media, and, like Tom, participants might blur either/or lines of thinking. My topic is one for which we lack an explicit research study, and therefore I could not anticipate exactly what I would find. At the same time, I wanted to honour the potential diversity of the responses I would receive. In order to adequately represent different ways of interpreting evil while minimizing my own perspectives, I chose phenomenography for my research approach.

4.1.3.2: Consideration of other ways to approach my research. There are a variety of methods with which I could study youths’ conceptualizations of evil, including (but not limited to) grounded theory, phenomenology, and ethnography. Grounded theory, like phenomenography, is useful for studying phenomena about which little is known. The

approach of grounded theory supports “discovering what concepts and hypotheses are relevant for the area one wants to research” which will then lead to building theory for real world situations akin to the original research situation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/1999, p. 2). Although grounded theory has the advantage of flexible data collection methods and sources, its focus is on a particular *situation*, rather than research on a *concept*, thus the better suitability of phenomenography for my study.

Phenomenology, like phenomenography, enables researchers to examine questions about meaning because the focus lies in specific experiences and the core or essence of the experiences of the phenomenon. However, phenomenography is a better choice for this study because I am not examining a particular experience of evil, but rather a general impression—a fuzzy calculus of social significance. My research is focused more on the dimensions of experiencing and understanding evil. Perhaps a later study could examine a response to a specific evil in a phenomenological manner; however, the ethics for such a study might be complicated.

Ethnography, with its focus on observational and descriptive questions to capture the “social meanings” of people (Brewer, 2000, p. 10), would have been another possible avenue to examine my research questions; however, my focus is not on specific cultural values, beliefs, and practices, but rather a fragment of these, as they might manifest in the concept of evil. Were I to examine cultural practices linked to the idea of evil, ethnography would have been an obvious choice. Like surveys, once initial categories have been established, ethnography might be a means to examine cultural differences (or not) in the conceptualizations of evil.

Phenomenography as either a method or methodology is suited for exploratory research into conceptualizations and interpretations of the world around us (Marton, 1981). However, once categories of description arise through phenomenography, later research could return to the idea of a survey of a broad spectrum of Canadian youths in order to explore my tentative findings as I could determine if the categories obtained from the youths I interviewed resonate with a larger population.

4.2: Research participants, location, and details

4.2.1: School location. Interviews took place at a non-denominational, independent school with a population ranging from kindergarten through grade twelve located in a major urban area in Western Canada. The student demographic of this school tends to come from homes in which parent(s) or guardian(s) can afford tuition and/or are involved in their child's education. The participants in this school represent a small fraction of the population of youths in Canada; thus, my study is deep rather than wide. As I initiated this area of study, I cannot make assumptions that students views on evil will vary (or not) based on demographic information. Although phenomenography allows for holistic generalizability to a broader human population (Åkerlind, 2005a), I am aware that my particular snapshot is of a particular place, time, and context. What my study uncovers are some of the possible categories for youths' conceptualizations of evil. My findings do not preclude the existence of other categories perhaps present in a different population. As such, it is my hope to conduct future research with other demographics and perhaps also use the categories derived from the phenomenographical study to create a survey that could be employed across a broad spectrum of youth.

4.2.2: Consent. Informed consent from students and their parents/guardians was obtained after ethics approval had been obtained from the Research Ethics Board of the University of Alberta and approval had been given from the school's Head Master (i.e., the school's term for the principal). On the consent form (See Appendix A), participants and their legal guardians were informed about when and where the interviews would take place, that both the individual interviews and focus groups would be audiotaped, and the process for participants to withdraw from the study during the study or up to a month after they had been interviewed. The consent form also outlined the topic and purpose of the research, as well as potential benefits and harm that might arise from participation.

4.2.3: Participants. Participants were drawn from the 2014-2015 Grade Eleven class, aged 16 to 18 years old. From these students, fifteen agreed to be participants. With phenomenography, fifteen to thirty participants are necessary for credibility when trying to ascertain diverse views (Limberg, 2008) and so my study met that criterion. I asked participants to self-identify their gender, religion, and geographical background. Nine self-identified as male, and six as female. Religious identification included: Agnostic, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Roman Catholic, Sikh, and Unitarian. All of the participants had been born in Canada, but their parents and/or grandparents heralded from a diverse range of countries: Canada, China, England, Germany, the Philippines, India, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Pakistan, Poland, Turkey, and the United States.

I was consistently surprised and impressed by the level of historical details and psychological insights that the participants expressed. A number of factors likely contributed to their high level of discourse, including (but not limited to) their family environment as well as the academic courses they had experienced. Participants had

taken Social Studies 20-1 in the previous semester, and were also taking an Advanced Placement course on human geography. A few students were taking an Advanced Placement psychology course.

4.2.4: Ethical considerations. As their former teacher, I knew many of these participants relatively well (i.e., I had a sense of their personality and interests). This familiarity presented advantages and disadvantages. The latter manifested itself as students trying to say what they thought I wanted them to say. To compensate, I designed my questions to lead the participants as little as possible, and to use particular techniques to determine if the participant is trying to anticipate what they perceive as my desired response. This included probing further "when the interviewee is answering in a way that suggests he or she was trying to second-guess an answer" that I might be looking for, or was "just trying to say anything to please" me (Thomas, 2013, p. 6). A clear advantage was my level of trust with the participants. Interviewers who do not know their participants must first establish a relationship with them, finding common ground through small talk to put them at ease (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982/1992, p. 96). This issue was not a problem for me, but nonetheless I was cognizant of the need to exude a comfortable presence. I was attentive to each participant, nodding and using facial expressions to show my personal interest while probing them to be more specific (cf. Bogdan & Biklen, 1982/1992, pp. 97-98). I was careful to avoid creating an impression that I was testing or judging their interpretations. I reassured them that I was not looking for a particular answer. I made it clear that participation was not mandatory and that students could withdraw from the process at any time with no ill effect on their student status at the school or my opinion of them.

To compensate for the difficulties regarding confidentiality, I reminded the participants that the interviews and focus groups were not mandatory (and, in fact, one abstained from the task-based focus group because they did not want to jostle with their peers regarding potentially opposing views). I also provided them with opportunities to remove themselves if they felt uncomfortable (although no participant felt the need to withdraw during any of the interviews), and I emphasized to participants that what others said in the session was to be kept confidential, which to my knowledge was observed. Although the group interview setting posed a challenge to confidentiality, it was worthwhile because of the benefits, such as the opportunity for me to ask participants to clarify earlier statements and hear their responses in a different context. I took a step back and listened to them discussing evil with each other by trading ideas, explaining, even arguing mildly.

The participants were affected by the interview; it was an intervention in itself. Potential benefits to participants included the opportunity to think more about their underlying assumptions about evil and this might help them with their study of history and perhaps even make them think more deeply about popular media and current events. Several participants commented afterwards at how interesting they found the interviews, and how relevant they felt it was to their studies. One participant even claimed that it helped them with an SAT exam written response. The ubiquitous political use of the concept of evil becomes very obvious after thinking about the phenomenon of evil, and it is my hope that participants will be more aware of such a usage as a result of the interviews.

Potential emotional harm was a possibility because I asked participants to think about past and present violence and other trauma, as well as see visual stimuli that might be potentially disturbing, such as pictures of Hitler, vampires, and other exemplars of evil to provoke conversation. The interviews could have potentially triggered memories of personal situations and resulting emotional pain. I watched for signs of this and I was willing to stop the interview if necessary. However, this situation did not occur.

4.3: Interviews

Phenomenographers commonly use interviews for data collection; however, there are other ways to collect data such as observation and use of artefacts, either pre-existing (e.g., historical documents) or participant-generated (e.g., drawing, written responses). For this study, I conducted semi-structured individual interviews with 15 participants along with a participant-generated stimulus, as well as a task-based focus group with the same participants after the individual interviews. I then followed up with another set of individual interviews. Participants requested an unanticipated fourth session, which consisted of a group interview with eight of the fifteen original participants where they could see the work of the other groups and discuss their views. Another emerging aspect of my research was that one participant was so excited after their first interview that she wrote down more of her thoughts and ideas about evil and gave me the pieces of paper. The additional insights gained by the extra group interview and written note were valuable. Also, it was heartening to witness such enthusiasm for my research.

4.3.1: Logistics. The initial individual interviews, group task-based activity, and follow-up individual interviews were all held in the Senior Library at the school (which has a door and large glass windows to the hallway, for a balance of privacy and

transparency). I conducted interviews outside of class time to avoid students missing valuable class time as well as the potentially awkward situation of some students feeling pressured to participate (7:50-8:20 a.m.; 11:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.; and 2:40-3:10 p.m.). I audiotaped both the group and individual sessions. I transcribed the transcripts verbatim because the transcriptions will be the focus of the analysis.

4.3.2 Interview and focus group considerations. I chose semi-structured interviews so I could obtain comparable data from all my participants and still honour the participant's own words (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982/1992, p. 97). Unstructured interviews require a significant time commitment and, because the concept of evil is rarely discussed, participants may not know how to articulate their thoughts without some guidance. On the other end of the spectrum, fully structured interviews do not allow the flexibility to engage in ideas as they are emerging, which I anticipate to be necessary as participants gain more insight into their own thinking. Regardless of the degree of structure of these interviews, I had to be prepared for students to struggle with or lack the language to express what they are thinking and feeling about evil.

As anticipated, participants had difficulties articulating their ideas of evil at first, and thus having them draw an image or write down words that came to mind when they heard the word "evil" proved helpful. The use of a stimulus to provoke the participant is a common feature of phenomenographic interviews (e.g., Peck, 2010; Webb, 1997). I am cognizant, however, of the dangers of predetermining categories, which is why I asked participants to create their own image or text. Most students chose to write down words instead of drawing a picture.

It was important for me to assure the students that I was not looking for a "right" answer. I just wanted to know what and how they think about evil and that I was not making any judgments about those ideas, nor did I need them to provide me with evidence for a claim I wanted to make. I informed them of this and told them that I simply wanted them to articulate their thoughts, and that whatever they said would be valuable to me. Participants visibly relaxed when I explained these things to them. Given that the goal was to map the range of conceptions that emerge in the group/individual settings, I also reassured them that I would not be "assigning" a conception to any one student. In other words, when the transcripts were to be analyzed, I would be talking about the students as a whole and would not be pinning any conception to a particular person. This assurance seemed also to be of comfort to the participants.

Although phenomenography has not traditionally used group sessions, recent phenomenographic scholarship has combined individual and group interviews/tasks (e.g., Peck, 2010). Using both focus groups and individual interviews provides a variety of ways for their conceptions to emerge, which enables the researcher to have more confidence in the findings because they might be supported by different data sources. Finally, group work after the initial interviews is pedagogical in itself as participants are thinking and discussing the notion of evil in relation to social studies curriculum.

4.3.3: Individual interviews. At the beginning of the interview I asked administrative questions: “I have your signed consent form. Are you still okay with participating in this interview?” and (to set up the pseudonym) “What name would you like me to use in place of your real name?” This pseudonym was used during the transcription of both of the individual interviews as well as the group interviews.

After the creation of the pseudonym, I began the semi-structured interview with the creation of the image/text and then asking open-ended questions that I had prepared in advance (See Appendix B). Some new questions emerged as I asked participants to clarify their statements further and as I was inspired by what they were saying. In phenomenography it is important to ask not only the "what" but also the "why" questions, especially in the follow-up prompts (Åkerlind, 2005a, p. 65). A funnel interview technique was used, meaning that questions were intentionally broad and then statements such as "tell me more about that" and "can you explain that to me in more detail?" probed the participants to clarify their initial statements, and then followed up with specific questions (cf. Brophy, Alleman, & O'Mahony, 2003).

After the group task-based interview, I interviewed participants individually again. At that point, I asked them some specific questions for three purposes: to ascertain if they agreed with their group's placement of images; to probe them regarding some claims arising from the earlier interviews, and; to collect demographic information (See Appendix C). The demographic questions were formulated after the initial interviews. Two participants specifically mentioned their religions as contributing to their conceptualizations of evil; therefore, I asked participants in the final interview if they subscribed to a particular religion. One participant mentioned that because their family was from Iran, his views on the political use of evil (e.g., the Axis of Evil and ISIS) are likely partially shaped by that geographical/cultural perspective.

4.3.4: Focus groups. I had planned on using the participant-created pictures from the initial interview to supplement the images I had already chosen; however, because participants generally did not draw pictures, I added images for the task-based group

activity based on their written and verbal responses (See Appendix D). The researcher-generated images were of Ebola, Hurricane Katrina, Edward Cullen, Nosferatu, Hitler, Adolf Eichmann, Pol Pot, and a demon. The other images I added based on the interviews were Darth Vader and Voldemort, as well as the following written statements: a person who accidently kills an adult; a person who accidently kills a child; a murderer of adults; and a murderer of children. Groups placed those images/texts on a spectrum of most to least evil. The intention was not that to find a right answer, but rather for me to observe and note the conversations that ensue. These images were selected based on what participants may have encountered in popular media (including news, film, and television) and in their schooling (particularly biology and social studies). I took a panoramic photo of each completed spectrum (as well as close-up photos for easier viewing) as a tool to use when I transcribed the group interviews (Appendix E). The group task provided an opportunity to clarify responses from the individual interviews and to allow participants to discuss with each other, which produced a different dynamic than the individual interviews with the researcher alone.

4.4: Analysis

4.4.1: Phenomenographic procedure. Phenomenographers organize data into categories of description that correspond to different meanings or ways of experiencing the phenomenon, as well as the logical "structural relationships linking these different ways of experiencing" (Åkerlind, 2005b, p. 322). The phenomenographer must not only catalogue the variety of ways in which participants explain the phenomenon, but also find commonalities and differences between those descriptions. Often these relations are hierarchically inclusive (Marton & Booth, 1997), and so a structure emerges from the

data. The structural relationships, the "outcome space" of interrelated interpretations, is related to the "non-dualistic ontology" of phenomenography:

> There is not a real world "out there" and a subjective world "in here." The world [as experienced] is not constructed by the learner, nor is it imposed upon her; it is constituted as an internal relation between them. (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 13)

There is a relationship between the experiencer and what is being experienced, and the meanings that emerge are in relation to each other (i.e., no one response is examined purely in isolation) (Åkerlind, 2005b, p. 323). In other words, it is not about cataloguing the responses of participant "x" and others; rather, common threads between and among the responses of all participants are ascertained through careful analysis (Peck, Sears, & Donaldson, 2008). This means that the researcher uses a sample group to determine a range of possible ways to experience a phenomenon not for an *individual*, but for a *population* in a particular context to which the sample belongs (Åkerlind, 2005b, p. 323). Because meaning is relative to social and cultural context, what the participants chose to express was described relative to categories of understanding present in the context of culture, including philosophical and popular media influences.

The outcomes of a phenomenographic study are what make this approach different from other qualitative studies. Instead of producing results with a richly descriptive but flat structure, a phenomenographer must not only describe the set of conceptualizations but also organize it into logically related categories (Marton & Booth, 1997; Cope, 2004). Phenomenographic researchers have a rigorous role to play as interpreters, but they make an effort to act more as conduits for what the participants are saying rather than inserting their own conceptualizations. This is a difficult and

seemingly impossible task, but nonetheless one that ought to be attempted to the extent it is possible, largely through the recognition and admission of the researcher's own perspective and point-of-view. Researchers exist in the tension between honouring the words of the participants and analyzing their responses. Constructing a quality outcome space necessitates revealing the structure of a population's interpretations with appropriate variety and depth. This process involves creating logically related categories, as few as necessary, which reveal a distinct way of understanding the phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997). Both meaning and structure of human awareness must be considered in the outcome space. As such, referential aspects of "evil" (i.e., categories of meaning) will be identified and discussed in relation to each other, reflecting both the original data and my judgment. This outcome space represents the variation in participants' experiences of the phenomenon of evil that can then contribute to a holistic perspective on human experience, despite obvious variations in perspective and context (Åkerlind, 2005a, pp. 70-71). Researchers must create categories not just from one transcript, but also from the collection of transcripts.

Difficulties arising from this research approach include keeping an open mind during interviews and analysis about categories: "The researcher needs to be willing to constantly adjust her/his thinking in light of reflection, discussion and new perspectives" (Åkerlind, 2005b, p. 323). In other words, throughout the discussions with participants, unexpected perspectives may emerge. Even for exploratory studies such as my research project, researchers likely have their own ideas about possible responses. For example, I had researched a number of philosophical and psychological understandings of evil. Such preliminary research before conducting interviews was helpful because I had developed

more nuanced ways to talk about evil; however, I had to be on guard for participant responses that fell outside the variety of understandings I had already pondered. Researchers must take care to pursue all perspectives and not discount any.

4.4.2: Coding. Key to phenomenography is that categories arise from the transcripts. Although I had to make every effort not predetermine the categories, of course I could not completely separate myself from the process (e.g., my philosophical commitments). I utilized a combination of strategies and considerations during my coding process. Following Marton (1984, 1986, 1988), I began with selected quotations from a variety of interviews, which I then decontextualized into a pool of meaning for further analysis.[6] Thus, I read through the transcripts and composed a few obvious categories about evil that I had noticed while in the process of interviewing (intention, awareness, nature of the victim) as well as categories based on pointed questions (evil in everyday life, processes versus individual, animals and plants as evil, difference between bad and evil, the power of naming something or someone as evil, evil in history and social studies, organizations as evil, where we acquire our views on evil, how the interview changed you or not). I then analyzed the transcripts and compiled quotations into these categories, creating new ones as needed, and shifting how I named and perceived the categories (e.g., the feeling/sense/image of evil, the choice of evil, needless harm and a lack of guilt about harm—both of which developed as a subcategory of intent, the scale of harm being evil, what creates evil). In particular, responses I had grouped by question were placed in analytical categories (e.g., bad vs. evil often went into quintessential or relative evil or the impact of naming someone/thing evil).

[6] Some phenomenographers utilize different strategies, such as examining larger segments or even a transcript as a whole (Bowden, 1994a; Bowden, 1994b; Prosser, 1994). I found that Marton's (1984, 1986, 1988) method suited my own thinking process better.

In phenomenography, the researcher is to create the coding scheme initially by identifying “core ideas of commonly occurring alternative responses” and then examining the transcripts accordingly, noting the responses that fall outside of these categories (Brophy, Alleman, & O’Mahony, 2003, p. 16). I found some excerpts to be very difficult to place because they were complex, novel, and/or in overlapping categories, in which case I either I put them at beginning of the analysis document or highlighted them, so that I did not forget to revisit them with particular attention. For these difficult excerpts, I went back to the original transcript and re-read the section in context (and, for many, I re-read the whole transcript to see how the participant was putting everything together, although it should be noted that frequently my participants made statements that fell into several categories).

My process was a reflexive and theorizing activity, and I had to keep in mind that my interpretations of the responses needed to be placed in the context of the study (Bowden, 1996). I examined one category at a time, inspecting each transcript for evidence of that category (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 133), and then I applied the opposite procedure by re-reading the analysis document and shifting excerpts to other categories or sub-categories, at times reformulating and/or renaming categories, all of which helped me to create the nested structure (Åkerlind, 2005b; Marton, 1986). I identified and described emerging themes and subthemes while identifying similarities and variations, thus establishing the structural aspect (Dall’Alba, 1994, p. 79; Marton & Pong, 2005, p. 337). Thus, categories of description arose when the transcripts were compared and grouped, as the overall response of the participant was reduced to its essential components while preserving the main content as a representative sample (Svensson,

1997). My final step was to re-read all the transcripts with the outcome space I had created in mind, looking for mismatches and any possible refinements of my analysis (Prosser, 1994, p. 34).

4.4.3: Credibility. I use the word “credibility” intentionally in this section instead of “validity,” on account of my recognition of my own subjectivity. Because the epistemology behind phenomenography as part of a constructivist paradigm is “transactional and subjectivist,” researchers must recognize that their own “voice” will permeate the study, which has been shaped by “the framework of the social, cultural, historical, political, economic, ethnic, and gender positions” (Guba & Lincoln, 2013, pp. 57-58). There can be no claims of objectivity; the only resolution is to negotiate meaning with the participants, thus honouring their voices (Guba & Lincoln, 2013, p. 59). Regardless of the diligence of the researcher, “any outcome space is inevitably partial, with respect to the hypothetically complete range of ways of experiencing a phenomenon” (Åkerlind, 2005b, p. 328). During my study, I attempted to avoid putting words into the mouths of the participants during the interviews, as well as to check my interpretations of their words when I saw them for their follow-up interview. During the coding process, I was aware that my professional judgment played a role (Åkerlind, 2005b, p. 329).

In phenomenography, attention to credibility must be paid throughout the study, including: being open to unique participant conceptualizations during interviews as well as coding, selecting an appropriate group of participants, defending the interpretation of the results persuasively, and ensuring dependability regarding the interview conversation and transcription (Collier-Reed, Ingerman, & Berglund, 2009, pp. 345-348).

Communicative "validity checks" usually consider the input of "other members of the population represented by the interview sample… and the intended audience for the findings" rather than the interviewees themselves (Åkerlind, 2005b, p. 330). Francis (1996) criticizes the lack of checking by other members of the population in phenomenography, but given that the categories are made holistically rather than upon one interview, this omission is understandable because only the set of transcripts addresses the range of categories (Åkerlind, 2005b, pp. 330-331). Pragmatic "validity checks" regarding the utility and meaning of the research outcomes can involve judging if the insight achieved provides a more "effective way of operating in the world" (Åkerlind, 2005b, p. 331; cf. Marton, 1996; Entwistle, 1997; Marton & Booth, 1997). In terms of reliability, the researcher can make the interpretive steps clear to the audience through description and examples (e.g., Guba, 1981; Kvale, 1996) and/or employ co-researchers or assistant researchers for coder or dialogic reliability checks (e.g., Bowden, 1994b & 1996; Prosser, 1994; Marton, 1996). Sandberg (1997) argues that practices such as requiring a certain percentage of correlation between the coders is too objectivist in its epistemology for a qualitative study (paraphrased in Collier-Reed, Ingerman, & Berglund, 2009, p. 349). For my study, my validity checks consisted of member-checking with participants in the final individual interviews as well as constantly recognizing my own assumptions, and then attempting to separate them from those of my participants, while coding.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

Participants in this study provided an impressive range of conceptualizations of evil, many of which are interconnected with each other. I separated these conceptualizations into five referential aspects: evil as images; evil as affects (bodily) and effects (cognitive); evil as abnormal and extraordinary; evil as a human thing; and evil as subjective (See Table 1). These aspects (e.g., differences in overall conceptualizations) revealed a variety of ways youths might think about evil. The first two categories—images and affects/effects—reveal what how one might picture or "feel" evil. I consider these to be more "gut reactions" in the sense that they are often first responses and not over-intellectualized. The latter three categories—evil as abnormal, human, and subjective—speak to how one might define evil beyond these initial reactions. Within each of these categories, there were variations (structural aspects of each referential aspect), all of which will be discussed in this chapter.

Before being able to create Table 1 with the referential and structural aspects of my findings, I first had to undertake the process of creating my own version of a web of conceptualizations, in this case a literal, non-linear web in felt pen on a large sheet of paper. After my coding process was complete, I mapped out my categories and subcategories (See Figure 1). This image is the end product, one of many maps I created. It was difficult to name the categories, and as I mapped out their interconnections I moved around many of the subcategories. This led to a refinement of the overall outcome space, as the structural aspects became much more clear.

From the many interconnections between and among referential aspects, I named two particularly powerful interconnections for social studies education between

Table 1: *Outcome Space of Youth Conceptualizations of Evil*

Referential Aspect (differences in overall conceptualizations)		**Structural Aspect** (variation of internal structure of the conceptualizations)
Evil as images	Visualizing tropes from horror and religion	Focus on identifying particular characters and themes
	Not being able to see—darkness and the unknown	Focus on literally not being able to see (hidden, distortion) as well as that which is intentionally hidden (secrecy, the occult)
	Not liking what one sees—ugliness	Focus on geometric and/or aesthetic flaws in people and in an abstract sense
Evil as effects and affects	Cold Shivers Fear Unease	Focus on bodily affects and/or cognitive effects
Evil as Abnormal, Extraordinary	Evil as other, not "us" Evil not part of our normal, daily lives Evil for extraordinary individuals	Focus on evil as from a different place, time, or for people different than the participants.
Evil as a Human Thing	An entity needs the capacity to choose evil	Focus on one or more of the following: awareness, intent, sadistic pleasure, and/or lack of remorse (and that plant and/or animals likely do not have the capacity)
Evil as subjective	Evil is a matter of perspective	Focus on the difficulty in labeling someone/thing as evil is participants know some background in "real" life and/or popular film and television
	No one is purely good or evil	Focus on that people can change (from good to evil and vice versa) and/or that evil is created by nurture not nature
	Nonetheless there are tipping points to evil	Despite subjectivity, participants focused on defining evil by one or more of the following: scale, intensity, innocent victims, awareness, intent, sadistic pleasure, and/or lack of remorse

Figure 1: *Web of Conceptualizations*

significant aspects of broader categories as the *politics of evil* and *villainification*. I identified the politics of evil as the intersection between: the sense that evil is other (not us), an aspect of evil as abnormal and extraordinary; fear, an aspect of the affects and effects of evil; and, the idea that the more you know about someone or something, the harder it is to label them as evil, an aspect of there not being a universal evil, but rather evil being a matter of perspective. The politics of evil will be discussed in Chapter 6.
I identified villainification as the intersection between: evil as individual, as aspect of evil as abnormal and extraordinary; the sense that evil is other (not us), also an aspect of evil as abnormal and extraordinary; fear, an aspect of the affects and effects of evil; ugliness, also an aspect of the affects and effects of evil; and, the idea that the more you know about someone or something, the harder it is to label them as evil, an aspect of there not being a universal evil, but rather evil being a matter of perspective. Villainification will be discussed in Chapter 7.

The five main referential aspects—evil as images, evil as affects and effects, evil as abnormal and extraordinary, evil as a human thing, and evil as subjective—emerged from a variety of initial categories that morphed and changed as I re-read the transcripts and pondered what the participants were saying. There were some complex quotations that I knew were important, but could not place them right away (e.g., they overlapped categories or were something I had not anticipated). I found these quotations a special place outside my analytical categories and kept returning to them, and eventually they sparked new categories and refinement of existing categories. For example, the issue of intent was, for a time, its own category, before moving to a hybrid position between the anthropocentric interpretation of evil and the identification that intent (and thus

awareness as a precursor) were defining characteristics of what participants imagined as evil.

5.1: Evil as Images

Participants conjured up religious imagery, such as the Devil and evil spirits. These overlap with tropes from religion and horror films, such as the imagery from *Insidious* (Wan, 2011) as well as the infamous demonic possession of *The Exorcist* (Friedkin, 1973), and also include what is hidden, a secret, or part of the occult, as well what is considered geometrically or aesthetically flawed. The latter two subcategories relate to other frequent images of evil—darkness/the unknown, as well as ugliness. There is power inherent in the word evil:

> SERENA: I feel like evil is such an extreme word that nothing really matches it. It's a shooting word; it's just loaded. It's taking it to a whole new level. It takes it to a religious aspect as well somewhat because like evil is traditionally rooted from Satan and all that religious stuff; so it's a really loaded term and nothing really matches it.

For Nick, the image that popped into his head when he heard the word evil was "a devil with horns on his head, doing bad things to innocent people, getting others to do selfish things." Nikolai wrote: "sharp, jagged, harsh, often darkness" at the beginning of his interview, and then described what he meant in more detail, "Yeah. I guess that's more just a general feeling. And I guess it's more the thing we get from books and things like that and movies. That's where we really get that feeling." Later on the interview Nikolai elaborated on his original idea:

> NIKOLAI: As a representation of that, something that is geometrically flawed that is not physically possible has that strong connotation of evil in my mind. I've seen representations of this in video games and things like that, that try to portray evil using unclear physical boundaries and just the idea of distortion. This goes back to the idea of darkness. It's not really darkness per se, but it's obscurity and the inability to see what's going on.

When asked about what makes vampires evil, Kunta replied, "they can harm you, they are sinister, they have their cloaks and keep hidden, you don't know them, they come out at night, a time of darkness, you can't see—the unknown." The association of evil and the occult, literally "what is hidden" from the Latin *occultus*, is unmistakably associated with evil, as are those who are on the fringes of society. Thinking to an example of witch-hunts, women, especially older wise ones, were frequently associated with the Devil and the occult. Serena, much to her own surprise, found herself drawing heavily from Disney movies, particularly *The Little Mermaid* and the character of Ursula:

> SERENA: It's automatically what I think of. And I find it interesting that all the evil people in Disney are always old and ugly, and they are always put them out to be women, and never men. It's always an older female. It's just the stereotype kind of.

It is likely that none of these representations are shocking; they correspond with much popular media. Perhaps more interesting is not what *represents* evil, but what evil might *do*.

5.2: Evil as Affects (bodily) and Effects (cognitive)

From the participants, it was clear that there is a feeling, both physical and psychological, that evil can have. This feeling is profoundly negative, which partially explains why the rhetoric of evil in politics and elsewhere can be so powerful. Strawberry's feeling of evil did not take corporeal form, but rather indicated bodily affect:

> STRAWBERRY: When I think of evil, I think of evil spirits; more like, you are walking down in the middle of the night somewhere, probably coming back from a friend's party, coming to your home, and all of a sudden there is this big gush of wind passing by and you feel that there is something wrong. And then you have a feeling that there is evil lurking around you… You feel really cold. It's so weird. You have a really strong feeling that something is present and you are actually being haunted or something.

Thus, there are clear images of evil, but also feelings and senses of evil. As are discussed in the next chapter, conjuring up such representations and bodily affects can have a significant impact in political rhetoric.

5.3 Evil as Distinctly Human (Mostly)

5.3.1: Awareness. A number of interconnected patterns emerged from participant responses to questions about whether or not plants, animals (other than humans), and natural disasters can be evil. Participants generally identified evil as confined to humans, such as Kira saying that "Ebola and Katrina are just things" and Kunta adding, "it's not their fault. It's just what they are." Some of this is attributed to an anthropocentric viewpoint as well as a lack of knowledge about animals, such as Riley remarking in

laughter that his "view is pretty humanity-centric, mostly because I'm a human" and Jean emphasizing that: "I believe that animals can be cruel… [but] I believe that evil is completely a human construct." Although Tom attributes his similar view to lack of knowledge ("we don't know that much about what goes on the minds of animals"), Amnis sees a similar, but more nuanced point-of-view:

> AMNIS: I guess not really because we aren't really sure what goes through the brain of an animal. Most times we think it's kind of like instinct. But then you get to like where otters rape baby seals to death. Is that evil? Or is that a weird nature thing like instinct? Is it a byproduct of instinct maybe? I guess for animals and especially plants, you can't say they are evil, but when you get to things that have more intelligence, like chimps and stuff, they kind of do realize what they are doing, the consequences, then maybe you can kind of start using the label evil there because they do realize what's going to happen. They have a basic understanding of that. And if they still do something they know will cause harm to another chimp then maybe you can maybe label that as evil.

Evil was seen as largely confined to the human realm, largely because the cognition involved for the criteria of evil was understood as limited to humans (i.e., that plants and other animals are unable to intend evil). Such an anthropocentric view is interesting given the frequent association of evil and animality in popular film and television (e.g., werewolves) as well as the assumption of malign intent for some animals, such as the shark from *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975). When these participants pondered the creatures in their ordinary lives, the Enlightenment worldview of only human animals as capable of reason seemed to trump representations of evil.

5.3.2: The issue of intent. For someone to be considered evil, they must make a choice to take that path and not be coerced into it. Tom and I spoke about the issue of intent:

> TOM: The first things that come to mind [when I hear "evil"] are that it's against moral precepts and the intent to hurt or destroy others, especially selfishly. I think that would be evil.
>
> CvK: Tell me more.
>
> TOM: Well, the intent to hurt or destroy others that could perhaps mean someone, who personally of his own volition, believes that he has to kill or harm others; that would be one category. Another category might be selfish sadism, enjoying in seeing others being hurt. People with a destructive personality who have no reason or motive for being that way, or some malicious motive.
>
> CvK: So what about if you inflict harm on someone and you didn't mean to do it? Are those not evil then?
>
> TOM: If you really didn't mean to do it in your heart, not just saying it, then it's not evil.

Of course, in order to make that choice, an evildoer must first be aware that their action is potentially evil, and then intend to do it; for example, a participant wrote "designed intentionally to inflict pain," and later in the interview made this comment about vampires:

> NIKOLAI: I mean you can think he's evil because he kills people, but that's just our bias because we are people. We don't consider ourselves evil because we eat animals. It's the same thing as long as there is no intent, no sadist intent.

Cold, rational intent was a common theme among participants. Another remarked:

> SERENA: If it was self defense and you kill someone, that wouldn't be bad but it wouldn't be good. But first-degree murder would be evil because you planned it and it's not like a spur of the moment kind of thing. If it's planned out and purposeful it's evil.

Because participants tended not to see natural disasters or animals as capable of intending (or even being aware of) evil, that disqualifies them from being classified as evil, even if their death toll is significant:

> NICK: I'm just finding this interesting about Ebola and Hurricane Katrina. Even though they may kill more people than these people will, even if they did that, I think we would still see these people as more of a threat to society, more evil. Basically, society thinks that these guys [Pol Pot, Hitler] are more evil than this because they have control over their actions, while these are just natural things.

Ebola and Katrina both killed on a grand scale and killed children, so what is the difference? Estavan responded that, "These are actual people, they have control over their actions." Because participants staunchly conceived of both awareness and intent as inherently human capabilities, linking those two attributes with evil, the supposed uniqueness of human animals is upheld. A possible implication of this finding would be an exploration of how we, as humans, navigate our both symbiotic and precarious relationships vis-à-vis other animals, as well as smaller entities such as bacteria and viruses.

5.4: Evil as Subjective, not Universal

5.4.1: Evil as a matter of perspective. Most participants spoke to an idea that what we label as "evil" is subjective and that evil is created by nurture (or lack thereof), not nature; for example,

> KUNTA: It's all really subjective. I think it's a good thing that we have things like the Devil/Satan/Lucifer, which are kind of the ultimate evil; don't be like that. But then somebody does that to you, and then you are like "they are evil," but then you do it back, and they are like, "no, you are evil," and it becomes complicated.

Related to this idea is that the more you know about someone or something, the more difficult it is to label them as evil, as Martin articulated, "the back story is just as important as the definition [of evil]… I mean, you can see it as an act of evil but it shouldn't be branded as evil without the full story, the context." Tom mentioned something similar, "What if the person has lived a very terrible life? What if the person had no choice? What if the person was pressured into it?" As Benedict succinctly stated, "I think people become evil. I think everybody has the potential to be good or evil in the constraints of their society. It seems like circumstances, the people around them, push them to be different." Amnis noted a similar process:

> AMNIS: I think it's how you were raised. Your environment, the one you've been brought up in. If you are kind of taught that it's ok to do these things, that doesn't make you evil. But if you are taught what's right and what's wrong—morals and stuff—then something else in your life pushes you to go against those things,

> maybe like Hitler. Maybe if he had gone to art school he wouldn't have had all that pent up rage.

An assumption of Amnis' statement is that evil is not inherent to our being; it is created from certain circumstances. Such anti-villainification opens up possibilities for thinking. If we see even the "Hitlers" of the world as banal, we are open to seeing the processes that might be in play. Villains regain their ordinary characteristics.

This relates to how evil can be portrayed differently in popular film and television. Martin noted that, although simplistic evil is portrayed, good stories have more complexity:

> MARTIN: I see evil in a lot of movies and TV a traditional sense, purely evil, and I don't see the varying degrees of bad so much, unless it's a very well done movie or TV show. I think it's because really evil is easier to portray than bad in my opinion. A lot of antagonists, unless it's done very well, are purely evil.

Television and film can provide an opportunity to explore ideas with meaningful complexity. William Pinar (2006), states:

> Popular culture provides an important site of curricular imbrication. Rather than ricocheting off the surface of academic knowledge or subjective experience, cultural study enables us to discern their complex and shifting interrelationships. As such, cultural studies not only complicate curriculum studies, they intensify them, drenching them in mass culture, subjective, experience, and political struggle. (p. 68)

Students will interpret meanings from their exposure to popular culture, regardless of their inclination for critical examination, and they bring these meanings with them into

the classroom. Anti-heroes, such as Wolverine from the *X-Men* (Singer, 2000), and enticing evil figures, like Heath Ledger's persuasive Joker from *The Dark Knight* (Nolan, 2008) blur the boundaries between good and evil. Some critics discard the character of Logan/the Wolverine as a simplistic reproduction of white masculinity, but his status as a borderline character-in-flux reveals a much richer discussion (jagodzinski, 2014, p. 73). The Joker is clearly evil and thus eventually defeated, as the narrative structure and genre lead us to expect, and yet we are invited to "reflect on ideas of values that we take for granted" (Forbes, 2011, p. 25).

5.4.2: Tipping points of evil (i.e., aspects that make someone evil regardless of an appreciation for the subjectivity of evil). Despite the lack of a universal evil, certain interrelated attributes led some participants to label someone or something as evil: choice, lack of remorse, sadistic pleasure, innocent victims, scale, and intensity. Participants developed ideas that went beyond awareness of, and intention for, evil. Awareness is a factor in defining evil, and then given that awareness, there is that intention to do something bad; however, a lack of evil intent is trumped by the scale of harm done (e.g., Hitler may have had "good" intentions for "his" people, but the scale of atrocity negates any positive intentions). Mary said, "I think your intentions are one of the most important things to make that difference, but it's also kind of what you do, like if it's something really bad then it's obviously going to be considered evil." In this sense, the scope of the deed warrants a label of evil. The scale of the deed is also a tipping point. In their focus group, Amnis, Nick, and Estavan used two criteria—scale and intentions—to separate some of the fictional characters on the spectrum of more to less evil. They rated Voldemort and Darth Vader as more evil than vampires because Vader blew up an

entire planet and Voldemort killed many people and children. The sheer scale of the atrocity was as important as intention. What, then, if the scale is relatively small? When asked about the possibility of isolated acts of evil, one participant stated after a long pause:

> SERENA: I think they have to do more than one thing to be considered evil—no, wait a sec. I'm thinking terms of rape. In terms of Hitler it was all systematic and he did a lot of them [evil deeds], but with rape you can do it once I would consider you evil. It's very circumstantial for me. Like if the event is powerful enough. Like I know killing one person is very powerful, but killing a lot of people sends a bigger message thinking of the sheer impact… If it's like a bunch of rapes by one person rather than one, it's obviously a huger impact than the one, but obviously just one still has a pretty big impact. And the same with murdering people.

Participants saw these actions (e.g., mass murder, rape) as extreme due to their particular scale (i.e., sheer number of victims) and/or intensity (i.e., severe impact on a limited number of victims). In such cases, even "good" intentions are trumped by extreme actions:

> MARTIN: [Hitler] had those good intentions, but by doing that to that extreme he was throwing away his humanity to pull off those orders of the genocide and all of that. So that evil is kind of different in my opinion.

Amnis echoed a similar sentiment: "Yeah, I guess he maybe did have good intentions to maybe get Germany out of its bad position, but like half the stuff he did he didn't have to do. So that's the tipping point toward evil."

Harming children is generally seen as particularly heinous and thus extreme even on a small scale. Estavan said: “it’s more serious if it’s a child because they still have more of their life ahead of them. But that still doesn’t give them a reason to kill adults.” However, some participants saw innocence more generally, such as Nick who saw an innocent person simply as “someone who is living his life, so he can survive.” Interestingly, although Hitler emerged unsurprisingly as the quintessential evildoer, the perceived innocence of childhood can still come into play:

> CvK: Say someone brutally tortures and kills Hitler. We’ll go with the extreme example. Would the person who did that to Hitler be bad?
>
> SERENA: I don’t think so.
>
> CvK: What if Hitler were a kid?
>
> SERENA: Yes, because I feel like if you were younger, it’s not an excuse, but you have not lived that much and you might have had past experiences that shaped that, or there is more there than what meets the face kind of thing. A kid wouldn’t jive with me.

Participants did not indicate that there are degrees of evil, although some stated that evil is the extreme of bad (i.e., there are degrees of bad, with evil being the worst).

5.5: Evil as Abnormal, Extraordinary

5.5.1: Evil as individual. Participants overwhelmingly conceived evil being at the individual level. Organizations can be evil, but that is dependent on the individuals within them. As Tom stated,

> Organizations are typically led by people. Al Qaeda was led by Osama Bin Laden; the Nazi party was led by Adolf Hitler. These organizations are based on

> the ideologies of the people who lead them or the people who founded them. And now you have to consider the people in the organization; in some cases they might have no other choice but to join. There were certain members of the Nazi Party who hated Hitler and didn't really support what the Nazi Party did but they had whatever fears. Being a member of the party doesn't necessarily make you evil. But if you are a member of the party and are fully cooperative in it of your own will, then you know that you are doing evil and yet you are still doing it. Then it's on a larger scale.

Evil, thus, can operate on a grand scale, but at the heart of it will be individual humans and their actions. Benedict said:

> I think everyone actually sees it as individual because it's just our nature. We need some kind of face to put to something. Like when we think of Apple, the company, we think of Steve Jobs, you know? It's a face that's associated with a company or circumstances. Like if you think of the Canadian government maybe you think of Stephen Harper, like if you think of genocide in Germany then you think of Hitler. It's a face to put with a situation.

The problem with this hyper-individualization of broader structures and processes is that it can disperse accountability; it makes it difficult to see how individual actions are nested within, or made possible by, interconnected people working within larger structural and historical forces. As Britzman (1986) states, "the ideology which supports this notion of the rugged individual is used to justify success or failure, social class, and social inequality. This brand of individualism infuses the individual with both undue power and

undue culpability" (p. 453). In a follow-up interview with Nick, this issue became very clear:

> CvK: Your group had an interesting conversation about processes versus individuals, like debates on where to put Eichmann. How much do we pin on Hitler, and what is the effect of pinning it on Hitler versus broader society? Could you tell me more about that?
>
> NICK: So, that's what I also think the Nazis did, maybe not exactly the Nazis maybe even the West as well, and like England and the U.S. Basically, I think this is what they did. Throughout our lives, even when we don't know anything about WWII, even when we are young, we know there's a guy called Adolf Hitler. Because he's like, people make us believe that he was the leader, which he was. He controlled everyone in his group to do the exact same things he did. So, it makes it look like he's controlling everyone. But I believe he didn't do that. Eichmann, for example, just the fact that he knows what this group is about and what Hitler does, too, makes him just as bad.

Nick clearly understands that the processes of evil instigated by the Nazis did not belong to a single villain. Hyper-individualization of Hitler or any other historical villain runs contrary to the nexus of individual and community culpability integral to the notion of the *banality of evil* (Arendt, 1963/2006), and relates to a process I have called *villainification* (See Chapter 7).

5.5.2: Evil as not possible in our daily lives. A particularly interesting finding included that participants considered evil to be unlikely in their own daily lives, and yet also recognized that what we might label as evil (e.g., processes in play during Nazi

Germany) were part of those individuals' daily lives. In other words, evil is thought to be personally irrelevant. As Nikolai stated,

> NIKOLAI: I would be surprised [to see evil in my daily life]… If I saw something bad I wouldn't be as surprised. If I saw something that I would genuinely consider evil it would be very shocking.

Amnis echoed a similar sentiment:

> AMNIS: It's kind of like, it's not like we live in a post-apocalyptic or some place where there is anarchy or anything like that. There is law and order. People have the kind of sense that if they don't want bad things happening to them then they won't do that to other people. There's a whole feeling that if I do bad things, bad things also happen to me. It kind of makes it more acceptable. Rule of law and stuff.

It should, however, be noted that not all participants shared that view. Jean noted that, "of course, I would be startled and uncomfortable. But I do think that I could see evil anywhere."

Related to evil seeming foreign to our daily lives is our sense of agency (or lack thereof) in combatting evil:

> CvK: So back to the Holocaust—do you think something like that can happen again?
>
> SERENA: I would like to say it wouldn't because it's happened before. History does repeat itself, but we try to prevent it. But maybe I feel like it would. There is so much conflict in the world right now, I think it's bound to happen, especially somewhere like the Middle East or something.

CvK: Do you think that someone like you could have an impact on it, especially given that you see it as happening far away?

SERENA: No. Not as a single person. We always hear these stories of people like Malala, she was one person who reached out to so many people, but it's such a hard thing these days for one person to make an impact. You feel so small. You need a bunch of people to actually make an impact, I feel. But then again there are those single people who make stuff happen. You need to be an icon already to have a voice, I feel. Like Angelina Jolie would be a lot easier than me doing it. It just wouldn't work for me; I'm a nobody.

Returning again to the idea of hyper-individualization, this is another negative effect of seeing individuals effecting change. Failing to see interconnections among ordinary folks behind major societal changes and events (for both "good" and "evil") can leave us with a feeling of disempowerment. This issue will be addressed further in Chapter 7. In the large group interview at the end of this study, a number of participants pondered whether or not we could do anything about evil we encounter:

NIKOLAI: Is it really possible to visualize something that is considered a societal norm? It's easy for us to look back and say that this is really obvious now, but can we right now look and see exactly what is wrong with society at this moment?

TOM: Like eugenics, right here in Alberta and many other places it was accepted as an idea. This just shows the significance of how our perceptions change. Back then, people thought that this was going to be good. And that goes to show how we judge these things until long after they have happened. It's difficult with

historical figures. These perceptions would change depending on which era you looked at them from.

Tom then added later, “humans are naturally myopic.” This calls into question the criteria of awareness for evil, and has implications for how we educate youths to foster thinking that is independent from authority. This will be discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7.

5.5.3: Evil as other, not “us.” Evil is not a term applied to ourselves; it is a critique reserved for other people. When asked if she saw any labels of evil in historical events, Kunta paused, then replied:

> KUNTA: The first thought that came to mind was neo-Nazis. I’m personally against it, obviously. Because Hitler lost WWII, we see Hitler as the evil one, but if Hitler had won I’d probably see Jews as evil… it’s about the majority view… it’s not that there’s evil and then there’s the other people, there’s evil and then there’s us.

This idea interconnects the conceptualizations that evil is a matter of perspective and that the more personal details you know, the harder it is to label evil. The more familiar we are, the less evil one might seem. This quotation also highlights the potential affects and effects of invoking evil in political rhetoric against a perceived enemy, an idea I will return to in Chapter 6.

5.6 Summary

Some participants (e.g., Nick, Nikolai, and Serena) initially focused on what they visualized, their images of evil. These included what they pictured from horror films and religious imagery, ugly villains (particularly from Disney animated films), as well what they could not see (darkness and the unknown). The latter category connects with the

tropes from horror and religion, such as the occult, the Latin root of which is literally what cannot be seen.

Participants (e.g., Strawberry) commented not only on what images came to mind, but also on what they felt. These included bodily sensations such as cold and shivery, as well as more cognitive feelings, like fear and unease.

Another category of conceptualization was evil as something abnormal and extraordinary. Participants (e.g., Nikolai, Amnis) did not expect to witness, or be a part of, evil in their own lives; rather, extraordinary individuals (e.g., Hitler) and amorphous groups (e.g., ISIS) perpetuate evil. This understanding is particularly heightened in historical contexts; for example, it seemed easier to label historical events as evil than contemporary ones. When asked if they saw evil in historical events, all the participants mentioned an event from a different place and time (e.g., the Holocaust/Shoah in Europe, slavery in the United States).

Participants (e.g., Kira, Kunta, and Amnis) did not generally see plants and animals as capable of evil, and when some animals were indicated as capable, their cognitive abilities were assumed to be on par (or close to on par) with those of humans. To perpetuate evil, someone requires an awareness that what they are about to do is wrong, thus they intend to undertake an evil act. Such an act may or may not involve sadistic pleasure in causing harm, and/or lack of remorse afterwards. Some participants (e.g., Tom) shifted those who genuinely repent after their evil deed from the category of "evil" to merely "bad."

The final category, evil as subjective, revealed that there is no universal evil—that evil is a matter of personal or societal perspective. What is evil to me might not be evil to

someone else; much like the saying, “one person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom fighter.” Participants such as Kunta and Martin, however, revealed a much more nuanced view than simply that truism. A common thread was that the more you know about people, the less likely you would be to label them as evil. This applies particularly to historical figures (e.g., Hitler) and fictional characters from television and film (e.g., Darth Vader and Voldemort), and partially explains why it might be so difficult to label those in our daily lives as evil. Related to this difficulty in labelling evil is that people were not seen as being born evil. Instead, how they were raised and their environment were interpreted as having a larger impact. Again, this idea was drawn out in terms of historical figures and fictional characters. Having mentioned this subjectivity, however, many participants indicated that they would use the term “evil” for atrocities:

- of a notable scale (e.g., a genocide of many people),
- of a particular intensity (e.g., a horrific event even against one person, such as rape); and,
- against innocent victims (e.g., children).

As noted in the section about evil as a human quality, participants spoke to the requirements of awareness, intent, sadistic pleasure, and/or lack of remorse.

Although these findings are interesting in themselves, my motivations as a researcher are linked to curriculum and pedagogy. The implications of these webbed conceptualizations for education are many. From the referential aspect of evil as images, an analysis of pictures in textbooks is warranted. What pictures of figures like Adolf Hitler are chosen by authors and publishers, and why? Thinking of the aspect of evil as affects and effects, how might images and textual descriptions of genocides and other

horrific events produce sensations and feelings in students? Another implication stems from the referential aspect of evil conceived of as being in the human realm. How might a posthuman perspective decenter this positioning and affect student understandings of historical and contemporary agency? How might such a perspective shift alter student understandings of historical events?

Although all of the implications listed above are worthy of study, in this dissertation I will focus on two intersections between the structural aspects of the outcome space that I suggest will be helpful for social studies educators: to trouble the *politics of evil* and *villainification*, each of which are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 respectively. I chose these two intersections because of their particular relevance to curriculum and pedagogy, as well as my intentions as a researcher. In social studies, educators are generally expected to build students' political literacy skills and capacities for critical thinking, and these implications arose from my commitment at the beginning of my doctorate to think seriously about how we might teach issues like war, genocide, and systemic racism in ways that produce feelings of agency and responsibility without descending into despair.

Both the politics of evil and villainification reflect the power that the word evil has when it is applied to a person (e.g., Osama bin Laden) or a group (e.g., Muslims). Returning to Serena's quotation from §5.1:

> I feel like evil is such an extreme word that nothing really matches it. It's a shooting word; it's just loaded. It's taking it to a whole new level. It takes it to a religious aspect as well somewhat because like evil is traditionally rooted from

> Satan and all that religious stuff; so it's a really loaded term and nothing really matches it.

I define the politics of evil as the invocation of evil in political rhetoric against a person or group that (intentionally or not) stifles democratic debate, and can promote hate speech, such as George W. Bush's reference to the Axis of Evil. The politics of evil encourages obedience to political authority, and thus the ability to deconstruct it is a meaningful form of political literacy, helping students to understand and navigate political rhetoric. The concept of order-words (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2008) helps illuminate participant responses about the effects and affects of a country's leader naming an individual or group as evil. I elaborate on the politics of evil in the next chapter.

Villainification is the process of creating a single villain as the face of systemic harm. As Nick stated (See §5.5.1):

> Throughout our lives, even when we don't know anything about WWII, even when we are young, we know there's a guy called Adolf Hitler. Because he's like, people make us believe that he was the leader, which he was. He controlled everyone in his group to do the exact same things he did. So, it makes it look like he's controlling everyone. But I believe he didn't do that. Eichmann, for example, just the fact that he knows what this group is about and what Hitler does, too, makes him just as bad.

Hitler becomes a singular villain instead of part of a horrific process that involved countless people in Germany and beyond. Villainification shuts down thinking about mundane processes and the actions of the general population, and so troubling it can reopen inquiry into historical and contemporary issues, and our shared sense of

interconnected responsibility. *Action* (Arendt, 1958/1998), the banality of evil (Arendt, 1963/2006), simulacrum/terror (Badiou, 1998/2001), and Symbolic Evil (Baudrillard, 1990/1993) are helpful philosophical tools to provide educational avenues to combat the problems regarding individual responsibility that participants articulated via their conceptualizations of evil. Villainification is the subject of Chapter 7. Provoking inquiry in both the politics of evil and villainification through the intersections of how youths imagine, perceive, and intellectualize evil speak to educational issues in the sense of thinking independently from authority, but interconnected with others.

CHAPTER 6: THE POLITICS OF EVIL

Political rhetoric that employs the word and concept of evil can be troubling. An invocation of evil evokes such ideas of evil and thus can (intentionally or not) stifle democratic debate, and promote hate speech. Such a politics of evil is harmful to the process of thinking in a public sense—thinking independently from authority, but interconnected with others—because this rhetoric taps into bodily affects and cognitive effects of our nascent understandings of evil, creating an "us versus them" mentality more so than a critical engagement with policies and their effects.

Even before my teaching career, I felt anger and anxiety regarding the ability that politicians seemed to have to manipulate their citizens. After reading Dews (2008) and his discussion of the Axis of Evil (p. 2) in the early stages of my doctorate, however, this concern became heightened and explicitly associated with the invocation of evil. This led to me asking participants:

> What do you think about presidents and prime ministers using the word evil in political speeches? U.S. President has called ISIS "Evil" and our Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, has called Iran as well as "ideologies" like Nazism and terrorism "Evil". What do you think about that? Do you agree, disagree, or partially agree? Why or why not? Why might Harper say that?

In addition to this direct question, I identified the politics of evil as a reflection of participant responses from other questions that are interconnected to the referential aspects of: the sense that evil is other (not us), fear, and the idea that the more you know about someone or something, the harder it is to label them as evil. The politics of evil taps into fear and all the other associated bodily affects and cognitive effects of evil. By

calling someone or something evil, the deep recesses of our bodies and minds react, and thus impact how we understand what is happening. These affects and effects contribute to the identification of evil as other, not something we ourselves could be. Our supposedly rational judgment is coloured by the label of evil, especially by authority figures we (are taught to) respect and trust. For many, political leaders such as presidents and prime ministers hold such a position. These aspects of participant responses, paired with a discussion of the power inherent in the label of evil via Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/2008) order-words, inform aspects of political literacy beneficial to social studies education.

Meaningful political literacy is more than learning about systems of voting and political parties. Also vital are issues like the effects and affects of political rhetoric and propaganda, including hate speech. These issues can be exacerbated by parallels in popular media, such as through television shows like *24* (Surnow & Cochran, 2001-2016), although other media can provide an important foil, including motion pictures like *The Dark Knight* (Nolan, 2008).

6.1: The Problem of Political Rhetoric

6.1.1: Political invocations of evil. Politicians (and their speech writers) have employed evil in their rhetoric in many places and times. Given the images, affects, and effects that can be produced by such an invocation of evil (demons, evil spirits, fear, unease, shivers), this usage is troubling. Three days after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, President G.W. Bush stated that "our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil" in a speech at the National Cathedral for a prayer service (Bush, 2001). This task of combatting evil soon justified

the war in Afghanistan. One of the most famous examples from North America comes from a year later, when Bush used the phrase “Axis of Evil,” stating that there are “truths that we will never question: Evil is real, and it must be opposed” to prime citizen complacency toward the war in Iraq (Bush, 2002).

Bush’s usage of evil, however, was not a new phenomenon for presidents of the United States, and certainly has not been the last. Reagan famously called the Soviet Union an “evil empire” in a speech to discourage U.S. citizens from voting to decrease their nuclear arsenal (Reagan, 1983). Current U.S. President Obama has labeled the organization ISIS as a “brand of evil” with which there can be no reasoning or negotiation. This statement encourages military action alone, instead of also deconstructing how and why a group like ISIS has emerged (Borger & Wintour, 2014).

Canadian politicians are not immune to the politics of evil. Former Canadian Prime Minister Harper has linked Nazism, Marxist-Leninism, and terrorism together as reinventions of a similar evil that seeks to destroy “human liberty” (Perkel, 2014), which simplifies the current geopolitical situation with Russia. These are a few examples of how politicians have employed evil in their rhetoric, but there are countless more. The question then is: Why should we (as educators, or in general as human beings) spend time talking about the politics of evil?

6.1.2: Effects on citizen behaviour. Why such rhetoric is dangerous is that it has repercussions for how we behave as citizens, shutting down thought about our government actions at home and abroad. Stern (2004) notes:

> If we see ourselves as fighting evil rather than a mere threat to national security (among many such threats), we are more willing to make sacrifices. Dread of evil

> cements societies, Jeremy Bentham observed, more than the hope for good. (p. 1113)

Star Wars fans know all too well what process is initiated by fear; in the words of Yoda, "Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering" (Lucas, 1999). Although this process is understandable, the effects can be catastrophic, such as the toll of death and suffering as a result of the U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, not to mention the proliferation of domestic policies that removes citizens' rights. The politics of evil can shift public attention away from government (in)actions and policies:

> AMNIS: I guess it's kind of twisting the word, especially Bush—the Axis of Evil, you know… [Politicians] are just using that towards their own needs, especially for Bush. It's much easier to become president in wartime and stay president. Like, you create an out group or an in group it's much easier to control your in group, it's us versus them. It's a lot easier to control your own population. That stops people from pointing fingers at you.

This process of shutting down critical thought is partly on account of the bodily affects and cognitive effects of evil. Kira spoke about the fear produced by naming someone or something as evil: "It kind of gives a notion of fear. So, if something is bad you don't necessarily have to be afraid of it. But if it's evil, it sounds terrifying." Anyone can tap into these feelings, but the impact can be more severe when a politician invokes evil. If a politician uses the word evil, those who hear the speech might take it as a given, rather than questioning it (as we might with a peer). As Nick said, "I think that it does have an effect on normal people. Like if our own Prime Minister says Marxism is evil, I think Canadians will tend to believe him." Serena noted a similar process:

SERENA: Everyone believes what the prime minister and president say, because they are the leaders. So if they label terrorism as evil, then we are going to think that, and we won't want to back down or compromise. I think it hinders us from resolving issues… If you label it as evil, you are going to take it at face value, you are not going to dig deeper and see that we did this to them and that's why they are doing it back.

Although there certainly are those who do not take what their leaders say as absolute truth, Serena importantly notes that the politics of evil can stifle debate about policy and critical thinking about government policies and the roots of systemic issues. Jean spoke a similar termination of deeper thinking: "once you label people or something then you feel that's sort of done enough for now."

6.1.3: Consequences of political rhetoric. Some of my participants did not necessarily disagree with the label of evil; however, they were cautious about the effects of that label. For example, many thought it was appropriate to label ISIS as evil because the beheadings perpetuated by that group fit the tipping points of evil, particularly intensity and scale. Regardless, a few participants were wary of the political and social repercussions, such as anti-Muslim hate speech and violence, as well as a failure to examine systemic issues that caused a group like ISIS to emerge. Similarly, participants spoke about the terrorist attacks of 9/11 as evil (due to the scale of innocent lives lost), but were concerned about what they saw as intended consequences. Tom stated:

TOM: The effect that it has on the people can be very strong indeed, especially if it is a popular leader. If something is called evil then other people will consider it evil as well. Unfortunately this can have unwanted side effects. For example,

> there was a period of racism against Muslims in the United States post-9/11, which perhaps was in part spurred by the naming of the Axis of Evil, of course part of it was by the act of pure evil that was 9/11, but part of it might be the naming of the Axis of Evil. It sets the people of a country against those other people and sometimes they can stereotype and generalize.

When politicians utilize the word evil, there can be harmful consequences. The politics of evil is dangerous because it negatively affects citizen behavior, discouraging critical thought about government policy, simplifying complex issues, and potentially fostering prejudice and hate speech.

6.2: Hate Speech

Related to the politics of evil is the link between the label of evil and hate speech. Although hate speech can and does exist without political rhetoric, it is exacerbated when paired with politics. Our nascent understandings of evil, particularly an association of evil with ugliness, shape our interactions with others, particularly by tapping into images of evil from popular culture. This section begins with an explanation of ugliness and evil as a link to political propaganda and hate, and then moves into a discussion of evil as an order-word (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2008).

6.2.1: Ugliness and evil. Images of evil often rely on a chain of signification based upon social conventions. Serena, much to her own surprise, found herself drawing heavily from Disney movies, particularly *The Little Mermaid* and the character of Ursula:

> It's automatically what I think of. And I find it interesting that all the evil people in Disney are always old and ugly, and they always put them out to be women, and never men. It's always an older female. It's just the stereotype.

Evil people are old, ugly, often female, and entirely Other—outcasts of society. Such signifiers are not new to Western society. The ancient Greeks had a saying, καλὸς κἀγαθός (kalos kagathos), which is often translated as the beautiful (καλὸς) and (και) the good (αγαθός) (Liddell & Scott, 1996). Those who fit societal standards of attractiveness were assumed to have an equally good character or level of ability. Sociologists have noted this as a significant cognitive bias in play, dubbed the Halo Effect—the tendency to rate attractive people more favourably in terms of their other characteristics (e.g., Lachman & Bass, 1985; Thorndike, 1920). Conversely, unattractive people are assumed to have negative characteristics (Fabello, 2013).

These negative associations are particularly heightened when linked to a notion of evil. Kira noted not only the signifiers of evil, but also the impact of naming evil for political propaganda:

> KIRA: It's like through the years evil is portrayed as the one you are against politically usually. So, it's like those [U.S. Second World War propaganda] cartoons we watched where the bad guys were, like, Japanese people with bad teeth and stuff. And then they were evil because they were ugly. Oh yeah—evil and ugly. They always make the pretty person good and the ugly person evil. [Characters in Disney movies] are also ugly and they have big noses. I heard that some of them might be a thing to attach to the Jews.

Kira's example of the Jews is illuminating. This group was repeatedly dehumanized and denigrated, which paved the way for a removal of basic rights and eventually the death of millions. The association of evil with darkness (e.g., Kunta, Nikolai) comes into play here as well. Whether it is the Jews hiding in the shadows in Nazi propaganda or witches

wearing black clothing, stereotypes of evil permeate these images. As a personal example, watching the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and the character of Saruman, the white wizard, was jarring. His bright white robes did not seem to fit with his “dark” personality and sinister plans. Although arguably not beautiful, the actor who plays Saruman, Christopher Lee, meets Western societal standards for an older man—tall, slender, and a full head of hair. Such reactions to non-ugly evildoers are not confined to the world of fantasy. An article from WhatCulture.com notes the confusion when a beautiful woman is a murderer:

> Everyone has certain preconceptions about criminals, and the popular image of a violent killer is certainly not a flattering one; perhaps you’d expect a hardened killer to look shifty, with cold dead eyes; your idea of a serial killer might be a wild-eyed maniac, probably wielding a bloody weapon. But what if the phrase painted the image of a gorgeous, wholesome looking girl-next-door? Or a sultry single lady, all dyed blonde hair and perfect makeup? Those notions don’t quite measure up with what we expect. (Mathers, 2014, para 1-2)

Our preconceived notions of what killers, or any other evildoer, should look like, shapes our suspicions of, and reactions to, other humans.

Associating a group with evil, and (re)producing caricatures of members of these groups as dark and/or ugly, can contribute to hate speech. Hate speech can involve a variety of methods to incite violence or prejudicial action. Labelling a group as evil taps into powerful images from religion, popular media, and other sources that draw off perpetuated norms of beauty (or lack thereof). However, most importantly, this label of evil is its own force that influences what we think and what we do. By associating an

oppressed group (in Kira's example, the Jews) with evil (and vice versa), there can be a tremendous intensity that affects us consciously and unconsciously.

6.2.2: Order-words. The use of the word and concept of evil (as previously mentioned in §3.4.1) produces an intensity that affects our assumptions and actions. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2008), language transforms us, not physically, but in terms of our social position, or how we interact with others. The application of the word "evil," like the word "guilty," can change social positions in a profoundly negative way. For example, I asked participants how they would react differently if I said, "watch out for that guy, he's evil," versus "watch out for that guy, he's bad." Estavan responded: "Well, if he's bad, I'd just think more that he's rude, he's impolite, whereas if you said evil I'd be more suspicious about him." To partially repeat Kunta's quote from Chapter 5:

> KUNTA: The word evil is more than I don't like that person or you should be afraid of them—they are evil, they will hurt you, you should be scared. It's that kind of feeling that it gives off.… it's about the majority view… it's not that there's evil and then there's the other people, there's evil and then there's *us*.

Evil and otherness are intimately entwined. "We" can never be evil—such a term is reserved for those whom we deem as not belonging, which, of course, can never be us. The order-word of evil shapes our interactions with these groups and the objects that are associated with them (symbols, foods, etc.), and we can use stereotypes and other prejudices to justify our assumptions. The evil group, the *villains*, can now more easily be denied even the most basic of rights, much like *criminals* are more easily denied rights than those designated as *citizens*. Such a discourse provides a "new signifier that comes to reorganize the symbolic field"; the bodies have not changed, but the level of

expression has (Bryant, 2011, para.8). The naming of evil may not physically change someone's body, but it has profound implications for how that body is treated, where that body is considered legitimately to be, and the intents ascribed to those bodies' actions.

These processes are constantly in play. An Internet search in January 2016 revealed a Yahoo Answers section on "Why are Muslims so evil?" with 30 answers (Anonymous, n.d.). The so-called "best answer" cites violent passages from the Qu'ran, listing those who Muhammad supposed killed. This was posted four years ago and has garnered comments over the years, some critical of the author (and the question itself), but others are clearly hate speech, powered by the affect of evil, such as:

> [Muslims] complain about their own lands. Move to those of others, scream RACIST every time anyone complains and try to make that land like the one they left. *They're evil and should be exterminated*. Every group should recognise that these people are a disease on the earth that must be eliminated.

The roots of this hate speech may have been affected by the exacerbated climate of hate against Muslims since 9/11, likely stemming from both political rhetoric and popular culture. In such cases of hate speech, evil is invoked with potentially tragic consequences.

6.3: The Politics of Evil in Popular Television: Jack Bauer in *24*.

The politics of evil is not confined to formal political rhetoric; it also is reflected in popular media, thus potentially exacerbating the effect of such rhetoric in our everyday lives. For example, the Fox television network series *24* (Surnow & Cochran, 2001-2016) follows Jack Bauer, an agent for the Counter Terrorist Unit in the United States, and mirrors contemporary political issues such as terrorism and torture. A television show like *24* (Surnow & Cochran, 2001-2016) can be interpreted as perpetuating the politics of

evil—it “pushes complex issues aside in favour of empty rhetoric” (Lewis, 2011, p. 173). This quotation reflects the views of Martin, who had noted that some popular movies and television portray an uncomplicated view of evil, in contrast with media that is “very well done” that shows nuances. The show *24* would fall into the former category. It is folly, then, to assume “national political rhetoric and film/TV entertainment as mutually exclusive areas [because] the construct of good and evil – or, more accurately, good *v.* evil – clearly undergirds both” (Norden, 2007, p. xii). It should be noted, however, that although politics and entertainment “share a mutually causal relationship… that relationship remains a conundrum resistant to easy explanations” (Norden, 2007, p. xiii). Instead of attempting to separate real and fictional evil, it is more fruitful to increase our awareness of evil, regardless of the method used to achieve this goal (Norden, 2007, p. xvii).

Media culture can produce “representations that attempt to induce consent to certain political positions… popular culture texts naturalize these positions and thus help mobilize consent to hegemonic political positions” (Kellner, 1995, p. 59). In a broad sense, audiovisual media like television is “a bearer/provoker of meanings and pleasures… a crucial part of the social dynamics by which the social structure maintains itself in a constant process of production and reproduction” (Fiske, 2010, p. 1). This is not to say that one meaning is constructed. In fact, television and film can invoke a multitude of potential meanings, but the dominant ideology tends to lead the audience to “structures of preference” (Fiske, 2010, p. 65). For example, in the post 9/11 era, there has been a surge of television and film inspired by or responding to the event (Norden, 2007, p. xii).

A specific example is the television show *24* (Surnow & Cochran, 2001-2016). The producers perpetuate the binary between the good guys (e.g., Jack Bauer) and the bad guys (e.g., terrorists like Abu Fayed in season 6) despite the fact that both characters use questionable methods like torture. The differentiation between good and evil is not through their specific actions but through their motivation. Bauer is depicted as forced to use torture in order to serve the greater good of protecting his country at the cost of great personal sacrifice, while Fayed is sadistic and his reasons are to extract personal vengeance for the death of his brother (Lewis, 2011). Bauer himself is tortured, his wife is murdered, and his relationship with his daughter is strained. He is even forced to torture his own brother because of terrorist ties. Bauer suffers emotionally because of his dedication to his country. The producers take great pains to reveal that Bauer is a good man who has the strength to do what needs to be done for national and international law enforcement, and the ends justifies his means. In contrast, Fayed, in his personal vendetta, manipulates followers by using the language of terrorism against the United States more broadly. Shows like *24* reinforce the rhetoric of evil, such as that of G.W. Bush, and potentially also exacerbate the hate speech (and ensuing violence) against Muslims.

6.4: Subverting the Politics of Evil in Popular Film and Television

Although shows like *24* can reinforce a politics of evil, it should also be noted that other popular media can trouble good-evil binaries. Some popular television and films aimed at youth have challenged a strict binary of good and evil. This added complexity highlights the existence of a continuum of good and evil instead of an oppositional relationship and can take the form of evil characters with whom the audience can

empathize. What happens when we empathize with an evil character's motives? What if we understand why villains do what they do, even if we disagree with the methods? Conventional evil narratives (i.e., those with obvious evil characters who are inevitably defeated) can still provoke meaningful questions about how we think about heroism and villainy (Forbes, 2011, p. 25). In this sense, evil is still considered the antithesis of good, and yet evil is very meaningful.

The Dark Knight (Nolan, 2008) is an excellent example of this. The Joker is clearly evil and thus eventually defeated, as the narrative structure and genre lead us to expect. And yet the Joker does not show the same simplicity that the other bad guys, the mobsters, seem to have. The Joker even points to the existence of the banality of evil: "Nobody panics when the *expected* people get killed. Nobody panics when things go according to plan. Even if the plan is horrifying." The Joker, despite his horrifying actions (e.g., using a bomb to destroy a hospital), points to larger issues in play. We might empathize with the Joker's frustrations with the world around him, but likely we disagree with how he seeks to destroy it. In this sense, the Joker could serve as a means to discuss contemporary terrorism. Systemic and personal inequity and tragedy are at the heart of terrorists' motivations. Instead of negating the very real problematic at the heart of terrorism as embodied by Jack Bauer in *24*, the Joker might be a conduit for the difficult discussion about the "War on Terror" and the motivations and flaws manifest on both sides.

What happens when one considers evil further? Understanding and perhaps even empathizing with the "wrong" side is a danger to those in power. Ambiguity and grey zones are not comfortable areas within which to dwell, and could very likely be

considered dangerous to the politicians and policy-makers perpetuating the labelling of others as evil. Regarding contemporary terrorism, broader systemic issues hidden by the label of "evil" include (but are not limited to):

- motivation for hatred of the West (e.g., What has "the West" done to "the terrorists and their families"?);
- violence being seen as the only viable option (e.g., What aspects are there within the Western political system that prevent other voices being heard?); and
- the hypocritical values of freedom held by so-called liberal nations (e.g., Can one be intolerant of intolerance? Can freedom be sacrificed for security and still be freedom?).

These are important issues that generate uncomfortable questions, which in no way are designed to absolve terrorists of their violent actions. Sympathizing and empathizing with situations that breed terrorism does not necessitate agreeing with terrorist methods. Addressing these issues by asking such questions, however, might lead us to more meaningful encounters with the socio-political realities of today and tomorrow.

6.5: Summary

The politics of evil can exacerbate larger issues such as racism and international military conflict, and the politics of evil, in turn, can be exacerbated or subverted by popular film and television. Politicians, when they invoke evil, perpetuate a dangerous mentality of "us versus them," thus simplifying complex issues and encouraging blind obedience to government policies and actions in relation to those issues; for example, Nick and Serena stating that we tend to believe our political leaders, with Serena even noting that we might not "dig deeper" and thus such rhetoric prevents potential

compromises. The use of evil in political rhetoric triggers the bodily affects and cognitive effects we have inherited from social factors such as popular film and television (e.g., Kira speaking about how calling someone or thing evil “sounds terrifying”). Evil as a political meme shuts down thought and analysis, most notably recently regarding the War on Terror:

> by defining terrorists as evil [it] allows them to gloss over both the contexts out of which terrorism grows and the human rights violations manifest in the use of torture by the CIA and military contractors… the broader ideology flattens the argument and hides the more complicated issue driving terrorism. (Lewis, 2011, p. 163)

Furthermore, such rhetoric can encourage hate speech and violence, such as Tom noting the anti-Muslim sentiment fueled by the naming of the Axis of Evil. Evil as an order-word emphasizes otherness. As Kunta noted, “there’s evil and then there’s us.” Discussing the use of evil in political rhetoric, by identifying and then troubling it, provides an opportunity to add meaningful and important complexity to social studies classrooms. These discussions can be a meaningful form of political literacy, and even *subjectification*—thinking independently from authority but interconnected with others. Instead of thoughtlessly following the gut reactions invoked by political speeches, we have an opportunity to sit in the tension that there may not be a situation of good versus evil.

CHAPTER 7: VILLAINIFICATION

Villainification, like the politics of evil, taps into the cognitive effects and bodily affects that evil evokes, primarily those associated with fear. What makes villainification distinct from the politics of evil is its emphasis on individuals (e.g., Osama Bin Laden serves as a villain, while the politics of evil also uses Muslims as an amorphous and oversimplified group). Intersections occur with historical and contemporary villains such as Hitler, Stalin, Kim Jong-Il, and Saddam Hussein, and such examples are of more interest in the context of this dissertation due to the social studies context. The creation of this villain is not just about blame. It is also about a whole persona and its affects and effects. Villainification often involves turning individuals into literal caricatures, with ugly features or characteristics. Thus Hitler, the human, becomes a cartoonish figure who is emphatically small in stature with exaggerated features. The idea of villainification became salient for me during the focus group sessions, as participants discussed the extent to which evil is a process and/or the product of certain individuals and their intentions. As I was analyzing the referential and structural aspects, I found it very difficult to place subcategories under just one category. This led to me to draw connecting lines (See Figure 1), but even those at times could not articulate the complexities of the responses (e.g., the idea of intent arose in a variety of contexts). One nexus of these interconnections, which I call villainification, spoke to the issue of process I had noticed from the focus groups. Thus, while analyzing my outcome space, I began to theorize about villainification in textbooks and popular sentiment.

Villainification identifies a single individual as *the* evil agent, not one of many players in a broader system. This villain is extraordinary, and certainly not anyone to

whom we could relate (i.e., "we" could never cause harm like s/he does). This partially explains why Jean, Kira, Martin, Strawberry, and Tom mentioned that the more personal details they knew about someone, the more difficult they found it to apply the term "evil." The more you know about these supposed villains, the more of yourself and other ordinary people you see in that person. This is related to how Martin saw "well done" media—he used the examples of the book, *The Dinner* (Koch, 2009/2013), and the television series, *Breaking Bad* (Gilligan, 2008-2013)—as depicting complex evil, in which there really was no villain per se, even though harm was indeed inflicted. We, as viewers, are very likely to see aspects of ourselves and other average people in those characters. Such media opens up thought about how we might all be capable of contributing to situations we would label as evil.

Villainification reflects the intersections in the outcome space between participant responses regarding: evil as individual, the sense that evil is other (not us), fear, ugliness, and the idea that the more you know about someone or something, the harder it is to label them as evil. An evil villain, like Hitler, can easily become the face for an atrocity like the Holocaust/Shoah. Evil thus has been identified as housed in one man (who is not "us"), and thus we can dismiss any uncomfortable thoughts about how people like us also played a role. It should be noted, however, that there is a tension between blaming one person for systemic, large-scale harm and diffusing blame into an amorphous entity (e.g., "society"). How might we think, live, and educate in the tension between those two poles—a villain or a faceless mob? If we are to accept personal responsibility without shouldering the blame for what is also a product of "the system," then it behooves us to consider how we might talk about systemic harm. If we, as educators, want students to

genuinely think about their own culpability in harmful processes in contemporary times involving such things as inequality, poverty, and violence, then villainification ought to be avoided. Helpful in this task is a pairing of Arendt's (1963/2006) banality of evil with Badiou's (1998/2001) identification of the evil of simulacrum, as well as an engagement with Baudrillard's (1990/1993) idea of Symbolic Evil.

7.1: The Existence of Villainification

Villainification is a process that mirrors heroification. Heroification is "a degenerative process…[that] turn[s] flesh-and-blood individuals into pious, perfect creatures without conflicts, pain, credibility, or human interest" (Loewen, 2007, p. 11). It is a process of creating a single hero as the face of systemic change, with that person losing their ordinary characteristics. Such a flattening of complexity is troublesome:

> NIKOLAI: Extreme goodness, something that is too perfect, also has a twist in my mind. It's also evil… there has to be that balance and that mix. So I guess something purely evil or something perfectly good or flawless just feels wrong… because when it's good it's so perfect it's like there is something missing. Something's not right.

Villainification is the opposite process, in which a single villain is held responsible for systemic harm, which is common for well-known atrocities like the Holocaust/Shoah. Like heroification, villainification can decrease agency and responsibility, but it is more troubling because—although it is unfortunate that we do not often see how we effect change—it is harmful when we fail to see our own part in the suffering of others (e.g., how many of us inadvertently perpetuate racism, sexism, etc.).

Labeling someone or something as evil can lead the person or event to being discarded as aberrant without much thought. Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, sees the function of tragedy to arouse pity and fear because the characters display a universal human vulnerability to tragic events. Much like the issue Nikolai speaks to, it is important for these characters to be realistic in that they are neither purely virtuous nor purely wicked, and thus they make an error (*hamartia*) as opposed to a purposeful action out of evil intention (Aristotle, 335 BCE/1995, pp. 69-71). Conversely, then, removing that complexity removes the audience's ability to feel the weight of the tragedy. By extension, textbooks remove students' (and teachers') abilities to relate to the historical figures they study. By creating villains, complex situations are oversimplified, thus making more difficult the task of recognizing and evaluating both systemic factors and political policies at home and abroad.

Villainification is an issue in our contemporary times in the media and even in some textbooks. This situation is a particular issue for events featured prominently in popular media and history curriculum. When I asked my standard question in the initial interview about if participants would label any historical events as evil, all 15 participants thought of the Holocaust/Shoah first. Benedict made this comment:

> The easiest example would be the Holocaust, but that's not the example I want to go to right away… The Holocaust just seems like what everybody's going to talk about… It seems to be one of the worst evils, something that is in relatively recent memory. People can, I guess, not really identify with, but understand.

Even though other genocides have occurred more recently (e.g., Bosnia and Rwanda), the Holocaust/Shoah is the first response. This likely contributes to Hitler being considered

as the quintessential villain. In October 2015, The New York Times tweeted a survey about whether or not people would "go back and kill Hitler as a baby." The largest group (42%) would kill Hitler, largely falling into the trap of villainification, in this case, seeing Hitler as solely responsible for the Second World War and the Holocaust. Only 30% responded "no," while 28% were unsure. From the tweets that arose in response to this survey, it seems that some of the "no" responses had more to do with killing a baby than killing Hitler (i.e., they would happily kill him as a teenager or adult). It should be noted, however, that some tweets resisted villainification, such as mykawada (2015) who responded, "No. If it wasn't [t]he baker's son from Austria, it would have been the civil servant's son from Hamburg." This suggests that existing conditions led to inevitabilities in which human agency plays less of a role, of Hitler and by extension anyone else. One ought to be careful that this does not slip into the opposite problem—diffusing responsibility to the point that no one is responsible. Thus, the situation is one where we need to consider a "both/and" situation rather than an "either/or" one. Hitler was indeed responsible for his own actions, but his actions do not negate those of the less famous participants in the atrocities of Nazi Germany. Individuals *and* the group of unknown people who comprise "society" created the situation.

In Canada and the United States, the discourse about many contentious or horrific events can all too easily fall into the trap of villainification or amorphous blame. A representative example of villainification in curriculum can be seen in the mandatory textbook for all students taking senior-level social studies in Alberta, Canada. The textbook, *Perspectives on Nationalism* (Fielding et al., 2009), the sole textbook for Social Studies 30-1, refers either very specifically to Hitler alone or very generally to the Nazi

Party, or both ("Hitler's Nazi Party"), and rarely to the others who contributed to Nazi ideology and action (pp. 172-179, 186-194, 361-363). There are some nods to processes in play; e.g., "such claims took advantage of widespread pre-existing anti-Semitism" (Fielding et al., 2009, p. 177). However, there is no prepositional phrase of "by ______"; broader society is implicated but not named, and thus no one seems to take responsibility. Furthermore, the general impression is that Hitler manipulated these sentiments (which needed no help to be destructive) to his own personal ends: "The ideology of fascism in Nazi Germany was in part an expression of Adolf Hitler's deep-seated hatred of liberalism, Jews, and communists" (Fielding et al., 2009, p. 186). Although the authors quite rightly indicate that Hitler was not the sole agent, leaving out every other factor might leave the reader with only that conclusion. The only hint that people other than Hitler were actively part of the processes in play remains vague: "[Hitler] pledged to restore the economic strength and national pride that he *and others* believed had been lost…" (Fielding et al., 2009, p. 186, emphasis added). Individuals are specifically named in terms of ordinary Germans being affected positively and negatively by Nazi policies; e.g., Liselotte Katcher, the Bishop of Limberg, Sophie Scholl, and Luise Essig (Fielding et al., 2009, p. 188-192). Although we might laud the inclusion of a variety of voices to prevent the assumption that all Germans were Nazis, there is still no mention of the ordinary Germans who were not only affected but also agents in the Nazi regime. A student could read this textbook and be left with only the impression of Hitler as the evil villain while the rest of the German population watched either gleefully or fearfully. Hitler understandably dominates historical accounts because he was a totalitarian dictator. Nonetheless, Hitler would not have risen to power, or maintained that power,

without others—notable figures such as Goebbels and Himmler as well as lesser known cogs-in-the-wheel such as Eichmann—actively working toward Nazi ideology.

7.2: The Problem of Villainification

It is dangerous to create villains, focusing on an individual at the expense of groups and systems. A focus that rests too much on the villain (e.g., Adolf Hitler, Saddam Hussein) and not also the processes and everyday people involved allows us to shut down our thinking about the part that we all play, or could have played, in the atrocities we are quick to condemn and blame on a select few others; whereas, countering villainification implicates us all. In focus groups, this process was observed in the context of placing Hitler and Eichmann on a spectrum of more to less evil. Nick, Estavan, and Amnis debated with each other:

> NICK: In order to be part of a process of evil, the people inside of it, most of them must be evil… [Eichmann] may have different motives [than Hitler], but he understands those motives.
>
> AMNIS: He [Eichmann] put his needs ahead of others. I need a job promotion, I'm going to kill thousands of people.
>
> CvK: When we label Hitler as evil, does that give people the impression that he is the only evil one, or do people get the impression that guys like Eichmann exist and are culpable?
>
> AMNIS: I think the people kind of forget. It's easy to put a face on evil. Even all those normal people were part of something so bad.
>
> ESTAVAN: Yeah it's not discussed as much because he is more of the main person.

NICK: There is also propaganda in some ways. They want it all to be forced upon one person and use that as an excuse. It's because of this guy that this stuff happened. It's not everyone else.

ESTAVAN: So that the others will be seen as less evil.

After this focus group, I asked each member individually about the conversation regarding the Holocaust and the role of Hitler as compared with the more ordinary people who enabled the atrocity. Kunta spoke powerfully to the frightening proposition of ordinary people being evil and/or creating processes of evil:

KUNTA: Adolf Eichmann, we out him as kind of central because, yes, he did take part in killing people and facilitated a genocide—he wasn't forced—but it was his job; it was indirect. There was anonymity between him and his work that made him both responsible and not responsible.

CvK: Given what you have just said about Eichmann, who scares you more, Hitler or Eichmann?

KUNTA: (pauses) Probably Adolf Eichmann a little bit more just because he shut off all moral sense and just did it. It was his job, he got paid, then he went home to his family and enjoyed the rest of his day. While Hitler he believed that Jews are an inferior race, but Eichmann just took someone else's belief without questioning it and just accepted it.

CvK: So why does that scare you more?

KUNTA: Because there will be one Hitler, but there will be several Eichmanns, which is the scarier part because those are the people acting on it. There's only so

> much damage that Hitler can do, but then Hitler and his followers and his army, it just kind of poisons minds.

Eichmann's case brings to the fore the fundamental problem of villainification. One person cannot be the symbol of an evil process and a horrific individual simultaneously. For Eichmann, he "was either made to stand for all of Nazism and for every Nazi, or he was considered the ultimately pathological individual. It seemed not to matter to the prosecutors that these two interpretations were basically in conflict" (Butler, 2011, para. 12). Those who perpetuate evil are not extraordinary villains acting alone; rather, ordinary humans with ordinary lives perpetuate systemic harm, perhaps even with little to no thought regarding how they are contributing to evil. As one participant aptly noted:

> KIRA: I'd say, it's not that we focus too much on Hitler but it's just that we don't focus enough on other people who made it work. Hitler is, like, the poster boy for the war, but there's other people. It's like how we have superheroes it's not just like one person, one thing we focus on. We don't really think about the inner workings of it all.

While *heroification* creates uncomplicated icons that students cannot possibly hope to emulate (Loewen, 2007), villainification reduces cruel systems or movements to the thoughts and actions of one individual. Both processes simplify intricate webs of events, people, and ideologies into their most basic components. This does an injustice not only to the past, but also to the present and future. Students (and their teachers) learn that positive social change occurs through the heroic actions of individuals rather than broad, coordinated mobilization (den Heyer, 2012), and thus evil occurs at the whim of a madman rather than through everyday actions that support injustice. Neither heroes nor

villains, students can come to see themselves as the bystanders of the past, present, and future. This research project, however, illustrates that when students are probed further about these events as a product, in part, of ordinary people and processes, they can hold individuals accountable without hyper-individualization. Thus, a major implication for this research is to create opportunities for students to have these conversations, which I argue can be accomplished generatively with Arendt, Badiou, and Baudrillard.

7.3: Avoiding Villainification

Investigating the form and function of villainification can reinvigorate the complexity inherent in our human situation, pushing back against the ways school texts can portray historical actors, in which, "not only victims, but also victimizers, collaborators, resisters, bystanders, and rescuers were all individualized or collectively represented, normalized or exoticized, personalized or abstracted—that is, if their roles were included in the first place" (Schweber, 2004, p. 157). Hyper-individualized representations of the victimizers, who have undergone a process of villainification, propagates a form of Arendtian thoughtlessness about the evils of history. Badiou's (1998/2001) identification of the evil of simulacrum paired with Arendt's (1963/2006) banality of evil can provide necessarily complexity to the idea that evil deeds require evil intent. This is an important step to avoiding villainification, as we avoid creating a false image of an evil villain plotting and scheming to harm others. I contend that this is helpful particularly in the realm of curriculum development and textbook writing. There also ought to be some thought regarding pedagogy. For this, I turn to Baudrillard's (1990/1993) idea of Symbolic Evil. If we, as educators, indeed want to encourage youths to think independently, we need to be open to ideas beyond what we anticipate. Although

Symbolic Evil can produce all sorts of outcomes, paired with Arendtian *action* (i.e., thinking in a public sense beyond our own specific needs and wants), there is enormous potential for discovering different ways we might live together as human beings.

7.3.1: Engaging with Badiou. Some hyper-individualization is related to the idea of intent. Although it is easy to see Hitler's intent through his own words in *Mein Kampf*, it is not so easy to see the intent of others, particularly those who often remain nameless and faceless to us. By over-emphasis on intent, we can forget about the people like Eichmann in the world. What if, like many of us in our daily lives, you are not intending evil? What if you are following what you think is "good," or simply following what the majority is doing?

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Badiou (1998/2001) defines three types of evil: betrayal, simulacrum/terror, and disaster. His identification of simulacrum is helpful for the task of anti-villainification because it does not rely on a destructive intent. Badiou (1998/2001) explores simulacrum through an example of the Nazis. What those within the Nazi Party were pursuing, contrary to their rhetoric, was not the pursuit of something true or novel, but rather a reproduction of the same petty nationalism as before, invoking the One—the one way of being German. Nothing new was created; no new truth was discovered. Based on a falsely posited German "soul, [with] its blood, and its race," the Nazi pursuit of truth really was nothing more than the "continuity with [that which came] before… faithful only to the alleged national substance of a people" (Badiou, 1998/2001, p. 73). This prescribed notion of the German nation was exclusionary—unlike a truth procedure that is open to any potential becoming subject. Many of those adhering to the simulacrum, in this case the false sense of one way of being German, likely did not have

the intent to cause pain and suffering; rather; they even had good intentions (albeit for a select group of people). If we, as humans, are to think in a public sense and take Arendtian *action*, we ought to foster the capabilities to distinguish the difference between an event and a simulacrum.

Badiou's understandings of evil can help us with the task of anti-villainification, particularly considering the outcome space regarding evil as individual, the sense that evil is other (not us), and the idea that the more you know about someone or something, the harder it is to label them as evil. Badiou helps us to see the processes that ordinary people like us can contribute to (regardless of our awareness or intent), and thus we have a responsibility to identify simulacra in Badiou's (1998/2001) sense. A participant, Martin, speaks to this personal responsibility to make oneself aware of processes that are evil, and thus an argument for innocence based on ignorance or lack of intent becomes irrelevant:

> MARTIN: I think that you can see the difference in Eichmann because some people can think that even if you are put into that place you are still responsible for your actions. You can still get out of that. *You still need to make an effort to see that this is wrong*. This needs to be amended; however, at least in my opinion, we need to take into consideration that this is really hard to do.

What I interpret from Martin's statement is that one must try to see through a simulacrum like the Nazi movement, however difficult that might be (and yet appreciate that this is a difficult task). Individuals like Eichmann have a responsibility to think in a genuinely critically way to uncover simulacra; after all, there were those who did just that, who then acted upon that realization with great personal risk. What is ideal, however, is to identify

a simulacrum in its larval stages (e.g., demagogues before they acquire executive power, nationalist posturing before discrimination and genocide occurs), so that this personal risk is reduced. Arendtian thoughtfulness can help us guard against thoughtless adherence to simulacra.

7.3.2: Engaging with Arendt. If we, as members of society, are to be able to identify a simulacrum, we must be able to think independently from authority as it manifests itself in government and social pressure. This is the sort of thoughtfulness that avoids the banality of evil (Arendt, 1963/2006). It behooves us to ponder the effects of our deeds, even daily mundane aspects such as how we might run our household or purchase goods. Amnis had mentioned slavery as an example of a historical evil in his initial interview, and so I asked him in his follow-up interview to relate the idea of the culpability of ordinary people to that example:

> CvK: Let's return to your example of slavery. Do you see that as a process? Or do you see that as 'it just sort of happens'? How do you see something like that coming about?
>
> AMNIS: I guess it's kind of like a process. People decide, "Alright, I'm going to take that person, rip them out of their home, and force them work for me, right?" And I guess that is evil because they *do* realize the consequences. That person will never see their family again, not going to have their own choices. I'm going to force them to do something.
>
> CvK: What about someone who doesn't take the slaves? Like just buys them from a slave owner, so it's the USA and a plantation owner buys them from a slave farm. What's your opinion there?

AMNIS: That's kind of more grey. It's kind of evil. It's pretty much evil, but kind of almost not because they probably kind of don't see them as people any more, they kind of see them as a commodity, like buying a machine or something.

CvK: So what makes them see those other humans that way?

AMNIS: I guess maybe because of how they've been raised. They are a rich person, kind of maybe they have different ideas, like "these people aren't really people, they are poor people," maybe, "oh these are peasants they don't have the same brains as us and aren't as smart as us" maybe. Maybe "they deserve this." They kind of delude themselves into think that this is ok. But I don't think that the majority of people are like, "oh yeah, I'm evil and I'll make sure that all these people are going to work for me," right? Most of them have deluded themselves into thinking "this is normal, it'll happen forever, right? If I don't buy a slave it's not going to make a difference," so they keep doing it anyways.

Amnis' thoughts are helpful for the task of anti-villainification, particularly the last section; he makes it clear that ordinary people can contribute to great harm through their processes of rationalization, and provides insights as to how such processes can occur. If we do not see ourselves as capable of evil, then we can block out any dissonance we might feel about our participation in wrongdoing, such as slavery. Tying the philosophies of Arendt and Badiou together with Amnis' example, slavery was a simulacrum, which could only be realized by those willing to accept their own deeds as contributing to an evil. Slavery created a false situation of a superior "us" (slave owners) and an inferior "them" (slaves), and thus the supposed truth procedure is limited to a select group. Those speaking against the simulacrum faced many risks—the terror enforced by those seduced

by simulacrum. If we are to encourage independent thinking, especially when it comes at great personal risk, we need a sense that our deeds have an impact. Villainification hurts such efforts because it can all too easily become a crutch to prevent feeling the implications of our (in)actions. There are many ways to shirk responsibility, and so it is a difficult task to take personal responsibility, given that we likely do not identify as either a hero or a villain.

As helpful as it is to consider historical atrocities like the Holocaust/Shoah, it is also important to highlight contemporary occurrences to prevent arguments along the lines of "well, that doesn't happen here." For example, Gopnik (2016) discusses the dangerous acceptance of Donald Trump as a U.S. presidential candidate:

> He's not Hitler, as his wife recently said? Well, of course he isn't. But then Hitler wasn't Hitler—until he was. At each step of the way, the shock was tempered by acceptance. It depended on conservatives pretending he wasn't so bad, compared with the Communists, while at the same time the militant left decided that their real enemies were the moderate leftists, who were *really* indistinguishable from the Nazis. The radical progressives decided that there was no difference between the democratic left and the totalitarian right and that an explosion of institutions was exactly the most thrilling thing imaginable. (Gopnik, 2016, para. 6)

This discussion of normal concerns and commitments in play during Hitler's rise of power is a helpful one that educators might have with their students. What ordinary (in this case, political) concerns might obscure us from recognizing simulacra? Good intentions based upon religion can also be a factor, such as Canadian residential schools. Here, both the system (i.e., Christianity, and specifically missionary mentalities) and

individuals (i.e., those who abused children) are implicated. How might we hold individuals accountable for their deeds while also recognizing the systemic, collective element as well, perhaps thinking of someone as guilty of thoughtless support for simulacra as well as their individual crime? Would pondering these questions highlight the responsibility we all must take in our daily lives?

7.3.3: Engaging with Baudrilard. If educators wish to foster Arendtian action in the face of simulacra, it is important to also cultivate a sense that there are other possibilities for how we might live together in society. An appreciation for Symbolic Evil (Baudrillard, 1990/1993) can encourage a disposition open to the emergence of something new (or the re-emergence of something from the past). Although teachers can certainly map out possible alternatives, this does not necessarily encourage students to feel that the future is an open space, yet to be determined.

Evil as a force for metamorphosis and becoming is seen positively in great revolutionaries like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi who tap into Evil as "the energy of challenge, defiance, creativity, and renewal" (Pawlett, 2014, §3, para. 1). The label of evil is subjective and linked to the moral precepts of the time:

> TOM: I guess the moral precepts of the Bible, for example the commandments, "thou shall not steal" or things like that like [dictate what's evil]. It's not just in Christian dogma, but in many societies, stealing is bad, especially if you are stealing just for the sake of it or causing harm, then that is evil. Now, it gets more complicated in a *Les Misérables* situation, stealing for the greater good, then you have to go through the conventional morality. You have to think of what frame of evil you are using. Evil might be relative depending on how people perceive it.

> Like in *Les Misérables*, the police and the government might see it as "You stole; this is bad. You go to jail," but the main character saw it as post-conventional morality.

The main character of *Les Misérables*, Jean Valjean, was defiant against authority, thinking instead in terms of what is more important than following the rules.

Although discussions of radical figures are important to deconstruct our notion of subjective evil, we must guard against heroification. We must also be wary of Baudrillard's creative sense of Symbolic Evil falling into the trap of anthropocentrism as a form of speciesism or individualism. Thus, a sense of interconnection between and among all humans-non-humans is necessary. Such a "scrambling of the species hierarchy" necessitates the acceptance of equality among humans and beyond, thus leaving behind "the inhuman(e) aspects" of humanism (Braidotti, 2013, pp. 145-147). Social systems are "complex, scattered and productive" and so resistance to the power they hold must be the same (Braidotti, 2013, p. 27). Human agency and responsibility to effect change must be examined in terms of not individual homo sapiens, but collections of people together as well as people and other entities on Earth. Thus, how might we, as humans, tap into Symbolic Evil to foster better relations among humans, and between humans and other entities?

7.3.4: Nuanced curricular documents. It is helpful if the curricular focus can shift away from a lone villain and more to the participation of less dramatic players. In some cases, this might mean reconsidering the label of evil. As the participant Martin stated, "when you say an evil person, I would generally [imagine a] *cliché* guy with a cat on his shoulder sitting, controlling his mad empire." In particular, it is important to

consider the dangerous effect the political invocation of evil has towards thoughtlessness and a lack of responsibility. Regardless of whether or not the word evil itself is used, curriculum designers, textbook authors, and teachers have an opportunity to address the many mundane forces behind what we often label as evil without much thought:

> AMNIS: It's way easier to put Hitler as the name of that. Cause then it's like Hitler is a special case, he's a really evil person. He did all of this. People don't ever think that it was normal people just going along with it, that kind of allowed it to happen. It's kind of a dark thought. People don't like thinking about that.

A textbook created for the Advanced Placement European History course by McKay et al. (2011) attempts to provide meaningful complexity to ponder the problem of difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998), which Amnis identifies. At times, the textbook falls into the same trap as that of Fielding et al. (2009). For example, the authors predominantly name Hitler and/or the Nazi party as a whole, at times using "Nazi Germany" or simply "Germany" as the agent of action in the sentence instead of those in the Nazi government, or some other indication of more specific human agency or responsibility (McKay et al, 2011, p. 900). However, there are some notable attempts to counter villainification. There is a brief biography of Hitler, although one that merely notes his parentage and that he was a "mediocre" high school dropout (McKay et al., 2011, p. 901). The most notable anti-villainification is that McKay et al. (2011) aptly point out that "Hitler was not alone" in his racism (p. 901) as "Nazi gangs" wrecked havoc during Kristallnacht (p. 904), while "[n]ot all Germans supported Hitler… and a number of German groups actively resisted him" (p. 907). The authors mention the roles of military commanders, policemen, bureaucrats and other administrators, in addition to the Nazi armies, the Einsatzgruppen,

and the SS (p. 912). The crowning moment of the McKay et al.'s (2011) textbook lies at the end of the section, where the authors identify anti-Semitism, peer pressure, social advancement, Nazi propaganda, and other motivations as leading "ordinary Germans" to "join the SS ideologues and perpetuate ever-greater crimes, from mistreatment to arrest to mass murder" (pp. 913-914). The blame for the atrocities of the war is, quite rightly, spread out among Germans. The authors even note the role that the anti-Semitism of Europeans in general played (McKay et al., 2011, p. 901), although notably they do not mention the anti-Semitism in Britain and the United States. The nuanced descriptions in this textbook potentially enrich students' understandings of the complexities that led to the horrors of the Second World War. Hitler is not depicted as solely to blame, but there is a clear attempt to engage with a more collective sense of responsibility.

7.4: Summary

What I interpret from the participants who spoke to the issue of villainification in some way (especially Nick, Amnis, Estavan, Kunta, Kira, and Martin) is that one must try to see through a simulacrum like the Nazi movement, however difficult that might be, and engage with our capacity for Arendtian *action*. Discussing in the context of historical events (e.g., the Nazi movement) and contemporary ones (e.g., the 2016 U.S. presidential election) Badiou's notion of simulacrum and the terror that can be inflicted when one tries to expose a simulacrum that has gained considerable adherence provides a pedagogical opportunity to examine the forces in play that we might tend to overlook. Individuals have a responsibility to engage in Arendtian thoughtfulness/*action* as a way to pierce through simulacra (in Badiou's sense of what might falsely appear to be a truth procedure). After all, there were those who did just that in Nazi Germany, who then acted

upon that realization with great personal risk. It is quite a task to think critically at the time of simulacrum. As such, it is fruitful to explore the tension between whether or not we see evil as individual versus systemic and extraordinary versus ordinary in our classrooms, and what kinds of pedagogically useful concepts might enable a more meaningful engagement with past, present and future evils.

An explicit awareness of *action*, the banality of evil, and simulacrum (in Badiou's sense) in social studies curriculum and pedagogy, in direct contrast with the politics of evil and villainification, can help students and teachers accept the tension between individual and collective responsibility. An appreciation for Baudrillard's (1990/1003) Symbolic Evil paired with Arendtian thoughtfulness might help give us, as humans, the strength to consider new ways we might live together that avoid hyper-individualization and adherence to simulacra.

CHAPTER 8: FINAL THOUGHTS

Burke and Segall (2011) aptly identify the Judeo-Christian roots of the apple's association with teaching. Teachers are assumed to hold the apple, the key to knowledge of good and evil (i.e., everything). Taking this metaphor further, this dissertation is a call for teachers and students to appreciate the existence of multiple kinds of fruit, and even how we might interrogate our understandings of apples specifically and fruit generally (i.e., conceptualizations of evil and their effects/affects) and to taste them (i.e., see which conceptualizations are helpful in provoking thought). For this research, I asked the question: What conceptualizations of evil do secondary students hold? From this phenomenographical study, it is clear that students can clearly articulate a number of different conceptualizations based on their personal beliefs and experiences, popular culture, as well as what they study in school, and also students respond in interesting ways when probed further about the mechanisms of the evils they identify. The outcome space for this study consisted of five referential aspects: evil as images, evil as affects and effects, evil as abnormal and extraordinary, evil as human, and evil as subjective and not universal. Through two sets of individual interviews, task-based focus groups, and an informal group interview, the pedagogical effects of the interview became clear. Tom, for example, noted that his thinking had “deepened” and Nikolai noted that his thoughts had become “clearer.” From the researcher’s point of view, I noticed how remarks about evil became more nuanced as the conversations unfolded over time, and I could not help but notice the enthusiasm that the participants had for the topic. Strawberry even noted after her initial interview that she spoke more during the interview than she had during her whole Social Studies 20-1 class the previous semester. This indicates to me that not only

is it educational to discuss evil in class, but it also something potentially enjoyable for and interesting to the students.

Evil can be a conduit for rethinking how we might live together in different ways—some of these might be more harmoniously, others not so. Will we acknowledge that our daily routines that might be exacerbating someone else's pain, and then consider altering that behaviour, such as in the case of Amnis' identification of the day-to-day thoughtlessness of slave owners? Will we resist our proclivity to shut down thinking about difficult topics, as apparent from Tom's comments about people stereotyping and generalizing? A potentially harmful side effect would be to replace someone's obliviousness with despair, which is why responsibility is different from blame. Instead of choosing to blame either an individual or an amorphous "system" that implicates no one, we need to consider holding both in our minds simultaneously. Although such an irresolvable tension might be vexing in many ways, it provides an opportunity to acknowledge our impact on others and make changes to our attitudes and behaviours without shouldering all the blame.

Although deconstruction is important, so must be the stories that replace what was there before. Having said this, I am not arguing for a trite, hopeful scenario for the world. Rather, let us consider what is helpful for fostering a sense that things can be different. I am advocating for discussions about Symbolic Evil (Baudrillard, 1990/1993) to foster Arendtian *action* in our classrooms (and beyond) for teachers and students alike. Encouraging a disposition that is amiable to the emerging of something new (or the re-emergence of something from the past) can do as much to teach for *action* as a particular structured lesson.

Evil as a “tabloid-esque” concept to try to manipulate a population into supporting questionable policies and practices is unavoidable unless we have some Arendtian thoughtfulness and *action* as part of history and contemporary politics. Both the politics of evil and villainification shut down this sort of thoughtfulness. Serena specifically noted the blind obedience many have regarding what presidents and prime ministers say, and Kunta spoke to the unquestioning nature of people like Eichmann while they participated in genocide. The failure to see nuances of what might be labelled as evil paired with a hesitancy to see ourselves as evil something educators need to talk about with students in social studies classrooms.

The simplistic dichotomy created by the hyperbolic rhetoric of evil creates an “us versus them” mentality with “cosmic stakes… evil cannot be just attacked and eliminated one piece at a time, through incremental steps, but it must be totally defeated and eradicated from the earth if good is to reign” (Kellner, 2003, p. 61). Here Kellner addresses the crux of issues like the politics of evil and villainification—it is unhelpful to conceptualize our situation as us versus them in a world of either/or choices. Historical and contemporary events and figures need to be understood outside of the dichotomous thinking engendered by heroification and villainification narratives. This does an injustice not only to the past, but also to the future. Students learn that positive social change occurs through the heroic actions of individuals rather than broad, coordinated mobilization, and that evil occurs at the whim of a madman rather than through everyday actions that support injustice. As Serena sadly stated, she felt helpless to effect change because she considers herself to be a “nobody.” The realization that so-called “ordinary” people are, in fact, responsible for helpful social change as well as systemic harm is an

important lesson. Deconstructing villainification, paired with an appreciation for the banality of evil (Arendt, 1963/2006), provides a sense of both individual and collective responsibility in social studies curriculum and pedagogy.

A more mundane and secularized understanding of evil can foster a sense of the processes of evil that occur at a collective/structural level as well as the individual one. Some excellent teachers undoubtedly do this instinctually, but there is a need to articulate this theory and practice in educational research. Such a theorization of evil implicates us all, serving as a call to take action in order to prevent large-scale harm. By addressing the complexity of evil, historical and contemporary situations constructed as conflict between "good guys" and "bad guys" can be avoided and replaced with more meaningful, nuanced discussions that highlight the shared responsibility of governments, companies, "society," and our own individual deeds. These nuances contribute to more effective teaching of social studies by encouraging students and teachers to engage meaningfully with difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998).

Discussions of evil, such as those conducted as part of this research, can be pedagogical. Nearly all participants noted a significant increase in their thinking about how the word evil is used in historical and contemporary contexts, particularly noting its usage in political rhetoric:

> SERENA: I've never even thought about evil ever in my life, and making me think about it has made me think of Hitler as, not less evil, but him as a person as less evil because his act was evil and not him. This has changed my thinking 360. So I feel like it would have a place in painting evil as not just a person, but the act

> as well so that history doesn't repeat itself. Cause I could easily go and do the same thing as well.

Adding meaningful complexity when encountering representations of social traumas in curriculum, including our own implication, helps prevent reductionist understandings of evil, thus encouraging the sort of thought that is independent from authority, but interconnected with others.

Participants tended to articulate that evil is not considered to be *our* normal state of affairs, and yet participants were aware that during historical evils (e.g., the Holocaust/Shoah), people participated in processes that were *their* normal state of affairs. Given that a default stance among youths is that evil is abnormal and thus outside their everyday experiences, the ordinary processes and people involved in systemic harm need to be directly addressed. Naming people as evil can make them seem otherworldly and almost incomprehensible. Conversely, the more we know about people, the less comfortable we feel labelling them as evil. These observations help explain why we might not take action during an atrocity because we fail to see the simulacra and we may be complicit in perpetuating it. Such findings relate very clearly to Arendt (1963/2006) and Badiou's (1998/2001) understandings of evil. Seeing how mundane activities can contribute to evil is tremendously helpful in challenging the politics of evil. By refusing to see the horrific violence of the Holocaust/Shoah as a result of a demonic force and thus seeing a mundane sense of human agency and responsibility, Arendt and Badiou offer a frightening but hopeful proposition that all humans are capable of perpetuating and stopping large-scale injustice and violence. Such understandings of evil relate to ordinary processes in play not only in Nazi Germany, but also in contemporary times, and the lack

of awareness/action taken by the average citizen. As such, curriculum designers and teachers might consider teaching these philosophical ideas alongside the teaching about systemic harm and violence. For social studies education, and indeed education in general, it is important to address the disconcerting assumption of the ordinary nature of evil in order to foster real possibilities that such horrors are not predetermined.

This dissertation is a call to thoughtfully rethink social studies curriculum and pedagogy, to consider what stories we are telling, and what effects that those stories have. Telling simplistic stories about historical and contemporary events is not helpful. What is more helpful would be to engage in a curricular fashion with the banality of evil via Arendt (1963/2006), processes of evil (Badiou, 1998/2001), as well as the politics of evil and villainification, while fostering a disposition hospitable to Symbolic Evil (Baudrillard, 1990/1993). The combination of these encourages the educational pursuit of thinking independently, but in an interconnected, public sense because we are invited to: question authority; see how broader structures and groups are implicated without shirking our own responsibility; and leave ourselves open to radical change.

Because this dissertation was exploratory, this area would benefit from further inquiry. Discussions with new participants from a variety of ages and schooling situations could provide additional insights that did not emerge from this study. Another valuable study would be to assess how different classroom approaches affect students' sense of shared responsibility; for example, what is the effect of teaching about Badiou's simulacrum in the context of a historical atrocity like the Holocaust/Shoah? There is room also for more theoretical work, teasing out the philosophers and theorists engaged with in this dissertation, and perhaps even addressing different thinkers who could add to

the pedagogical and curricular inquiry into evil. I look forward to pursuing this topic further.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Youth Conceptualizations of Evil and Social Studies Education

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Background
Grade eleven students are invited to participate in an initial individual interview and then a focus group about their conceptualizations of evil. The results of this study will be used for my doctoral dissertation.

Purpose
Examining conceptualizations of evil serves the purpose of uncovering how we might discuss evil in social studies classrooms. We all have a sense of evil, but many of us do not think about what it is.

Study Procedures

1) For the initial individual interviews, students will be asked to respond to a number of questions about their thoughts and opinions on what evil might be. The interview will begin with a brief drawing/writing task (but the student is not obligated to perform this task). This interview will take approximately 30 minutes and will be audiotaped.
2) After all the individual interviews are completed, students will be grouped together for a task-based focus group during which students will discuss as a group where to place researcher-selected images on a spectrum of evil. This will take a maximum of 45 minutes and will be audiotaped.
3) Brief, 10-15 minute, follow-up individual interviews will be made to clarify any questions that the researcher or student might have.

Benefits
Potential benefits include the opportunity to think more about the nature of evil that might help the students with their study of history and perhaps encourage them to think more deeply about popular media and current events.

Risk
Potential emotional harm might come to students as they might engage in thinking about past and present violence or other trauma, as well as see visual stimuli that might be potentially disturbing, such as pictures of Hitler, vampires, and other exemplars of "evil" to provoke conversation. Therefore, the interviews could potentially trigger memories of personal situations and resulting emotional pain.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal
Students are under no obligation to participate in this study. Participation is completely voluntary. Even if students and their parents/guardians agree to participation in the study, students and/or their parents can change their mind and withdraw during the study (before, during, or after the interviews and focus groups) or up to a month after they have been interviewed—this includes the deletion of their data/audio files if the student and/or parent/guardian wishes. Students (or their parents/guardians on behalf of them) may refuse to participate or withdraw from the research activity without penalty or jeopardy to her/her class standing.

Confidentiality & Anonymity
- Students will choose pseudonyms at the time of their initial individual interview that will be used in place of the students' names in the documentation. I will remove any links between pseudonyms and real identities at the time that the interviews are transcribed.
- Working papers will be kept in files in a secured office and digital information will be kept on a computer with password protection. Records will be stored for five years. Digital files including audio files will be removed from the computer after the transcription is complete and put on DVD and stored in a locked cabinet with any paper-based materials.
- This research will be used primarily to develop my doctoral dissertation, but it will also inform research articles, presentations, and teaching. Students will not be personally identified in any of these.
- You may inquire about a report of the research findings by contacting Cathryn van Kessel by email at vankesse@ualberta.ca
- We may use the data we get from this study in future research, but if we do this it will have to be approved by a Research Ethics Board.

Further Information
- If you have any further questions, you may contact Cathryn van Kessel at the Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta (email: vankesse@ualberta.ca)
- The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Consent
To participate in this study, the consent form attached to this document must be completed by both the student and his/her parent/guardian.

Please keep this letter for your records.

<u>CONSENT FORM</u>

Please complete the following form.

****NOTE: In order for a student to participate in this study, a <u>parent/guardian</u> *AND* <u>student</u> must indicate their consent/assent by signing this form.****

---

(1) ***For Parents/Guardians*: Please circle ONE of the following options:**

a) **YES**, I consent (or, agree) to my child's participation in the research study, "Youth Conceptualizations of Evil and Social Studies Education."

or

b) **NO**, I do not consent to my child's participation in the research study, "Youth Conceptualizations of Evil and Social Studies Education."

______________________________________ ____________
Parent or Guardian signature Date

____
Printed name of Parent or Guardian

---

(2) *For Students*: Please circle ONE of the following options:

a) **YES**, I consent (or, agree) to my participation in the research study, "Youth Conceptualizations of Evil and Social Studies Education."

or

b) **NO**, I do not consent to my participation in the research study, "Youth Conceptualizations of Evil and Social Studies Education."

______________________________________ ____________
Student signature Date

____
Printed name of Student

Appendix B: Initial Individual Interview Questions and Prompts

- On the piece of paper provided, please try to draw something you think is evil.
    - Why that person/thing is characterized as evil? [additional prompts were tailored to individual drawings]

- What, other than the picture just drawn, comes to mind when you hear the word “evil”?

- What do you think “evil” is?

- Are there other words you might use to convey the same meaning as “evil”? What are those words? Why would you choose those words?

- When was the first time you remember hearing the word “evil”?

- Do you think that people can be evil to their core or do you think that only actions are evil? If you can, describe some examples.

- Are humans naturally good or evil, or neither, or both? Why do you think that?

- Do you think that any person can do evil things in certain situations? If yes, what might those situations be?

- Do you think that someone who has been evil can change to become good? If yes, how? If no, why not?

- What characteristics must someone or something possess to be evil? Why are those characteristics evil?

- Can something be somewhere between good and evil (i.e., not all of one or the other)? Why or why not?

- Can inanimate objects be evil? Can animals? Can humans? Can institutions? Organizations? Why can(’t) these be evil?
- Does the nature of the victim determine whether or not an action is evil?

- In what situations (if any) do you notice a presence of evil?
- Do you see evil in historical or present events?
- Do you see evil in your daily life?
- Do you see evil in movies or television shows?
- Why are these “evil”? Describe what makes it evil.

- Do you think that humans will continue to kill each other on a large scale (e.g., genocide, etc.)? Why or why not? Is it inevitable? Do you think that you have an impact on the situation? Is that your preferable future? Why or why not?

- What do you think about presidents and prime ministers using the word evil in political speeches? U.S. President has called ISIS “Evil” and our Prime Minister, Stephen Harper,

has called Iran as well as “ideologies” like Nazism and terrorism “Evil”. What do you think about that? Do you agree, disagree, or partially agree? Why or why not? Why might Harper say that?

- [near the end] Where do you think your views of evil might come from?

- [near the end] Have you thought about evil differently because of our discussion today? If yes, how?

Appendix C: Follow-Up Individual Interview Questions and Prompts

- [after showing the participant a photo of their group's spectrum] Now that some time has passed and you are on your own, would you move any of these images?
- Do you see historical tragedies like genocides as a result of one evil individual or a select group of individuals? Do you see these as a result of a broader social process? [This question often required explanation or an example. I often used the Holocaust—how much of that event was a result of Hitler versus how much was the result of the actions of many people within and outside of Germany?]
- Do you see any point in studying or talking about the idea of evil in a social studies or history class? Why or why not? What might that look like?
- Are there any new thoughts or clarifications about your ideas of evil that you would like to share?
- How old are you?
- With what gender do you identify? [a few students asked for clarification, so I gave the examples of male, female, and transgendered]
- Do you consider yourself to be part of a particular religion?
- What is your family's geographic and/or ethnic background?

Appendix D: Images and Text for the Spectrum Activity

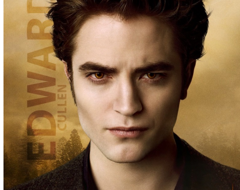
Hurricane Katrina

http://www.usageorge.com/PowerPoint/Hurricane-Katrina.jpg

Ebola

http://localtvkdvr.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/ebola4.jpg

Edward Cullen ('vegetarian' vampire)

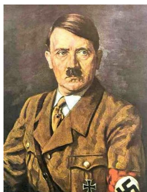


http://twilightsaga.wikia.com/wiki/Gallery:Edward_Cullen

Nosferatu (traditional vampire)

http://www.nosferatuscoffin.com/portal/synopsis/

Adolf Hitler

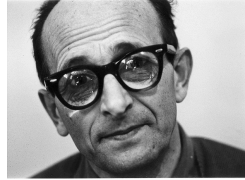


http://www.webzeest.com/article/2292/adolf-hitler

Pol Pot, leader during Cambodian genocide

http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2013/dec/11/pol-pot-khmer-rouge-interview

Adolf Eichmann, Holocaust "manager"



http://collections.yadvashem.org/photosarchive/en-us/5890876_6055590.html

Darth Vader

http://www.cheatsheet.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Darth-Vader-comic-books.jpg

Voldemort, from Harry Potter

http://ichef.bbci.co.uk/news/976/cpsprodpb/6D9C/production/_87106082_voldemort_ap_976.jpg

Demon

http://fc04.deviantart.net/fs71/f/2012/010/2/e/devil_rider_by_velinov-d4lwjjc.jpg

Murderer who kills adults

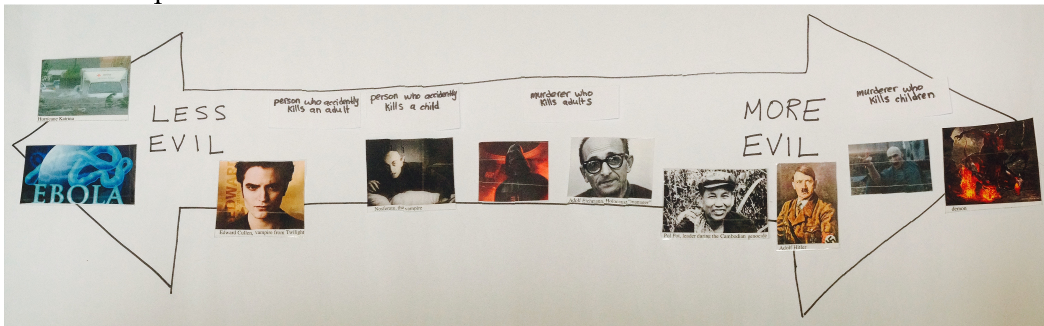
Murderer who kills children

Person who accidently kills an adult

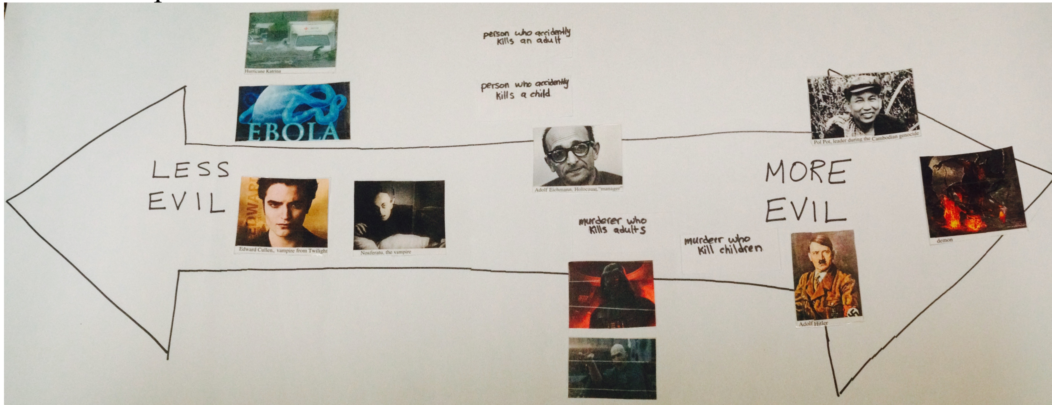
Person who accidently kills a child

Appendix E: Focus Group Spectra

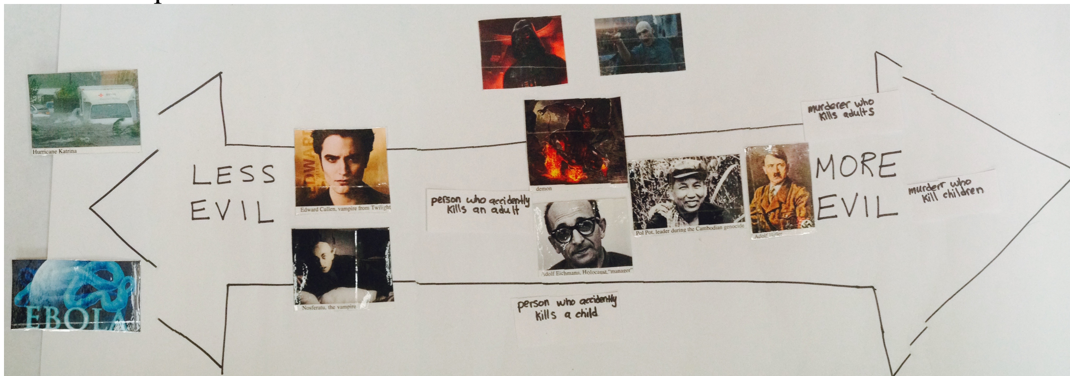
Focus Group 1



Focus Group 2



Focus Group 3



Focus Group 4