

Preservice Teacher Talk Surrounding Gender

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**Dedication**

To Jean, Nada, Virginia, Nina, Evelyn, Nelle, and Jessica  
for showing me how to be a strong, smart woman.

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for loving us strong, smart women.

## Abstract

This dissertation examines the discourses around gender present among a cohort of preservice secondary social studies teachers (n=25) and how gender discourses manifested throughout their preparatory year with particular interest paid to their thoughts about curricula, schools, and students. Using ethnographic study design, the author presents three significant moments that occurred throughout their preparatory year, and, for three focal students, interviews which occurred in their first year of teaching. Data include transcripts of three class sessions, completed assignments, reflective journals, and interviews. Building upon Thornton's (1991) work on teachers as "curricular-instructional gatekeepers," the author explores what guided the curricular decision making for the participants and, for the focal students, what discourses they decided to make space for in their first classrooms. Because gender is socially constructed, it is important for future teachers to examine what has contributed to the construction of their own gendered identities in order for them to be able to see how they as individuals and as members of a larger group contribute to the greater society.

Through feminist poststructural discourse analysis, the author finds multiple and competing discourses around the gendered topics of sexual violence and how the students expressed their own genders as connected to culture. Intersections of race and social class with gender and the presence of emotion were important in how the students talked about gender. Also found was the uneven follow-through of implementing practices learned in their teacher education coursework in their first classrooms, and the reluctance of two focal students to include Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) topics in their

first classrooms. Additionally, the role of context is considered as essential to the students' decision whether to self-censor.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

In early April 2010, as part of a class assignment, I audio recorded a group of five student teachers in the secondary social studies M.Ed. program at the University of Minnesota. All had finished student teaching and were beginning the job search while finishing up coursework. One of these courses was the student teaching seminar where they had been reading Gary R. Howard's book *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*. The author emphasizes the hard work that White teachers must do to connect with students who are from cultures unlike their own and encourages teachers to engage in deep reflection on how to enact an anti-oppressive education. I had personally worked with three of these five students as their student teaching supervisor. Although they conversed about the chapter for about 30 minutes, what caught my attention was a poignant four-minute segment where all spoke of their Whiteness in relation to their student teaching schools and the places where they lived or had visited. Even after 11 months of field experiences and coursework, the dominant discourse of White being "normal" and of segregation as being "the way things are" was disappointing to hear. It was these four minutes from these five students that prompted my fascination with the journey that our future teachers go through with regard to different aspects of their subjectivities and how that relates to who they are as teachers. Because a particular interest of mine is gender and gender issues in school and society, I began to think about how preservice teachers think and talk about gender.

### **Gender in Society**

It is clear that women in the United States have made significant strides in

working toward gender equity in the past century. Even in the past decade, women have increased their college attendance and graduation rates (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011), and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests show nearly equal performance between boys and girls (Corbett, Hill, & St. Rose, 2008). SAT and ACT scores show a small, though persistent gap with boys scoring higher on math, science, and composite scores of these tests, though girls score higher on the English portions of both exams (Corbett et al., 2008). An increasing number of women entering academia is also encouraging, however as of 2009, only 38.8% of academics who have achieved the level of full professor were women (WIA Report, 2012). With the more equitable representation of women and girls in these areas, and evidence of the gender gap slowly closing, it is clear that progress has been made. However, even though gender can no longer be used to limit voting rights, funding for school sports and activities, or employment, gender inequity persists. Economically, women and girls still face a 23% wage gap compared to men (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011); women CEOs are a miniscule minority at 1.5% of the world's 2,000 top performing companies (Ibarra & Hansen, 2009); and hidden discrimination present in hiring and firing practices endures. Socially, women, on average, are working more hours than previously with many of the household duties falling to women, even if they hold full-time employment outside the home; the number of women serving in Congress is disproportionately low compared to men— only 277 women have ever served in either house with the current percentage being 21% (Office of the Clerk, 2012); and the United States has never had a female candidate endorsed by either major party for president. Without question, these numbers show the

persistent gender inequity present in the United States. Gender is not simply a man-woman issue, though. While numbers are difficult to obtain, the information present on transgender individuals and the discrimination they face in hiring, wages, and the broader society is disheartening (Badgett, Lau, Sears, & Ho, 2007). Interestingly, however, in examining the workplace experiences of 64 transgender individuals, Schilt & Wiswall (2008) found that earnings for female-to-male transgender workers slightly increased, while earnings for male-to-female transgender workers fell by nearly one-third after their gender transitions. The researchers theorize that this disparity is linked to subtle gender discrimination that persists in the workplace.

This status quo fails to achieve the vision of the United States as a place that serves the needs of those living in a pluralistic and democratic society. If we cannot attain equal pay for equal work or see an equitable representation of genders in our elected officials, how are we to believe that our views are being represented accurately and our voices heard? This is not the vision of what I want the United States to be: The only way to change this reality is to be aware, pay attention, and work for what we want our society to become. If our social studies classrooms are sites for learning about and practicing democracy, they must attend to gender inequity as it exists in the present day. The consequence of not attending to this issue is too great, in that the work left to be done will remain untouched, oppression will endure, and opportunity for all genders will, at best, stagnate.

### **Research Questions and Purpose of Research**

This study examines the discourses present among a cohort of preservice

secondary social studies teachers and how gender discourses manifested throughout their preparatory year with particular interest paid to their thoughts about curricula, schools, and students. Building upon Thornton's (1991) work on teachers as "gatekeepers" who determine what curriculum is allowed to enter the classroom, I am concerned about what guided their curricular decision making and in turn, what discourses they decided to make space for in their classrooms. Because gender is socially constructed, it is important for future teachers to examine what has contributed to the construction of their own gendered identities in order for them to be able to see how they as individuals and as members of a larger group contribute to the greater society. One of the best ways to begin to understand what makes up their thoughts on gender is through their dialogue with one another.

The primary and secondary research questions guiding this study are: How do students enrolled in a social studies teacher education program talk about gender and gender issues in the formal setting of their teacher preparation classes? Does their talk change over time? If so, how? How is their talk influenced by their practicum and student teaching classrooms? Is it influenced by their formal preparation experiences? And how do they talk about gender and gender issues within the context of their first classrooms?

I used a qualitative ethnographic study design as I followed a group of preservice teachers for the year of their formal teacher preparation at a large university. I attended their methods courses where I audio recorded class sessions, wrote field notes, and came to know the participants through casual interactions. Selections of the audio recordings were then transcribed. Three focal students were also interviewed when they were in their first year of teaching; those interviews were also transcribed. Using Feminist

Poststructural Discourse Analysis (Baxter, 2003) as the primary mode of analysis for the observational data, I discerned patterns and themes associated with their talk, which allowed the most access into understanding how this group of people talked about gender within their teacher education classes. This methodology allowed me to gain insight into the complex, often competing and overlapping, discourses that surfaced throughout this critical time in teacher development for these students.

The purpose of this dissertation is to illuminate how preservice teachers talk about gender and gender issues in an effort to increase our understanding about how future teachers construct, reify, and enact certain discourses. Very simply, I was interested in how a group of future social studies teachers talk about gender and gender issues with each other. As future colleagues and social studies teachers, these individuals will participate in creating the sanctioned discourses present in our secondary schools. Will those discourses include multiple perspectives? Will they include the perspectives of women, people of color, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals? Will they work to maintain or dismantle the status quo? These questions are not the specific foci of this study, but the answers to them depend on who these people will become as teachers and what decisions they will make both in their formal and hidden curricula after they are licensed professionals.

This dissertation adds to the present body of literature in multiple ways: Because of the ethnographic methods and the structure of the initial licensure program, I was able to examine how these preservice teachers did or did not change throughout their preparatory year. I was also able to use this investigation to determine what the state of

gender is for these students: How were they thinking about gender and gender issues in relation to their future classrooms? What did they see as gendered issues and what concerns did they have about them? For three focal students who allowed for a more in-depth analysis, I also had the opportunity to draw conclusions about how they addressed gender in their first classrooms. This particular aspect of the dissertation adds to the body of knowledge in social studies teacher education in that few studies have followed teachers throughout their preparation and into their first year of teaching in this way (Clift & Brady, 2005).

The findings here offer a glimpse into how to best prepare future teachers to do the work of teaching students about the status quo, how to disrupt it, and how to create their version of “a more perfect union.” Without knowing what the state of gender is in teacher education, teacher educators are at risk of offering anemic, misguided, or inadequate preparation for teaching about gender. This dissertation continues the “spade work” (Bernard-Powers, 1996) of investigating the state of gender in a social studies teacher education program with the intention of making informed, research-based recommendations for practice. Through a deep investigation of the gendered discourses present throughout this preparatory year, insight is gained into if and how teacher education programs can best prepare their students for the reality of teaching about gender in an already crowded curriculum, and recommendations are offered into what considerations must be made if gender and gender equity are to exist as topics worthy of teaching in secondary classrooms. In short, we must understand where we are now if we are to make informed decisions about how to best achieve gender equity in our future

classrooms. This work is aimed at increasing that understanding.

Gender in social studies education has been documented as a winding road with inconsistent attention paid to it throughout the past four decades (Crocco, 2008). Interest in gender has experienced ebbs and flows with attention paid to equity issues, multiculturalism, and balancing the curriculum. Until recently, little research has been conducted investigating how discourses of gender have manifested in preservice teachers in the social studies. As is the nature of qualitative research, this cohort of preservice teachers and their experiences are unique and the results are not generalizable to all preservice teachers. This in-depth inquiry, however, allowed for the rich understanding of how gendered discourses were “taken up” or left untouched with this group of people at this particular time. I hope that the understanding from this dissertation can illuminate this topic for teacher educators and draw much needed attention to the area of gender in social studies education. It is with this in mind that I attempt to add to the body of knowledge about what we know about gender in social studies. It is clear and well-documented that textbooks and content standards are becoming more equitable with time. It is also clear that preservice teachers respond positively to coursework designed to increase their knowledge of and attention to gender in the curriculum (Hill, 2003; Nelson, 1990). What is less clear, however, is how preservice teachers conceptualize and integrate gender into the classes they teach.

### **Terminology**

Following are key terms used throughout the dissertation. These ideas are central to this work and because they are socially constructed, they warrant explanation as to

how I use them here.

**Gender.** *Gender* as a term has often been conflated or used as a substitute for *woman* or *female*; therefore, it is important to define *gender* as it is used throughout this dissertation and throughout the foundational literature. While I approached the dissertation with a feminist lens, gender here is not conceptualized as *female*. For the purposes of this dissertation, *gender* “refers to the ways in which human societies have conceptualized and sorted the categories (social identities) and plans (attributes and roles) flowing from the material realities of biological differences” (Hahn, Bernard-Powers, Crocco, & Woyshner, 2007, p. 336). Gender here refers to being male, female, trans, inter, Two Spirit<sup>1</sup> (Anguksuar, 1997), or any point along the spectrum of being feminine or masculine. Even this description is limiting in that gender does not have to be one or a combination of two polar opposites, but rather can encompass a multiplicity of being. In the spirit of Judith Butler (1990), each person performs gender and can change this performance throughout a lifetime; this performance can endure as a singular expression as well. Gender also has societal implications, particularly in the United States where a gender binary persists and is maintained as the status quo.

**Gender balance.** Often used in reference to curriculum, *gender balanced* refers to an equitable, if not equal, presence of males and females. In this dissertation, I will use this term to describe the relationship between the presence of males and females in relation to one another as they appear in curricula. Because of the binary connotation of “balance,” I use this term when referring to relevant literature, which also uses this term

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<sup>1</sup> The term *Two Spirit* refers to the Native American understanding of how some people are born with both masculine and feminine spirits within them.

and when the participants are speaking about their curriculum in this way.

**Gender equity.** If gender balance and gender equity were to sit on a continuum, gender equity would represent the more advanced, progressive, and ideal position. Equity as a term is preferred to the term equality because “it implies the concept of *fairness* or some differences...rather than the concept of *sameness* when dealing with a diverse student population” (Klein, 2007, p. 3). In addition, gender equity refers to “ensuring fair, just and comparable *but not always identical* treatment during the educational process” (Klein, 2007, p. 3). This concept is closer to an ideal approach because it transcends the binary of balancing two genders by opening the space for multiple expressions of gender. With that opened space, a more equitable representation of the many ways of being gendered is allowed. Gender equity allows for the presence of all genders in a way that respects the multiplicity of being engendered in the world.

### **Dissertation Format**

In the next chapter, I discuss the literature in social studies education that relates to gender and preservice teachers and curriculum. I also introduce the theoretical framework of feminist poststructuralism and how this provides the lens to understand how these students talk about gender and gender issues. Chapter Three details the methodology and data collection and analysis methods. Chapters Four, Five, and Six present findings and discussion related to the three significant moments that serve as mile markers along the preparatory year. Chapter Seven presents additional findings from interview data conducted with focal students when they were in their first year of teaching, while also drawing on the three significant moments for understanding. Chapter

eight then concludes the dissertation with implications and recommendations for teacher education and research.

## **Chapter Two: Review of the Literature**

The focus of this chapter is the research in secondary social studies education related to gender and (a) curriculum, (b) instruction, and (c) the preparation of social studies teachers. This literature is intended to provide the foundation for understanding the complex ways in which the preservice teachers in this study talked about gender and gendered issues. Also presented is an overview of the theoretical framework of feminist poststructuralism and sociocultural theory that guides this study.

### **Gender and Curriculum**

**Textbooks.** Empirical research examining the presence of gender in curricular materials has been a consistent, though not predominant theme in social studies research in the last half-century. Particularly with the rise of the New Social Studies in the 1960s, the Second Wave of Feminism in the 1970s, and the increasing number of women researchers paying attention to women and gender in the 1980s and beyond, gender has been a regular topic of inquiry in the social studies. However, even with this traceable thread of gender inquiry, more is needed if we are to remedy persistent gender inequities. At this point, though the understanding of gender is limited, within the field there is a clear understanding of and a desire to increase gender equity both in curricula and methods.

Textbooks and the content of social studies courses can be considered to be an indicator of what is actually taught in secondary social studies classes in the United States. With the rise of multicultural education in the last two decades, women as an underrepresented group began to gain attention with regard to their presence in textbooks

and curricular materials. In 1985, Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault published her “Feminist Phase Theory” which was used as a framework to determine the inclusivity of curricula. With her five phases, Tetreault outlined “male scholarship,” “compensatory scholarship,” “bifocal scholarship,” “feminist scholarship,” and the final phase of “multifocal relational scholarship” as ways to categorize a curriculum in reference to its inclusivity of women. The final phase is marked by a gender balanced approach where “women’s and men’s experiences [are fused] into a holistic view of human experience” (p. 371). This theory serves as a framework for examining textbooks and other curricular materials throughout the social studies because it articulates a method for understanding and evaluating how women and their contributions appeared in curricula.

Even before the publication of Tetreault’s phase theory, the absence of women in the social studies curriculum was a topic of investigation in the field (Trecker, 1971; Hahn, 1980). In a book chapter published in 1985, Carole Hahn and Jane Bernard-Powers reviewed the social studies literature present at the time and determined that students in government and economics classes learned more about famous men than famous women as evidenced through their unequal presence in the text and photos of textbooks in these disciplines. They were also able to determine that textbooks became less overtly sexist in that sexist language was less frequent in the newer texts, but that they were still male-dominated.

Progress over the last 40 years has been documented in representation of women in United States History and civics books with qualitative and quantitative analyses (Avery & Simmons, 2000; Clark, Allard, & Mahoney, 2004; Clark, Ayton, Frechette, &

Keller, 2005; Tetreault, 1986; Trecker, 1971). Hahn revisited her content analysis of textbooks as part of a 1996 case study investigating gender and political learning. As part of her case study of high school civics classes, Hahn found that within the text used by the two classes in her case study, presidents, vice presidents, male “founding fathers,” and chief justices of the Supreme Court were mentioned far more frequently than female political leaders, who were more often relegated to sidebars and special activity sections. She also noted multiple missed opportunities to use gender inclusive language and to highlight these sidebars or to explore gender-related issues in class. Given this approach in the textbook and in the instruction, her conclusion that students of all genders referred only to men when speaking about political leaders in their interviews was not surprising.

The most recent studies investigating gender and textbooks (Clark et al., 2004; Clark et al., 2005) examined 19 world history and 18 United States history textbooks from the 1960s, 1980s, and 1990s. Their analyses determined that while textbook authors are devoting more attention to women, representations of social history are still outnumbered by political and military history, thus making women less prevalent in the books overall. One study (Ensico, 1999) showed promise in recognizing a more balanced presence of gender in trade books, which are “increasingly important in middle schools” (Crocco, 2008, p. 181), though this increasingly popular area of social studies literature has not been reexamined recently. Because many social studies teachers rely on textbooks to provide a foundation for the curriculum, this underrepresentation and limited view of gender is constraining the potential of what social studies can be in terms of

teaching multiple perspectives connected to gender. Even with the documented progress, teachers are charged with modifying inadequate materials.

**National Standards.** In addition to textbooks, curriculum and content standards written and implemented both by states and national organizations also serve to channel the curriculum taught in the classroom. National standards in civics, history, economics, and geography were written and published in the early 1990s. Scholars have examined standards documents for the presence of women and, for the most part, the curriculum standards have been silent about women and gender-related topics. Even though gender is noted along with race and ethnicity to be important in shaping participation as a citizen, *The National Standards for Civics and Government* (Center for Civic Education, 1994) mentions gender just twice (Crocco, 2008). These standards were examined by a team of researchers (Gonzales, Riedel, Avery, & Sullivan, 2001) who found that of the quotations located in the margins of the standards, just 9% were attributed to women, all of whom were European-American. While they note that these quotations are unlikely to be read by students, they do serve as an indication of whose voices are deemed to be most significant and worthy of study. They caution that the “ongoing neglect” (p. 123) of gender equity, as evidenced by the quotations, could lead teachers who use the standards to include the contributions of relatively few women in their instruction. Similarly, the national geography standards, *Geography for Life: National Geographic Standards* (Geography Education Standards Project, 1994), mention gender just once, and thus have been criticized for “reveal[ing] that gender [is] not taken seriously as a category or lens” (Bernard-Powers, 2007, p. 336).

Unfortunately, the *National Standards for History* (National Standards for History Task Force, 1996), which address both U.S. and World History, do not fare much better in the inclusion of women. Joan Wallach Scott (1997), a contributor to these standards, who after receiving criticism of the paucity of women, responded that the “compromise of political and social history” would “always lean to political history” and that this decision “makes the systematic inclusion of women difficult” (p. 174). While she noted that there has been an increase in knowledge and research about the contributions of women in history and that the committees were cognizant of this, she also wrote that “there could be much more about women in these Standards” (p. 176). While women’s history is increasingly viewed by educators as a legitimate area of study in secondary social studies, the focus on political and economic history in the standards has proven to be a significant barrier to its full inclusion (Symcox, 2002). Finally, as Hahn, Bernard-Powers, Crocco, and Woysner (2007) note, the *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*, which were developed and published by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) in 1994 and guided the field until the recently published revision in 2011, “give little explicit attention to gender” (p. 343). Although they acknowledge that the standards are broad enough to allow teachers to infuse gender into the curriculum, ultimately the authors stated that “NCSS’s failure to provide curricular examples aligned with the standards that are oriented to gender resulted in a missed opportunity to facilitate the inclusion of gender in social studies courses” (p. 343). Similar to the trend in social studies textbooks, curriculum standards seem to have provided little direction to teachers in terms of balancing the disproportionate presence of males in the curriculum.

## **Gender and Instruction**

Considering the improved, yet still inadequate, state of gender balance in textbooks and curriculum standards, it is difficult to determine the enacted curriculum with regard to women and men in the social studies. Given this persistent paucity of gender balanced curricula, it is logical to assume that the role of the teacher is critical if a balance is to be found. If the textbooks and standards present a male-dominated version of history, civics, or geography, then teachers need to be intentional about including females and their experiences in order to counteract the limited story told by the textbooks and standards. Unfortunately, there are few studies pertaining to gender-balance and classroom instruction, and as did the studies on curricular materials, all of the research in the social studies literature operates on a gender binary. In each investigation presented here, the researchers noted gender differences between boys and girls, with no mention of students who identified outside these two categories.

In the case study discussed above, Hahn (1996) observed no gender differences in classroom interaction patterns, which is a rare finding compared to other investigations in the field. In a large observational study investigating sexism in single-sex and coeducational settings, Lee, Marks, and Byrd (1994) found that discussions in coeducational history classes were dominated by male students. The researchers found that the schools where males dominated also exhibited more signs of sexism in hiring practices of teachers, inequitable enrollment of students, and that most instances of sexism (e.g. stereotyping, embedded discrimination against females, and gender domination) were initiated by teachers.

Building upon the research on discussion, Hess & Posselt (2002) investigated how high school students experienced and learned from controversial public issues discussions that were structured and conducted with specific discussion methods. They found that male students were more likely to report greater enjoyment in classroom discussions after the course; female students were more likely to report that they spoke in class discussions and less likely to report fear of their classmates thinking their ideas were unworthy. This indicates that even with the same instruction, male and female students came away from the lessons with different outcomes. When gender equity and dynamics were consciously addressed, Karnes (2000) found that girls' interest in social studies topics increased. Supporting this finding, Levstik and Groth (2002) concluded that "teaching really does matter" (p. 250) when they found that the gender-balanced unit they created on the antebellum era for a middle school history class resulted in multiple students eagerly detailing the experiences of women from the time, even though many of them still referred to male-dominated history as "normal history."

### **Gender and Preservice Teachers**

Little research has focused on teachers or preservice teachers and how gender, specifically gendered discourses, are implicated in their beliefs and decision making (Crocco & Cramer, 2005). The few empirical studies that have examined gender in preservice social studies teacher education have noted shortcomings in courses, programs, or in the self-awareness of the future teachers themselves. Segall (2002) found that a group of Canadian secondary preservice teachers believed that including women and minorities in the curriculum is important, but few could remember how these groups

were addressed in their methods courses. Another study focusing on students in a secondary social studies methods course examined the potential for students to move from discriminatory beliefs to beliefs in equality. In an examination of their students' autobiographies, Smith, Moallem, and Sherrill (1997) found that throughout their lives, students were taught a range of beliefs in terms of gender, race, and class. Although some had been taught to believe in gender equality, others had been taught gender discrimination. Many of their beliefs were influenced by family members or experiences in and out of school. For those students who wrote about their beliefs shifting from discriminatory to equality for all genders or between races, the common event was a positive personal experience they had with someone who was different from them. These experiences were not described in great detail, though they were noted as impactful. Others noted their lack of multicultural experience as a weakness. The lack of concrete examples demonstrated by the students in both studies is problematic for those wanting to educate teachers who will be able to connect curriculum and instruction to a multicultural student body.

The inability of teachers to recognize instances of bias and equity in their own classes has been documented as well. Lundeberg (1997) investigated her secondary preservice teachers' perception of gender equity<sup>2</sup> by having them evaluate one of their class discussions for subtle gender bias as measured by the frequency of responses contributed by each gender. In the two sections of her Educational Psychology class, 71% of the students perceived the discussions to be equitable when in fact they were not.

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<sup>2</sup> Lundeberg (1997) uses the term 'gender equity' in her work to describe the idea that I have defined with the term 'gender balance.'

In one section, a higher percentage of the men spoke and did so more frequently than the women, and in the other section more women spoke and more frequently. Of the students who did not perceive equity, a mixture of male or female dominance spanned both sections, indicating that only a few of the preservice teachers accurately perceived the participation of males and females in the class discussions. In a large-scale, mixed methods, multi-university study, Pryor and Achilles (1998) determined that preservice teachers' identification of gender equitable classroom practices was generally low as measured by a 37-item questionnaire. Their definition of gender equitable classroom practices included those that eliminated "sex-related bias in interaction and in participation patterns, classroom management and organization patterns, and student expectations" (p. 63). Although knowledge of general aspects of gender equity was relatively high, responses measuring the students' ability to apply gender equitable classroom practices were comparatively low. It is unclear how well a multiple choice format can capture students' ability to apply equitable classroom practices; however, the results are still troubling in that they suggest that these future teachers were lacking in the foundational knowledge of gender equity practices. This lack of self-awareness and ability to apply gender equity to their own classrooms as students indicates a possible void of adequate preparation in this area and warrants more in-depth investigation.

In an effort to capture an image of how teacher education is addressing gender issues, text analysis, faculty surveys, and policy statements of the American Education Research Association (AERA), the National Council of the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

(AACTE) have been investigated (Sadker, Zittleman, Earley, McCormick, Strawn, & Preston, 2007). Regrettably, attention to gender and gender equity in teacher education appears to be systemically lacking and most often appears when individual faculty members consciously devote time to addressing them (Sanders, 2002). In one survey of 353 mathematics, science, and technology teacher educators (Campbell & Sanders, 1997), nearly all indicated that gender equity is important to teach, but the majority reported spending fewer than two hours per semester on gender related topics. The authors concluded that the educators “appear uninformed but interested” (p. 74) in teaching about gender. In addition, the texts do not offer much guidance. A content analysis of 23 teacher education textbooks published from 1998 to 2001 recorded the mention of gender or gender topics as a mere 3.3% (Zittleman & Sadker, 2002). This disappointing presence in the texts coupled with an apparently uninformed faculty seems to indicate limited space for gender in teacher education. In answering the question of whether preservice teachers are being prepared in nonsexist teaching skills, how to confront challenges specific to different genders, and how to resist sex-role expectations, Sadker et al. (2007) answer that they “have found no evidence to indicate that today’s teacher education programs are any more successful in these areas than in 1985” (p. 143). This lack of progress, or at least any evidence of it, is unacceptable.

The literature here suggests that studying beliefs about gender among preservice teachers has begun but is in need of extension. Many scholars have identified the absence and continued need for further research into the connection between preservice teacher beliefs and practices regarding gender (Crocco, 2001, 2005; Hahn, Bernard-

Powers, Crocco, Woyshner, 2007; Hurren, 2002; Loutzenheiser, 2006; Sanders, 2002; Zittleman & Sadker, 2002). Hahn et al. (2007) specifically call for research on “preservice teachers’ beliefs about gender and social studies and how those beliefs relate to their teaching” (p. 353) because there is a significant lack of research in this area. Additionally, in a recent review of gender and social studies, Christine Woyshner (2011) reiterated this need for teacher educators to be attentive to gender issues in their work with preservice teachers. Interestingly, mention of transgender people and issues does not appear in any of the literature surveyed here. While this category of gender is often included in the sexuality literature, it is markedly absent from the gender literature within social studies where it also has a legitimate presence. The thin research body, coupled with the frequently asked but rarely answered call for more research concerning gender and teacher education, makes this area of study imperative if the buried gender element is to be uncovered.

### **Summary**

Though the literature is sparse, what is present in the field concerning teaching methods and gender equity or balance is both promising and grim. Following from the findings of these studies, efforts to work toward gender-balance have worked, indicating the possibility that gender-balance appears to be attainable. This is encouraging; however, not surprisingly, there are indications that the converse is also true. When teachers do not pay attention to gender in their instruction, it is all too easy for the gender imbalanced curricular materials to perpetuate a singular perspective of gender in social studies classrooms (Hess & Posselt, 2002; Lee, Marks, and Byrd, 1994). Research

indicating that teachers can overcome the deficiencies of the textbooks paves an exciting path for the future (Karnes, 2000; Levstik & Groth, 2002). It is of the utmost importance for our students to learn how the diversity of human experience can and does contribute to the creation of a pluralistic society. Learning about the multiple gendered experiences of people throughout history and the present is inherent in this diversity.

This dissertation builds upon this literature in that I explore how students who were exposed to gender as a topic in their methods courses either approached or avoided gendered issues, and what might be the potential implications of these orientations. Stephen Thornton's (1991) notion of teachers as "gatekeepers" who determine what curriculum is allowed to enter the classroom, provides the necessary metaphor for understanding the implications of what guides curricular decision making and in turn, what discourses my participants decided to make space for in their teacher education classes. Gendered people walk into classrooms each and every day. With each student comes experience and knowledge about who they are and how the world appears to them. Our teachers are no different. They enter preparation programs with entrenched beliefs about school and students, and throughout their preparatory programs, they are exposed to new ideas and theories that they must combine with their decades of educational and life experiences. As these ideas are introduced throughout coursework, they not only combine with each individual's history but with the ideas of the other future teachers in the learning community. The dialogue and refinement of new ideas, mixed with old, happens constructively. How preservice teachers journey through these ideas and the program is largely unknown. What is known is that when the time comes to design and

teach lessons, they will have a considerable amount of freedom in deciding what is taught and how. To date, few scholars have examined the preparatory process with a particular eye towards gender and gender issues and how preservice teachers speak to one another regarding these topics (Campbell & Sanders, 1997; Lundberg, 1997). The limits of these studies, however, prevent rich description and understanding because of the nature of quantitative research. If greater understanding and in-depth knowledge of how preservice teachers approach gender issues in their classes, this gap must be filled by examining this issue through qualitative inquiry.

This dissertation illuminates how preservice teachers talk about gender as a fundamental piece of their emerging teacher identities and how gender is connected to their curricular decision making. Building upon the existing body of research, this ethnography gains longitudinal insight into how a group of gendered individuals grow throughout their teacher preparation program, how they make sense of who they are becoming as teachers, how their experiences with gender matters to that becoming, and how they negotiate these topics together through in-class dialogue. Insight is gained into what gendered discourses dominate and are silenced within this group of future teachers.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Feminist Poststructural Thought**

In focusing on gender and gendered discourses, feminist poststructuralism provides a particularly robust framework within which to work. Lazer (2005) notes that “the prevailing conception of gender is understood as an ideological structure that divides people into two classes, men and women, based on a hierarchical relation of domination

and subordination” (Lazer, 2005, p. 7). This prevailing conception can be interpreted as the prevailing discourse of gender in the United States, though there are instances of effective resistance to this. The multiple waves of the feminist movement give examples of organized resistance and evidence of greater society changing to become more gender equitable. The structure of gender, however, persists as a mode of separating or organizing society into understandable, relatable categories. Gender in schools is of particular interest in this dissertation and both anecdotal and research-based evidence leads to the finding that the gender binary is alive and well within the structure of school. Separating students based on gender for bathroom breaks, lining up, gym class, in-class competitions, and even the self-separation of choosing friends persist to reinforce the dominant gender binary. Poststructuralism resists this binary, yet feminism appears at first glance to reinforce it. It is therefore important to understand how I am using these two seemingly disparate ideas together.

**Commonalities.** One of the clear commonalities between feminism and poststructuralism is their shared denial of a belief in a singular experience and in the notion of neutrality. Indeed, nothing is certain in each of these paradigms and both not only allow, but demand, the multiplicity of experiences to be recognized and considered to be valid. In the work presented here, this can mean that the students who sat through the same classes, read the same material, and participated in the same discussions could and would have different interpretations of each of those experiences. These differences are informed by their histories and who they are as complex people with multiple and intersecting subjectivities. Both paradigms also share a dependence on language to

enable a raising of consciousness that can lead to societal transformation. The emphasis on difference and the rejection of the binary also contribute to this study because of feminist poststructuralism's focus on the social construction of gender and the multiplicities of gendered identities that can be performed by any one individual. Specifically, poststructural theory offers a challenge to and deconstruction of this masculine/feminine dichotomy (Francis, 2007). Because gender is socially constructed, it is fluid and flexible with both the potential to change or remain the same over time and in different contexts. The importance of context is underlined in feminist poststructuralism by the importance of this co-construction of identity, and the notion that power is constantly shifting among those present in a particular context (Baxter, 2003). In this dissertation I used ethnographic methods to follow the participants for a year. This gave me the opportunity to observe the shifting power dynamics across multiple social structures throughout time and the different spaces of their methods courses. To understand the socially constructed meanings and locations of power within this group of people, I paid keen attention to their language as an indication of their beliefs about who they are and how that is enacted in their roles as future teachers.

Core to poststructuralist theory is the importance of language and its role in relation to social structures and the individuals within them. As Davies (1993) articulates, the individual subject is understood at one and the same time to be constituted through social structures and through language, and becomes a speaking subject, one who can continue to speak/write into existence those same structures through those same discourses. But, as a speaking subject, they can also invent, invert and break old

structures and patterns and discourses and thus speak/write into existence other ways of being (p. xviii).

Language here, while spoken by the individual, is constructed with information from the cultural and social worlds to which the speaker has access. Poststructuralists thus argue that language is always produced discursively (Baxter, 2003). Analyzing discourse from a feminist poststructural lens not only allows for an examination of the shifting power dynamics between speakers, but also opens space to investigate gendered voices that have been marginalized or silenced previously. For this dissertation, the framework provides the opportunity to parse out where, when, and who either perpetuates mainstream discourses surrounding gender or transgresses these boundaries and produces alternative discourses.

For feminist poststructuralists, language is where the definition and construction of the self occurs:

Feminist poststructuralism is a mode of knowledge production which uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change. Through a concept of *discourse*...feminist poststructuralism is able...to explain the working of power on behalf of specific interests and to analyse the opportunities for resistance to it. (Weedon, 1997, p. 40)

Using feminist poststructuralist theory as a guide offers the opportunity to see the multiple and possibly changing discourses employed by this group of preservice teachers.

This frame also serves as a tool to “demystify the interrelationships of gender, power, and ideology in discourse” (Lazer, 2005, p. 5), thus fitting closely with discourse analysis, the mode through which I analyzed the data.

**What Feminism Adds.** With the well-documented inequity present in the social studies textbooks and standards and the call for this to change (Clark, Allard, & Mahoney, 2004; Clark, Ayton, Frechette, & Keller, 2005; Gonzales, Riedel, Avery, & Sullivan, 2001; Hahn, 1996), the addition of feminism to this project is an attempt to pay attention to how this oppressive patriarchal power structure can be subverted by those implementing the curriculum. Achieving gender equity is a primary goal of all feminisms and examining the discourses of these preservice teachers supplements the research on the curriculum as an indication of how the stereotypical gender messages in these materials can be reproduced or resisted. The iteration of feminism that I adhere to does not promote one gender at the expense of another, but rather it strives to achieve equitable space for multiple expressions of all genders.

Feminism also adds a reconstructive element that balances the focus on deconstruction so important to poststructuralism (Francis, 2007; Weedon, 1997). The emancipatory nature of feminism juxtaposes with the poststructural focus of dismantling existing oppressive power relations in a way that offers a sense of hope and direction on how to rebuild a more just society with gender as the specific concern. This combination also refines the two “broad-church” paradigms into workable theories that can be applied to a specific context. It is in their combination that criticism of both being too big to do any good is avoided. This balance is perhaps best seen in Bronwyn Davies’ (1989) work

with preschool children where the deconstruction of “gender dualism,” the assignment of behaviors or traits to one gender or another, allowed the children to break from their gendered positions and experiment with different ways of being. The reconstruction of gender expectations here fulfilled the emancipatory feminist goals after the poststructuralist deconstruction of the gender binary.

Other essential elements of feminist poststructuralism pertinent to this research are the focus on ending gender discrimination and the requirement that all genders contribute in creating this social change (hooks, 2000). While poststructuralism is broadly concerned with social change, and gender equity is inherently included in the breadth of those concerns, the addition of feminism highlights this thread of gender specifically. It is not that I am unconcerned with other areas of societal inequity, but in the effort to deeply understand the gendered discourses of this group of future teachers, I chose to focus on this one area of subjectivity. Unlike other feminist theories, this iteration demands accountability from all members of society and rejects the narrow view that men are to blame and all women are part of the solution. Keeping an open perspective as to how people of all genders contribute to the progress of humanity or hold it back allows a theoretical scope wide enough to encompass how all participants contribute to the creation of a shared discourse. It is here specifically that my work deviates from the previously presented literature in social studies. While this dissertation is rooted in the literature that has shown inequitable attention to different genders, and is ultimately concerned with remedying this inequity, I strive to present a more nuanced interpretation of what gender entails in social studies teacher preparation. Here, the

reader will find how gender intersected with historical and contemporary stories of sexual violence, how it influenced discursive patterns in methods classes, and how the participants adhered to or transgressed gender norms during their preparatory year.

The final motivation for explicitly including a feminist lens to this work is purely political. As a feminist who wants to challenge the stereotypical notion that feminists are only concerned with women and that their work only belongs in one area of the academy (namely in gender or women's studies departments), it is critical that I label my work as feminist if I am to foster connections across areas of study. Keeping Janice Law Trecker's (1971) thread of feminist inquiry alive in the social studies allows me to contribute to the progress of the future while remaining rooted in the progress of the past. Feminist scholars in the social studies have labeled their work as such, and in their tradition, I must, as well.

### **Sociocultural Theory**

According to Volosinov (1994), meaning is constructed when words, or utterances, are said and then heard (or misheard). The sending and receiving of the linguistic message is the site of social construction and the understanding of this meaning is dialogic in nature (p. 5). Similarly, Gee (2003) identifies "words, phrases, and utterances...as clues or cues that guide active construction of meaning in context" (p. 44). Helpful to this study and connected to the centrality of language to poststructuralism are the concepts of heteroglossia and speech genres, as detailed by Mikhail Bakhtin. Heteroglossia involves the competition between centripetal, or unifying, and centrifugal, or stratifying, discourses that are present in every utterance (Bakhtin, 1994b). Speech

genres refers to the broad set of rules that speakers agree to within a particular context and includes both the primary genres of everyday life and secondary genres, which is where the specific lexicon of teaching is located (Bakhtin,1994b). As these preservice teachers went through a year-long program designed to educate them into the professional practices of teaching, they built their professional lexicons, which interacted with their pre-existing ways of speaking. Heteroglossia and speech genres offer a manner in which to understand how their talk is moving between and among both personal and professional discourses and how that movement may change over the course of a year. A metaphor helpful to understanding Bakhtin's notion of dialogue, offered by philosopher Julia Kristeva (1986), is that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (p. 37). For the purpose of this study, the spoken and written words of the preservice teachers constitute the text analyzed. Paired with feminist poststructuralism, Bakhtin's concepts revealed through discourse analysis allow for the tracing of power relations and the interplay of multiple discourses constructed throughout the study period.

In addition to the spoken word in dialogue is the silence that sometimes accompanies the utterances. Segall (2002) observes that "silences are as informative as are the utterances surrounding them; they always work with, through, and against the latter to educate" (p. 117). Together, utterances and silences constitute a discursive practice that provides a more complete picture of the expressed meanings in a particular context. Dialogue is of particular importance to the social studies classroom where the emphasis of the discipline is placed on educating an informed citizenry that must learn to

operate in a pluralistic democracy. Indeed, it is through democratic dialogue where conceptions of citizenship are negotiated and it is in secondary social studies classrooms where these skills are practiced (in theory). Understanding that this is a goal of social studies teachers begs the question of how they dialogue with each other as colleagues. If they are to facilitate democratic dialogue with their students, they must have experience in the practice themselves, and it is during their preparation for licensure that many of these dialogues occur in their social studies methods courses.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **Introduction and Overview**

For this dissertation, I used a qualitative ethnographic study design (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) in following a cohort of 25 preservice secondary social studies teachers through its year-long preparation program at a large, public, Midwestern university. I was interested in how the culture of this cohort constructed a social discourse of gender over the course of its formal teacher preparation program. As is the nature of qualitative inquiry, the research design remained focused on gender and gender issues but was flexible and open to additional themes that emerged.

#### **Participants**

The participants were the 25 students in the 2010-2011 secondary social studies cohort earning their secondary social studies license and their M.Ed. in social studies education. All of the students had previously earned a bachelor's degree and were enrolled in a program where they could simultaneously earn a teaching license and a masters of education degree. The cohort consisted of 13 female and 12 male students. Three male students self-identified as students of color: a Somali immigrant who moved to the United States when he was in sixth grade, a student who identified as "half-Mexican," and another student who identified as an ethnic Korean and was adopted as a toddler by a suburban White family. The majority of the students were White, between 20 and 29 years of age, and raised in the Midwestern United States. Table 1 shows the demographic information for each member of the cohort.

Table 1

*Demographic Information for Members of the 2010-2011 Secondary Social Studies**Cohort*

Name	Gender	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Marital Status
Alan	M	22	White	Single
Angie	F	22	White	Single
Brandon	M	22	White	Single
Bridgit	F	29	White	Single
Chase	M	22	White	Single
Dave	M	24	Korean	Single
Emily	F	22	White	Single
Evan	M	22	White	Single
Geoff	M	22	Half-Mexican/White	Single
Greta	F	24	White	Single
Holly	F	24	White	Single
Isaac	M	25	White	Married
John	M	26	White	Single
Karen	F	25	White	Single
Kimberly	F	22	White	Single
Leah	F	24	White	Single
Maddy	F	24	White	Single
Martin	M	28	White	Married
Omar	M	24	Somali	Single
Paul	M	29	White	Single
Rebecca	F	28	White	Single
Stephanie	F	24	White	Single
Tara	F	22	White	Married
Ted	M	24	White	Single
Valerie	F	26	White	Single

*Note.* All information reflects the self-identification of the participants.

For the purpose of this dissertation and its focus on gender, three focal students were identified, two of whom were my supervisees in their spring student teaching. As is the nature of qualitative research, I remained flexible and open to identifying focal students throughout the data collection process, even though I had to select my

supervisees in the middle of the year. The three focal students in this dissertation are Dave, Kimberly, and Leah; Dave and Leah were my supervisees in the spring of 2011. Follow-up interviews were conducted with all three after they had completed the first semester of their first year of teaching in the spring of 2012, when they had all been teaching for a semester. The focal students were recognized throughout the data collection period. Dave and Kimberly were the first to be identified in the summer as they both shared differing views about the gendered content in a book they both read in class. Leah was identified later in the fall when she offered a unique perspective of herself as a gendered person during a class activity on multiculturalism. These instances where Dave, Kimberly, and Leah differed from their cohort members regarding gendered topics heightened my interest in their perspectives on gender and led me to pay greater attention to them throughout the rest of the study.

**Dave.** A self-identified Korean adoptee, Dave was the only economics major in the cohort and was eager to seek out a placement in this area. Having grown up in a suburb of the same metropolitan area where the university was located, Dave was familiar with the area and intended to stay in the area after graduation. Of medium height and build, Dave wore his hair short for most of the year, with the exception of the fall when he buzzed his head bald in the middle of his practicum experience. Most of the time Dave came to class in casual street clothing, though when he was teaching he would usually wear khakis and a pressed button-down shirt with the collar open. He laughed easily and was a regular contributor in each class I observed. Dave rarely sat in the same place in his classes as he seemed to prefer to sit wherever there was an open seat and

frequently with different people. Thoughtful and willing to volunteer to read a passage, offer an answer, or perform in a skit, Dave was consistently engaged while in class.

While he rarely directly challenged another student or the instructor, he often offered his perspective to bolster or counter another that had been presented. When he spoke of his Korean heritage, he referred to having thought about and “worked through” his ethnic identity previously. Dave appeared to freely share his thoughts and experiences with me both as a researcher and as his spring student teaching supervisor.

**Kimberly.** A history and communication major in college, Kimberly frequently participated in class. Her long blonde hair, often worn down, mimicked her slight build and wide smile. An avid horseback rider, Kimberly often wore jeans and a t-shirt to class when she had not come directly from student teaching and was dressed in business attire. Kimberly was also one of the few cohort members who maintained her job at a local department store throughout the program. This set her apart from her cohort members, as did her penchant for freely speaking her mind, despite the possibility that her thoughts were sometimes unpopular. In an interview after the program was complete, she described feeling that some of her peers did not understand her because of different upbringings and socioeconomic statuses: “I feel like some of my cohort members don’t see [things from my perspective] because of the way they grew up. Some of them are definitely higher up economically” (Interview, March 4, 2012). Due to these perceived differences, she “felt like an outsider” from the other members of the cohort, and was only close with one other student, Omar, with whom she connected initially because her family had become very close to her brother’s best friend who was also Somali. In nearly

every class, she and Omar sat next to each other and chatted during break times.

Kimberly had an extended student teaching placement in the spring because it was determined by program faculty that she needed additional time with her cooperating teacher in order to teach independently.

**Leah.** As the daughter of two professors at a small-town college in a neighboring state, Leah considered herself to be a “faculty brat” who was drawn to the urban area because of its diversity. As an independent only child, Leah was petite in stature and build. She often wore combat boots with vintage dresses, and paired with her glasses and chin-length brown hair, she stood out as less mainstream in terms of dress than many of her classmates. A thoughtful young woman, Leah would often contribute to class discussions. A verbal processor and naturally reflective, she would occasionally talk herself through her thoughts in front of her fellow students, which they allowed her to do. A history major in college, Leah was concerned with social justice issues and was talking about race, social class, and their connections to policy from early on in the program. The disparity in resources and student achievement between her fall practicum placement in an inner-city middle school and her spring student teaching placement in a suburban high school was distressing for Leah and was often a topic in her reflective journals.

### **The Secondary Social Studies Teacher Education Program**

The secondary social studies teacher education program at this university was designed for students who had already completed a bachelor’s degree and who wanted to become social studies teachers in middle or high schools. According to the website, the goals of the program are to prepare educators to be well-rounded professionals:

The social studies education initial licensure program is designed to help you become an inquiring, analytical, and reflective professional educator prepared to teach in grades 5-12 classrooms and lead in the schools. The program seeks to develop educators who are advocates for young people and the social studies, and can help youth to become thoughtful and active citizens in a culturally diverse, democratic society. (Program website)

The social studies coursework reflected this statement in that it included frequent reflection; incorporated lessons and readings on culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural education; and was framed around King, Newmann, and Carmichael's (2009) Framework of Authentic Pedagogy.

Students entered the Master of Education with initial licensure program in June 2010 and continued through the following June 2011; the program included social studies and foundations coursework and practicum and student teaching placements. The students entered together as a cohort and continued throughout the year taking all five of their social studies courses together as a group. At the end of the 13-month program, students graduated with a Master of Education degree and a grades 5-12 All Social Sciences license as awarded by the state Department of Education.

Table 2 shows the coursework required for a M.Ed. in Social Studies Education with initial licensure. Students began in the summer of 2010 with six classes designed to provide them with the foundations of education and social studies methods. They attended classes five days a week and finished the summer term in early August.

In early September, they continued with their coursework and completed a six-week practicum experience, CI 5782, which ran parallel to the course *Advanced Methods of Teaching the Social Studies* (CI 5742). This practicum started in early October and entailed a placement in a local middle or high school where the students observed in the mornings for two weeks and then planned and taught lessons for the following four weeks to at least one class at the school. Lesson plans were assessed by an assigned university supervisor and the cooperating teacher in the school. The university supervisor also observed students once at their practicum sites and read their reflective journals. The half-day practicum experience ended in mid-November.

In January 2011, the students entered the final semester of coursework, which included a 10-week student teaching experience where students were in local middle and high schools for the entire teaching day. For at least eight of these weeks, the students were planning and implementing their own lessons for two different subjects. A university supervisor was assigned to each student for this experience. That supervisor assessed all lesson plans, read reflective journals, conducted at least three observations, and led three break-out sessions as part of the course *Seminar: Reflecting on Professional Development in Social Studies* (CI 5744).

Table 2

*Required Coursework for a M.Ed. in Social Studies Education, 2010-2011*

<p>Summer Term 2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CI 5741—Introduction to Social Studies Education (3 cr)</li> <li>• EDHD 5001—Learning, Cognition, and Assessment (3 cr)</li> <li>• EDHD 5003—Developmental and Individual Differences in Educational Contexts (2 cr)</li> <li>• EDHD 5004—Teaching Students with Special Needs in Inclusive Settings (2 cr)</li> <li>• EDHD 5005—School and Society (2 cr)</li> <li>• EDHD 5009—Human Relations: Applied Skills for School and Society (1 cr)</li> </ul>
<p>Fall Term 2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CI 5452—Reading in the Content Areas for Initial Licensure Candidates (1 cr)</li> <li>• CI 5644—Working with Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students in the Mainstream Classroom (1 cr)</li> <li>• CI 5742—Advanced Methods of Teaching the Social Studies (3 cr)</li> <li>• CI 5743—The Social Sciences and the Social Studies (3 cr)</li> <li>• CI 5782—Clinical Experiences in Teaching Social Studies (5 cr fall)</li> <li>• EDHD 5007—Technology for Teaching and Learning (1.5 cr)</li> </ul>
<p>Spring Term 2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CI 5744—Seminar: Reflecting on Professional Development in Social Studies Education (3 cr)</li> <li>• CI 5745—Engaging Youth with Social Studies Texts (3 cr)</li> <li>• CI 5782—Clinical Experiences in Teaching Social Studies (7 cr spring)</li> <li>• CI 5746—Global and Multicultural Education in the Secondary Classroom (3 cr)</li> <li>OR</li> <li>• CI 5762—Developing Civic Discourse in the Social Studies (3cr)</li> </ul>

**Data Collection**

I collected data from three sources: student interviews, classroom and informal observations, and course-related and student-generated documents. Research began during the second week of the cohort's first methods course in the summer of 2010 and continued throughout their program of study, ending in May 2011. Data collection occurred in four required social studies program area courses at the university.

**Interviews.** Interviews occurred officially in two forms: informal conversational and open ended (Patton, 2002). Informal conversational interviews were appropriate because I interacted with the students at least weekly throughout the entirety of their licensure program. Conversations naturally arose between the students and me. It was mostly during these encounters that I built rapport through casual interaction. I also used these encounters to ask for clarification on comments made in class.

More structured but open-ended interviews with the three focal students were conducted in early 2012 when they were in the field as first year teachers. These interviewees were selected from a pool of participants who volunteered to be interviewed at the end of the program in May 2011. Kimberly, Leah, and Dave were chosen because I had previously built positive, open relationships with each; they were all teaching full or part-time social studies; and they frequently reappeared as active participants in their classes and thus were integral to the study. These interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The semi-structured interviews employed an interview protocol to guide the line of questioning. The interview protocol is presented in Appendix A.

**Observations.** As the researcher, I was present at each of the class sessions in the social studies methods course sequence: *Introduction to Social Studies Education* (CI

5741), *Advanced Methods of Teaching the Social Studies* (CI 5742), and *Seminar: Reflecting on Professional Development in Social Studies* (CI 5744). These courses began in the summer and continued throughout the fall and spring semesters. A fourth course, *Engaging Youth with Social Studies Texts* (CI 5745), is one in which I observed only two class sessions. The instructor invited me to these sessions because she knew the students would be discussing topics relevant to my research. The data collection procedures for these two class sessions were the same as those for the three courses in which I observed each session. I audio recorded all large and selected small group conversations in all observed classes (i.e., 38 three-hour class sessions total across the four courses) and transcribed verbatim relevant conversations from those recordings throughout the data collection and analysis period. These portions were transcribed if there was gender talk between any of the students. Field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) accompanied the transcriptions and were written after each class observation, if an encounter with the students was experienced outside of class, or if a student teacher preferred a post-observation conference not be recorded. The observation protocol is shown in Appendix B.

**Documents.** I collected copies of materials (handouts, assignments, readings) that were used or created for the classes. In addition, I had access to the class websites, which were used primarily as a place to house the documents handed out in class. When pertinent, I asked students for copies of papers, lessons, or unit plans to which I would not otherwise have had access. Fortunately, in each case, the students were generous in sharing their work and freely gave me copies of many assignments to use as part of this

study. Assignments pertinent to this dissertation were the “Collaborative Unit Planning Assignment” from the *Introduction to Social Studies Education* (CI 5741) and the “My Multicultural Self” activity from the *Advanced Methods of Teaching the Social Studies* (CI 5742). Both of these assignments are presented in chapters 4 and 6.

### **Reflexivity and the Role of the Researcher**

As a researcher, I took on the role of a participant observer throughout the research process. Following the students throughout their coursework and working with six of the students in the spring as their student teaching supervisor created the need to negotiate my relationship as both researcher and supervisor. In the summer course, I served as a room leader for a small group of students’ microteaching experience. In this context, microteaching was the students’ first attempt at teaching a 20-minute lesson they had planned on their own to four other members of the cohort and an experienced teacher. In this role, I served as the experienced teacher in one room where I observed and commented on the lessons for five of the cohort members. I also assisted the instructors of their social studies coursework as requested by adding solicited comments and helping with any logistical needs in the classroom (moving tables, handing out materials). All of these actions gave me a position of authority, even though I had no official grading or evaluating power. Regardless, students came to see me as someone connected to the program, the instructors, and the faculty. Many of these classes met in the same building where my office was located, which allowed for the increased opportunity to interact and build rapport with the students in the hallways and on campus.

In the Spring of 2011, I supervised six members of this cohort as their official student teaching supervisor. These six participants volunteered to have me as their supervisor knowing that I would be acting as both a supervisor and researcher, and that this dual role would allow me greater access into their development as novice teachers. As part of this role, I observed and commented on their teaching practices in the middle and high schools where they were placed. This entailed formally grading eight weeks of lesson plans; reading, commenting on, and grading reflective journals; leading mini-seminar sessions in conjunction with their student teaching seminar course; and observing each supervisee teach three lessons in their student teaching classrooms.

It is important to note here that my role as a participant observer (Erickson, 1992) is inseparable from my position as a White, straight, female, middle-class, Midwestern, doctoral student, and that my observations and interpretations are inevitably, though not uncritically, viewed through these lenses. Particularly for this dissertation, my identification as a female and as a feminist are essential to understanding how I approach the research questions and data analysis as my gender identification and socialization filter my interpretation of the data. In an effort to make this gender lens transparent and to systematically engage in the critical examination of my position, I wrote reflective memos (Erickson, 1986) throughout the data collection and analysis period.

In addition, Merriam (1988) stated that the validity of a study can be ensured by using “member checks.” Coupled with long-term observation as a method of checking for validity, I sent drafts of chapters to the focal students and the instructors asking for feedback. Focal students Leah and Kimberly, and course instructors Dr. Browne and

Sophie King all provided comments before the final draft of the dissertation. These comments proved invaluable in mediating my authority as the researcher and main interpreter of the data.

### **Data Analysis**

Feminist poststructural discourse analysis (FPDA) is the primary mode of processing and analyzing the data, though the tools of discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis were used to enrich the analysis and parse out specific elements of the discourse. *Discourse* in this study is used in two ways. The first definition refers to discourse as the patterns of language, words in spoken or written text, that happen between people. An example of this is a conversation between three students, presented fully in Chapter Four, where ideas of one person are confirmed through the verification of others:

Greta: the White women were becoming extremely jealous of you know, telling her that she was going to kill her

Isaac: yeah

Rebecca: that happens a couple times too

Greta: and she didn't want anything to do with this but it was just this weird triangle of, I don't know

Rebecca: yeah

Greta: and I don't know how we would bring it up but I just found it really interesting

Rebecca: but that's another relationship like you said

Isaac: yeah yeah that's huge that

Rebecca: like the White women and the relationship with the slaves it's not just the master but the mistress of the house too

The second way discourse is defined here is as a social event that carries assumptions, expectations, and explanations that both shape and are shaped by mainstream social and cultural practices (Baxter, 2003; Wodak, 1997). An example of this is from Chapter Six when students were describing the cultures with which they identified. Valerie described her experience of being female by saying, "I'm constantly trying to balance between um being happy with like home or social family life and having a successful career and deciding which is more important and trying to deal with having it all." By speaking about the discourse of "having it all," Valerie's discourse was shaping and shaped by certain assumptions of being female that are informed by the time and location of where she lives. Both of these definitions are in the tradition of FPDA. This feminist lens was added to discourse analysis for this dissertation because of the gender element present in the data, the focus on the gendered power relations among the speakers and broader themes of their talk, and the potential for overturning "discursive practices that conventionally position [women] as powerless" (Baxter, 2003, p. 55). FPDA is an appropriate tool for the data because understanding how preservice teachers

talk with one another and what it is they are saying is the crux of the study. As Gee (2003) articulates, understanding the how of spoken language gives a glimpse into who the speakers are in that moment, which in turn allows insight into how the larger societal discourses are produced and reproduced by the speakers. Unlike a feminist linguistics approach, where differences in how the genders speak are interpreted, here I focus first on what was said and then on who was speaking. This distinction is important to note because I am interested in how this group of students talked about gendered issues rather than how they as distinct groups of gendered people perpetuated gendered speech patterns. How they “do gender” (Wodak, 1997, p. 13) is less of a focus than how they talk about issues concerning gender. Through understanding the discourses they construct, insight was gained into who they were becoming as teachers and what kinds of choices they are likely to make as curricular gatekeepers within the institution of school.

Discourse analysis was the most appropriate method of analysis for these data because I was most interested in what the preservice teachers were actually saying about gender and gender issues. The ethnographic nature of the study, coupled with the frequent and regular opportunities for them to talk about these difficult issues, established a space where the participants seemed comfortable and honest in their conversations. I used the constant comparative method coupled with discourse analysis to discern themes and patterns associated with their talk. Examining the talk of these preservice teachers allowed me a window into the discourses they constructed and reified.

### **Analytic Procedures**

In an effort to avoid confirmation bias, which is the categorizing of new data into already established categories without considering the possibility of more appropriate interpretations or categories, I employed the constant comparative method (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). By categorizing the transcripts according to recurring themes, which were revisited and modified throughout the process of data collection and analysis, the coded transcripts were compared to the corresponding field notes and each other. After each class that I observed and recorded, I entered the date and general content into an organizational matrix that included themes of gender, race, sexuality, and religion with an additional notes section where I recorded the topics of the day. This matrix became the source for identifying the three significant moments that I focus on in this dissertation. With this matrix, I could clearly see that three days throughout their preparatory year included significant discussions of gender and that two of those days also included the theme of sexual violence. With this information, I proceeded in transcribing these days and any parts of other class sessions that concerned gender or gendered issues. This matrix is presented in Appendix C.

After transcribing the audio recordings of large and small group discussions in class, I coded the transcriptions of the significant moments for any indication or mention of gender. This began with the very simple a priori codes of the following words: *gender, sex, man, woman, dad, mom, daughter, boy, and girl*. This first round of coding was broadly defined with these terms in an effort to sense if and how the topic of gender was present in the data. When it was determined that gender was a salient theme in the data, I developed another round of coding that pulled words from the data itself. Codes

identified in this second round of coding included *rape*, *assault*, euphemisms for rape, *victim*, *avoidance*, *inclusion*, *exclusion*, *struggle*, *angst*, *feminist*, *stereotype*, *disturbing*, *disgusting*, *difficult*, *horrible*, *angering*, and *troubling*. Constant comparison (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) coupled with various tools of discourse analysis (Gee, 2011), allowed me to discern patterns associated with the students' in-class talk in regard to any gendered speech. When initial codes were identified (e.g. *rape*, *assault*, *feminist*, *stereotype*, *disturbing*, *disgusting*), transcript data were compared to (a) the observational data; (b) any relevant student work, including reflective journal entries and unit or lesson plans; (c) interview transcripts; and (d) the existing literature previously presented.

At this point, after two levels of initial coding and comparison within and across data sources, I used Fairclough's (2001) list of questions to further analyze the text of the discussions. Borrowed from Critical Discourse Analysis, these questions helped me to see how the students were using words, grammar, and sentence structures when I applied them to the coded transcripts. Appendix D shows a complete list of these questions. With each significant moment, and each code within each moment, I asked these 10 questions in an effort to further illuminate both the obvious and hidden discourses present in the words of the participants. While some of the questions resulted in few conclusions, many of these questions were determining factors in systematically ascertaining the values of the words that the participants were using, and thus the discourses in which they were participating. The questions focusing on vocabulary and the relationships between words were particularly important, as was the question "Are there any euphemistic expressions?" It was through these questions that I systematically located unique textual

structures, vocabulary, and grammar that could be compared with the previously identified codes. For example, asking if there were any euphemistic expressions became pertinent with the first significant moment when Dave referred to sexual assault as “**getting basically hit on** by her owner, like this big doctor ...so then um starts to have **those problems** basically saying you know I own you you’re supposed to be **taking care of me**” (Class session, June 30, 2010). Through the systematic application of this question, the euphemisms were identified for further analysis. This comparison process allowed for a methodical understanding into the patterns present in the students’ spoken discourses.

### **Transcription Style**

The transcription style chosen was more naturalized with laughter, stresses, emphasis, and pauses included because the content of the speech and the interaction of the speakers were the primary foci of the analysis. Standard spelling was adhered to, but grammatical differences remained as to not favor one speaker over another with regard to phonological differences (Preston, 1985). Although accents, inflection, and representation of every sound are sacrificed by choosing this transcription form, the advantage is a visually “cleaner” transcript that allows the reader to focus on the content and interaction of the speakers. Choosing a less detailed transcription style was the best choice in answering my research questions because the focus of the study was more macro than micro in question and analysis. Appendix E shows the transcription conventions.

### **Limitations**

One significant limitation to this study was that I followed only one cohort of students during one particular year in just three of their classes. Not being regularly present in their other classes, particularly *Human Relations: Applied Skills for School and Society* (EDHD 5009), a course where gender topics could have potentially arisen, limited my data to the conversation that occurred during their methods sequence of *Introduction to Social Studies Education* (CI 5741), *Advanced Methods of Teaching the Social Studies* (CI 5742), and *Seminar: Reflecting on Professional Development in Social Studies Education* (CI 5744). The data are also limited by the nature of their talk and only reflected their verbalized interpretations of their in-class and student teaching experiences. As with qualitative research, the findings are not generalizable but do have a degree of transferability. Knowing that the students in the cohort were not unlike other preservice teachers in demographics, the findings provide an opportunity to gain insight into preservice teachers in similar contexts.

Logistically, another limitation of this study was my inability to audio record all side and small group conversations in each class. On multiple occasions, I used two audio recorders to capture the conversations of different small groups, however I know that not having captured all of this talk resulted in missing data that could have enriched the analysis. When I listened in on small groups that were not recorded I wrote detailed field notes, however these notes could not replace the actual words of the participants.

When interviewing the focal students, I felt the need to balance my need to reconnect with each of the three students who I had grown to know well and my need to ask them detailed questions that would further inform the analysis. When asking

questions that I had pre-written and ones that arose naturally in the interview, I found myself to be cognizant of their time to the point of not asking for as much detail or examples where I wish I would have.

Despite these limitations, I found the data to be informative and representative of their talk in their teacher education classes. The ethnographic study design contributed to the completeness of the data that was collected and allowed me to gain invaluable insight as someone who followed their development from the beginning through the end of their formal preparation. The access gained through the relationships built throughout this year allowed for some limitations to be minimized. Particularly regarding the focal students, I found no resistance or difficulty in their being interviewed and perceived them all to be interested and eager to schedule the interviews. Indeed, the major limitation of access to all of the participants in-class never materialized as each student allowed me full access to their contributions and participation in the classes I observed.

#### **Chapter Four: Beginning the Program: Avoidance & Uncertainty**

In the summer of 2010, the students in the secondary social studies cohort began their licensure year with *Introduction to Social Studies Education*, a course designed to teach students how to plan for instruction and assessment while also providing a place to begin the development of their educational philosophies (course syllabus). In this course, students wrote unit and lesson plans and practiced different methods of instruction within Newmann's framework of authentic pedagogy. They also started to develop relationships with each other as cohort members who would see and work with each other for the following year. The significant moment presented in this chapter is more accurately described as the events that occurred around their first assignment.

As the first assignment of the course, students were to work in a small group to plan a unit surrounding an assigned text (Appendix F). The first day of class, students signed up for one of four books that all addressed the theme of slavery as it existed in the United States. They were to read the book and then come to class prepared to share a synopsis and initial thoughts on the appropriate grade level for instruction in a jigsaw with students who read the other three books. This discussion happened on the sixth day of the course when students were still getting to know each other's names and personalities. Six students read *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Jacobs, 1861), a memoir written by Harriet Jacobs, a free woman who had been enslaved from childhood through her early adulthood. While Harriet Jacobs gave herself and the other characters pseudonyms, the account is considered to be a work of non-fiction.

All of the discussions for this analysis occurred on the same day, though the final unit and lesson plans were turned in a week later. In the class period previous to this day, students who had all read the same book split up into smaller unit planning groups. For this book, two groups were formed: Isaac, Rebecca, and Greta; and John, Kimberly, and Dave. After the students shared their books in jigsaw groups, the class came together for 55 minutes as a whole group to discuss the books and any questions that arose in their small groups. After a short break, the students returned to class and spent the remaining 35 minutes working in groups of three or four with the task of planning a unit using their book as the central text (Appendix G). Participants who appear in this analysis are identified in Appendix H.

The instructor of the course, Shayna Randall, was a veteran social studies teacher with over 10 years of experience in middle and high school classrooms. A graduate of the same program herself, Shayna led a lively course with frequent stories of her own practice and extensive knowledge of authentic pedagogy. Dedicated to anti-racist education, Shayna was also a PhD student at the same university where she just completed her first year of coursework. Latina herself, Shayna's belief in education as a critical component to addressing racism was clear in her choice of materials and decision to focus the first assignment on how slavery existed in the United States. This was the second time she taught this course.

### **Findings**

The findings presented here are organized chronologically with the jigsaw group data first, the whole group discussion next, the unit planning group third, and the written

unit and lesson plans last. As I hope to illustrate, the discourses surrounding whether to include gender and sexual violence in the formal curriculum, or not, are competing and while each has moments where it becomes prominent, the conclusion from these data suggest that, in the end, no singular discourse prevails.

### **The Jigsaw Group**

When students gathered together in their jigsaw groups, they were directed to share the plot, compelling parts of the story, the age appropriateness of their book, and any concerns they had in using the book in a social studies class. Dave was the only member of his group who read Jacobs' memoir and was thus the only person in his group who described the plot and age appropriateness of the book. When Dave was sharing his plot synopsis with his jigsaw group, his description trivialized Jacobs' sexual assault by her master.

Dave: basically then she when she's around 12 um she starts getting basically hit on by her owner, like this big doctor or whatever the big owner or whatever so then um starts to have those problems basically saying you know I own you you're supposed to be taking care of me and all this stuff um so

Choosing the words "hit on," "those problems," and "take care of me" indicate a significant downplaying of the sexual violence that Jacobs lived with. His language was so vague, in fact, that I questioned whether he had actually read the book, but upon further analysis, his in-depth description of the later parts of the plot led me to believe that he had in fact read the entire memoir and was choosing not to disclose this part of the plot to his group mates. This avoidance of saying the often emotionally heavy words of

sexual abuse, sexual violence, or rape instead substituting euphemisms such as “those problems” likely made the difficult topic easier to discuss, particularly with a group of people who did not yet know each other very well. This discomfort, however, is not an excuse for sidestepping an entire portion of Jacobs’s narrative and while perhaps seemingly innocuous, misled those in his jigsaw group as to a significant portion of her story. This trend of avoidance is echoed later in the whole group discussion when multiple students continued using the term “stuff” to describe the sexual violence content with likely a similar intention of softening the harshness of the subject.

Throughout all of the discussions recorded, students expressed uncertainty regarding the appropriate grade level(s) in which to use this book. This was one of the questions the instructor asked them to consider while reading the books and was one of the topics they were to address when sharing their books in their jigsaw groups.

Evan: age appropriate?

Dave: high school because of the, I mean, I just think it’d be kind of awkward cause there’s a lot of talk about like the, like the sex stuff and things like that and just the different choices that you have to make like you know her having to, there’s a lot of her talking about how you know I wish all my children were dead and they would get sick and I hope they die and stuff like that I hope they wouldn’t wake up, and just be able to I guess empathize with that a little bit I would expect a little higher

Maddy: more maturity

Dave: yeah, exactly

In this first description of the book, Dave had already made a determination as to the age level for which the content would be most appropriate. It is important to remember here that Dave is the only member of his jigsaw group who read *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Jacobs, 1861), and thus none of his other classmates who had read the book could agree or disagree with his retelling of the plot and determination of the age appropriateness. Dave referred to the sexual violence content as “sex stuff and things like that,” again to perhaps to soften the harshness or ease the discomfort surrounding the rape content which was admittedly “awkward” for Dave. This awkwardness led to his determination that the book be reserved for more mature students, though Maddy was the one who voiced it in this way which left the question open to interpretation. It is likely that Dave meant to reserve the book for students in high school, though this was not explicitly stated. The other four students, three male and one female, did not verbally agree or disagree. For at least these six students, a determination that the sexual content of this text made it inappropriate for students with less maturity was established with little question.

### **The Whole Class Discussion**

In the large group discussion this topic came up again when the instructor asked if there were any practical questions regarding the teaching of any of the books.

Rebecca: I know that Harriet Jacobs is a book that would be appropriate for 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes, it's a book that could be appropriate for an 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade class based on how much you get into it and just, how do you develop the

themes from a really kind of basic level without you cheating them and giving them like a glossy version of it versus you know the older students that you hope can get a deeper understanding, um cause I personally think you can use the book with both age groups.

Whereas Dave was reluctant to name grades for which the book would be most appropriate, Rebecca stated with confidence that she would teach the book to students as young as 8th grade, though she was questioning the level of understanding that she could encourage as a teacher, indicating that there would be a way to sterilize the text to a point of cheating the students. Without saying which themes or concepts she would use to teach with the book, thus continuing the avoidance of speaking of the sexual violence, Rebecca here seems to be entertaining the idea that younger students could access the difficult and traumatic themes present in the memoir. Kimberly immediately responded to Rebecca and spoke to conceptual teaching and how different students would likely encounter the curriculum in different ways. She also became the first in the large group discussion to explicitly raise the issues of the sexual content present in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Jacobs, 1861).

Kimberly: I think it's about pulling up the underlying concepts of the book.

Cause I read the same one and like the sexual content in the book, um I feel like I know some high schoolers that would read it and ((snaps her fingers)) bam they totally understand that little cottage in the woods and why it was built but I know some that would be like oh so he's treating her really well, like they wouldn't notice that and I think the little things like that are things that you can kind of

integrate depending on their age level and what they're ready for and what they've already been exposed to, like we were talking about high school they get that sex stuff, middle school probably but not all of them do cause some are more innocent than others and we can use stuff like this to develop new ideas new thoughts new perspectives and um bring it together (5second pause)

Whereas previously in the jigsaw group, the six students had come to a conclusion that because of the sexual content this book had to be reserved for students with more maturity, now in the large group this conclusion was problematized by both Rebecca and Kimberly who asserted that they would use the book in both middle and high school. Kimberly's statement that middle and high school students would understand the content at different levels was not unlike Dave's thoughts on the varying maturity levels of students; however, her allusion to some of the students understanding the role the cottage played in providing a setting for the repeated assault silenced the class, though it is unclear as to why her words silenced the group. Potential reasons could be because they were still new to each other, or because their determined ideas on age appropriateness were questioned, or likely because until this point in the course no one had spoken openly about the taboo topic of sex. Regardless, the silence was palpable and required a redirect from the instructor to break it. After the instructor's redirect, Greta, another student who read this book, started a conversation about Bloom's Taxonomy in relation to possible evaluation questions that could be asked to different grade levels.

Greta: the type of evaluation question that you brought up to a middle schooler would be different and on a different level than the type that you would, you

know maybe you could bring up more of the sex stuff to high schoolers in the evaluation question if you felt like that was important, where middle schoolers they would have a more I mean they would have different questions, I guess...

Here Greta questioned the nuance but did not suggest eliminating the book from the middle school curriculum unlike some of her classmates. This then sparked three other students to question using the book at all, with Emily, a student who was in the jigsaw group with Dan at the beginning of the class, explicitly suggesting it be excluded from the classroom: “If you have to gloss over a lot of stuff wouldn’t you maybe just choose a different book?” Emily reasserted the previously decided upon discourse that this be reserved for more mature students even after the topic had been opened by Rebecca and Kimberly and then continued by Greta, all students who had read Harriet Jacobs’ book. She assumed that younger students would need to have parts of the content “glossed over” and based solely on the descriptions from classmates suggested that the book simply be excluded from the curriculum. Emily granted herself the authority to advocate for the exclusion of a book that she had not read, even in response to three of her classmates who had. Her judgment that the memoir be excluded from the curriculum, informed only by Dave’s telling of the story and perhaps any personal beliefs she held or new knowledge gained from the discussion, voiced an opinion that was losing credibility in the whole group discussion, though her re-voicing of it allowed the discourse of exclusion to remain viable.

At this point another discursive pattern had arisen. On four separate occasions from four different speakers, “sex stuff” or “stuff” was used in place of the words *sexual*

*assault, sexual violence, or rape*, even though those who read the book clearly knew that Harriet Jacobs was not a consenting participant in the acts and others would likely be able to infer that her sexual relationship with her master could in no way be consensual. Kimberly used “sexual content” once, though this phrase does not carry the heavy connotation that the other choices do. It is unclear as to why they chose to refer to Jacobs’ experiences using the vague “stuff” rather than a more specific term, though regardless, it does keep the conversation away from the intensity of rape. This avoidance of using certain terms was broken soon after when Geoff contributed to the discussion. However, he introduced his disbelief of Jacobs’ story and questioned the significance of including the theme of sexual violence in the broad narrative of slavery itself, thus mitigating his direct address of the sexual violence.

Geoff: I didn’t read your book, I’m not familiar with the context or how essential this cottage or presumed sexual abuse is to the story but is that the issue? Like are we using the book to talk about the way that you know women were sexually abused in slavery or is that the essential part of the narrative of slavery? I don’t know like, I don’t know if it would have to be focused there... I mean it seems like, it seems like that particular issue is like as much a women’s rights question as it is a slavery question. Um so I don’t know, I guess I would say especially when you’re dealing with a younger age group it seems like you could pick a source that addresses all the woes of slavery without getting into that but I don’t know maybe is that like, is middle school the right time to bring that up? I lived a very sheltered life growing up [group laughter] so ((trails off))

Here Geoff appears to align with Emily and Dave in their beliefs that this memoir be excluded from the curriculum for younger students because of the sexual content. Why Geoff chose to speak of the sexual abuse as “presumed” is unknown, but his choice of lending doubt to the story and his outright questioning of including the topic in the broad narrative of slavery itself contributed to downplaying the significance of the topic as a whole, which is something that had not yet been voiced in the whole class discussion. He also spoke in euphemism with “all that stuff” and “getting into that” in place of more specific terms, just as his classmates had done previously. His mitigation of his previous statement with “I lived a very sheltered life growing up” drew laughter from the class. This break in the discussion allowed the instructor to step in and share that “the sexual piece is huge in Harriet Jacobs,” and that it is the only book of the four that addressed sexual themes. This discursive move by the instructor validated Harriet Jacobs’ story and redirected the discussion to how often social studies teachers teach with books other than the approved textbook until Angie directly confronted the sexual abuse content three minutes later.

Angie: um I was just thinking in my head about um, so this piece that has the sexual abuse in it would you have to prep the class for that, because what if there was a boy or a girl in the class who had been sexually abused and they go and they read this and they like are like emotionally destroyed and can’t even complete the assignment so that’s, that’d be something that I’d have difficulty knowing who and who has not been abused in that way.

Empathizing with her future students and for the first time personalizing the issue, Angie

resisted the dominant discourse of avoiding the topic completely, and instead sanctioned its use by suggesting that as a teacher, one would need to prepare the students to read the material because of the sexual abuse content. This opened the floor for other students to join in creating a competing discourse of including the book in the curriculum. Unlike Kimberly's previous comment, which had literally silenced her fellow students, Angie's comments served to raise the consciousness of some of her classmates, and together they were able to change the spoken discourse that had previously endured. While some questioned what the best way would be to introduce it to students who had experienced such trauma, three female students clearly advocated for the topic through such statements as: "I just don't like the idea of shying away from something because it's going to bring up controversy" and "I wouldn't want to shy away from material that might have very direct relevance to a student's life cause it could be disturbing, but it could be really helpful in some way." Together these women re-wrote the previously decided upon discourse that this book be reserved for only some students, if used at all, and reestablished a discourse that made space for it, even if it had the potential to be disturbing or controversial. This is the spoken discourse that was left intact at the end of the large group discussion, though none of the students who expressed their exclusionary views openly switched to beliefs of inclusion.

In a few instances in the jigsaw group and in the whole class discussion, students discursively downplayed the significance of the sexual violence portrayed in Jacobs' story through short yet powerful choices in their words and descriptions of the story itself. Speaking euphemistically, Dave and others in the large group chose to speak of

the sexual violence through referring to it as what happened in “the cottage,” a place off the main property where most of the abuse happened.

While Dave’s word choice downplayed the topic in his small group jigsaw, in the whole class discussion, he spoke vaguely of Harriet Jacobs’s decision to have a romantic relationship with a White man as a way “for her to gain power” and then countered himself with “I don’t know, it’s full of questions, no answers” indicating his uncertainty. Harriet Jacobs herself left little uncertainty about her feelings surrounding her exercise of power in the situation: “I knew nothing would enrage Dr. Flint so much as to know that I favored another; and it was something to triumph over my tyrant even in that small way” (Jacobs, 1861, p. 55). Dave’s comment here introduced feminist theory into the discussion, but then he himself quickly squashed its inclusion even though the text directly supports his assertion that Jacobs was trying to exercise control over her life through choosing with whom she fell in love. Notably, no one returned to this idea or elaborated on the feminist notion of power being embodied, using the personal to exercise the political, or Harriet Jacobs’s sexual agency as an opportunity for her to control her own destiny (hooks, 2000). With his swift admission of not having any answers, the topic was closed and left as a question unable to be answered.

When the speakers who participated in the large group discussion on this topic and their positions were identified, 12 of the 25 students participated in some manner, with seven females and no males advocating for the inclusion of the sexual violence in the written curriculum. One female and three males suggested excluding the book and themes of sexual violence in the curriculum, and one female said she did not know what

she would do. The whole of the class discussion was dominated by female voices advocating for the use of the text, though the majority (4) of these voices did not enter the conversation until Angie opened the space for them. Previously the discourse had been dominated by questioning females and males advocating for the exclusion of these inherently gendered issues. Of the 14 statements and questions spoken concerning this topic in the large group discussion, one of the first eight was overtly inclusive whereas of the last six, five were overtly inclusive, thus leaving the overall tone of the discussion as in favor of including these themes in the written curriculum. This view, however, was only expressed by females. Both the dissenting and the male voices were silent in the latter part of the discussion.

### **The Unit Planning Group**

Later in the class period, students gathered in their small groups to begin planning their units. Isaac, Greta, and Rebecca worked together to create their plan. After discussing initial ideas on how to frame the unit, they decided to take a multiple perspectives approach and chose “How do different people see and experience slavery differently?” as their essential question. Nearly 25 minutes after they began their discussion, Isaac, who did not speak in the large group earlier that day, brought up the sexual violence.

Isaac: I kinda don't buy it that he never fol-followed through and actually sexually assaulted her. Did you guys have any questions about that?

Rebecca: well I'm sure he did

Isaac: cause like

Rebecca: I'm sure he did.

Isaac: for the kind of guy that she describes like it's impossible he needed her consent for anything, you know what I mean

This marks the only time consent was raised in any of the discussions and establishes their belief that her story was true, though carefully written. The students went on to theorize about why Jacobs wrote of the experiences in a veiled manner. They raised the question of whether or not to include the sexual violence content in their unit plan, thus continuing the previous discourse of uncertainty in determining an appropriate age level for the material.

Rebecca: I, I'm sure that she edited that stuff out for her own mental protection and

Isaac: yeah and her kids and all sorts of stuff

Rebecca: but I, I absolutely think that he must have

Isaac: yeah

Rebecca: and for all the times she said that he was there (2 second pause)

Isaac: anyway I was just wondering what other people thought

Greta: yeah yeah

Rebecca: agreed

Isaac: that may not be something to talk about, I'm not sure if it would be or not

Here is the first time Isaac expressly indicates his uncertainty whether to explicitly include the sexual violence as a topic in the unit. As other students had previously indicated their uncertainty by stating in the large group that they didn't know how they felt on the issue, Isaac continued the discourse of uncertainty in his three person unit planning group. Neither Greta nor Rebecca immediately acknowledged his question of whether to include the subject, likely because they had not yet solidified their thoughts on if and how it could be included.

A few moments later, Greta hedged her shift in the conversation with an admission that she was wholly unsure as to if she wanted to include the sexual abuse content in their unit plan. She did not explain her trepidation, perhaps because a swift dismissal of the topic was easier than addressing the content directly or because her previous advocating for the book in the large group discussion sparked questions of whether to include it at all. Also important to note here, is that this is the first time they were group planning, and their intention was to start brainstorming multiple ideas to revisit later when meeting on their own to narrow the topics further. She quickly moved the conversation to the relationship between the women in the story and for the first time, they begin to problematize the relationship between Jacobs and Mrs. Flint, the wife of her oppressor.

Greta: I think I don't know how I feel about bringing up the sexual abuse topic, but I think it would be important to show the difference between...maybe it's not

important maybe I just find this interesting. I'll just throw it out there between White women and the Black slaves and how the White women didn't have all that much authority but the men, they were obviously married, they got jealous of the Black women who the masters tried to sleep with, but the Black women didn't want to sleep with those masters and so it's just this weird triangle that

Rebecca: yeah

Greta: the White women were becoming extremely jealous of you know, telling her that she was going to kill her

Isaac: yeah

Rebecca: that happens a couple times too

Greta: and she didn't want anything to do with this but it was just this weird triangle of, I don't know

Rebecca: yeah

Greta: and I don't know how we would bring it up but I just found it really interesting

Rebecca: but that's another relationship like you said

Isaac: yeah yeah that's huge that

Rebecca: like the White women and the relationship with the slaves it's not just the master but the mistress of the house too

Greta: well and then also they're, she, Mrs. Flint was verbal to her but then the other mistress taught her to read and write you know, but then also the other mistress promised her freedom and when she died they were auctioned off. I mean there's just so much going on in the book like good versus evil, but is the evil really evil because they're mad because the husbands are going after the slave girls and then is it really good when she still auctions them off in the end?

Greta was seemingly trying to parse out the complexities of the gendered relationships both in the book and in the greater slavery narrative that they were intending to teach, but perhaps inadvertently, she gave more voice to the oppressors through seemingly empathizing with the wife. She did acknowledge the complexity of the time when she spoke of the White woman who helped Jacobs learn to read; however, she quickly returned to nearly siding with the mistress by justifying her horrific treatment of Jacobs because of her jealousy surrounding her husband's repeated sexual assault of Jacobs, here couched as "going after the slave girls." Her question of "is the evil really evil" directed at the behavior of Mrs. Flint towards Jacobs is troubling. By questioning whether the verbal and physical abuse that Jacobs experienced at the hands of her mistress was actually evil, Greta gave voice and therefore power to Mrs. Flint because of her intense emotions. Did Mrs. Flint's actions become acceptable because her feelings were hurt and she was angry? If so, where does that leave Harriet Jacobs? Surely, her pain and anguish is clear to the reader, as Jacobs is forced into the inhumane institution of slavery, but

Greta does not empathize with her here and instead chooses to try to understand and explain away the actions of Jacobs' oppressor.

Even though she mentioned that the enslaved women did not want to sleep with their masters, and that the wives of the masters did not have a great deal of authority, her implied message was contrary. Twice characterizing the relationship between Jacobs, her master, and her master's wife as a triangle implies that each member has equal footing in the relationship, which could clearly never be the case in the context of slavery. Throughout Greta's talk here, the implied message is that Jacobs was a willing participant in luring her master into a sexual relationship with her, and that this was done at the expense of the mistress's pride and role as a wife. The thread of Greta's talk here surrounds the jealousy and anger that Mrs. Flint felt towards Jacobs because of her husband's choice to sexually abuse her – not of Jacobs' feelings towards an abusive Mrs. Flint. The wife's anger is justified here through the implication that Jacobs is a willing participant in her own abuse. While Jacobs's participation in her own abuse is implicit in these comments, and Greta does explicitly question if the evil is, in fact, really evil, it is unlikely that Greta would ever explicitly blame Jacobs as being complicit or consenting in her abuse. The ambiguity of her word choice and perhaps the striving to truly include perspectives from all of the figures in the book gave voice to the oppressors and took power from the victim. Even though this was perhaps unintentional, it nonetheless contributed to downplaying the validity of the victim's experience. The greater implication here is that disbelief of sexual abuse victims as truly innocent victims and not willing participants who "asked for it" persists in contemporary society. Even if that was

not the intended outcome, questioning the relationship and not explicitly acknowledging the stark difference in power among those involved contributes to an undercurrent that maintains this larger discourse of blaming the survivors of sexual assault.

### **The Final Unit Plan**

In the final unit and lesson plans written by Isaac, Greta, and Rebecca, gender as a concept was explicitly present. Isaac, Greta, and Rebecca planned a 14-day unit on pre-Civil War Slavery for a tenth grade U.S. History class and dedicated two full days to the topic of “Power, Assault, and Abuse.” Though none of the three decided to write the lesson plan for these days (they chose Resistance, Ethics, and Geography respectively), Isaac mentioned in his lesson plan for Resistance that this lesson would have been “positioned after our discussion of sexual assault, in which students will see Harriet Jacobs as a victim, as well as an active resister of slavery.” The previous day’s discussion topic noted on their unit calendar was described as “Activity: Create discussion topics related to power, assault and abuse and the video or reading (master/mistress, slave/master, grandmother/Linda, master/female slave, Linda/Mistress).” It appears here that they decided to explicitly address the sexual assault content through a class discussion framed by the broad concepts of power, assault, and abuse and that they had agreed that tenth grade was an appropriate age to include this in the curriculum, thus giving answer to Greta’s previous uncertainty as to how she felt as to including the sexual abuse content in the written curriculum as a topic that would be explicitly addressed. Greta’s shift from uncertainty to including the content in the unit plan is the only documented shift in view of a participant.

Later in their unit, one of the guiding questions for a lesson on “Authorship and Authenticity” was “Do you believe Harriet’s story?” This isn’t pointed at any particular part of her story, but the questioning of her account mirrors Geoff’s previous comment of “presumed sexual abuse.” It appears, however, that they chose to have their students answer this question rather than they themselves as teachers. While Isaac’s lesson plan indicated that this topic was part of the formal curriculum, the inclusion of *how* the sexual violence appeared in the unit plan was significantly less clear. Even though Isaac, Greta, and Rebecca had previously discussed in their unit planning group that the sexual abuse part of Jacobs’s story was undoubtedly true, this conclusion did not appear in their written unit plan and thus calls into question the motive behind the ambiguity. At the culmination of this assignment and after multiple discussions, it appears that there was little resolution whether the discourse that excluded the content or the discourse that included the content clearly prevailed. Even in the final unit plan where sexual abuse was given space, none of the students chose to elaborate on how it was to be included, thus leaving the role of this taboo topic ambiguous.

### **Discussion**

Through their small and large group discussions surrounding the content and unit planning of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Jacobs, 1861), some of the study participants created a discourse of uncertainty, others avoidance, and still others total exclusion in using this book as part of the formal curriculum. The discourse expressed in the large group discussion surrounding the inclusion of the text began as exclusionary

and shifted to being inclusionary, though the thinking of most of the students is unknown because they chose not to speak. This ebb and flow of the discourse ultimately resulted in individual students making decisions for themselves, but with little persuasive power over the discourse of the cohort. It appears that while some students could make space for competing discourses, there was little they said that recruited students to their points of view once these views had been expressed. The students who remained silent offered no more than the contributions of a bystander; their views and why they decided to not voice them are wholly unknown. The discourse of uncertainty about how to include sexual violence themes was found across all data sources. It appears that little resolution was found between these competing discourses as evidenced by the ambiguity present in the final unit and lesson plans.

In this significant moment, these preservice teachers struggled with whether sexual violence was an appropriate topic for the secondary classroom. Even extended discussion and collaborative work on these issues still left these students with few answers on how to address issues of gender and assault in the formal curriculum, though some showed continued engagement in asking the question. Missing in their reasoning behind why excluding themes of sexual violence would be justified is a fear of community backlash. Identified in previous studies (Evans, Avery, & Pederson, 1999; Miller-Lane, Denton, & May, 2006) as a reason for avoiding topics that incite controversy, these students did not appear to consider the potentially negative opinions of parents or administrators in their decisions. While some appeared to be uncomfortable with the topic as evidenced by their extensive use of euphemisms, this alone does not

fully explain their exclusionary beliefs and leaves this open to further inquiry. The failure of a predominant discourse emerging is disappointing because even though this was early in their development as teachers, I had hopes that more of them would have advocated for including difficult stories from history that show the diversity of the human experience. This disappointment, however, is not as great as if a single discourse of exclusion had prevailed. There is hope however, that when presented with difficult material, preservice teachers would grapple with how to best serve their students by determining what is allowed in the curricular gate (Thornton, 1991). And with a few strong voices, it appears that unpopular views can make space for themselves alongside those previously reified.

### **The Gender Element**

The data suggest a connection between identifying as female and allowing sexual violence as a theme into the formal curriculum. Women have historically been victims of sexual violence and these tactics are still used in wars today. The marked difference in the number of identified females (7) compared to the number of identified males (1) who advocated for the curricular inclusion of the sexual abuse content is noteworthy, and suggests a connection between teachers as gendered people and the choices they make in choosing curriculum. Perhaps the female identified students found more of a personal connection because of their shared gender with Harriet Jacobs and thus could justify the significance and inclusion of this discomfoting narrative in the formal curriculum, though this does not explain those female identified students who advocated for exclusion or who were uncertain as to whether the content is appropriate for students. This is also

not to say that the identified males do not have the empathy or the ability to empathize, but their reluctance to vocalize the inclusion in the curriculum is perhaps evidence of their distance from the topic of sexual abuse or the discomfort they feel when speaking of it, regardless of their views on inclusion. hooks (2000) would likely see their silence and the outright exclusionary views as a significant roadblock in making progress for all genders, as for her, and for me, it is imperative that all participate in creating a space for all stories – no matter how difficult they are to endure.

Nonetheless, the students' willingness to engage in discussions about sexual violence was encouraging and when the topic was revisited months later with a contemporary example presented in another course, the students were able to engage at a deeper, more emotional level. The findings from that significant moment are presented in the next chapter.

### **Chapter Five: Ending the Program: Engagement & Emotion**

In the spring of their preparatory year, the students in the secondary social studies cohort began a three-credit course titled *Engaging Youth with Social Studies Texts* where they focused on “assist[ing] learners in comprehending texts” (syllabus) and developing disciplinary literacy. For the purpose of the course, “text” was conceptualized broadly and included graphs, maps, speeches, political cartoons, film, artwork, newspaper articles, and other materials. Throughout the course, the students learned instructional strategies, how to support struggling readers, and how to teach their students to be critical consumers of a variety of textual materials. The course met weekly for 15 sessions each lasting 2½ hours in the spring semester. For the first 10 weeks of the course, students were completing their student teaching and were also attending a weekly student teaching seminar course in which I observed and collected data. While I was not present regularly in the *Engaging Youth in Social Studies Texts* course, the instructor, Dr. Gaby Browne, invited me to observe and collect data during two class sessions because the topics being covered were pertinent to my study. The data presented here is from one class period in late April where the topic title for the day was “Disciplinary Literacy: Newspapers as Social Text.”

At this point in the year, nearly 10 months after their reading and discussion of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Jacobs, 1861), the students were approaching graduation and the end of their program. Months earlier they had solidified their roles within the group and had found friends by whom they usually sat in class. They were also visibly less exhausted than they were in the previous weeks when they were taking

two classes and student teaching full time. The professor had set her usual basket of candy and, for that day, a collection of graphic novels on the side table where some students gathered before class began. Dr. Browne, a full professor, is well-established within her field and has a reputation for demanding high quality work. She also is broadly concerned with issues of equity and considers herself to be a feminist. Both of these interests appear in her research and in the courses she teaches.

As I entered the room, students had arranged their desks in a large double U-shape. One entire wall of the basement room was windows that looked out to a small landscaped area and up to the sidewalk that ran along the adjacent street. The class met in the evening hours and as the course progressed, the sun set. The room was organized with the desks facing the front whiteboard and the teaching podium, although Dr. Browne moved frequently around the room and was rarely stationed near the front. Because the room was a bit too small for the number of people enrolled in the course, the desks were crowded closely together, and students were sitting in two rows. When students were directed to share their thoughts with each other, they all remained seated and spoke with the people sitting near them. The previous week, students had read about using newspapers in the social studies classroom, and the first part of this class was devoted to investigating two newspaper articles in-depth. The instructor presented the students with a *New York Times* article written by James C. McKinley, Jr. originally published March 8, 2011, titled “Vicious Assault Shakes Texas Town.” The article reports on the case of 18 young men and boys who were charged with “participating in the gang rape of an 11-year-old girl in an abandoned trailer home” (McKinley, 2011). The article quoted

community members who questioned the whereabouts of the victim's mother during the assaults and how this had "destroyed" the community and the lives of the alleged perpetrators; the article contained few mentions of the victim or her family. Students read the article silently to themselves with the direction to "identify words or phrases that trigger a response in you as you read the article." After a 27 minute discussion, students were then given a revised version of the article originally published on March 28, 2011, by James C. McKinley, Jr. and Erica Goode titled "Three-month nightmare emerges in rape inquiry." The framing of this article differed significantly and included an in-depth description of the victim's hobbies, family life, and success in school. Twice as long as the original, the second article also included more detail about the assaults and the official charges that the men were facing. Both articles appear in Appendix I.

Dr. Browne told the students that the paper had received 20,000 complaints within hours of publishing the original article, and that the *New York Times* ombudsman wrote the Sunday after the first article was published that, as Dr. Browne described, he "thought that this story had not been well written or well contextualized." The directions while the students read the revised version were to pay attention to how the authors were positioning them as readers. After they read this second article, they engaged in another whole-class discussion for about 20 more minutes.

### **Findings**

In the investigation of how they talk about gender and gender issues, this discussion became pertinent because of the sexual violence content, the portrayal of the victim and the perpetrators, and the addition of a female author to the re-written second

article. Throughout the nearly hour long discussion, students critically read and spoke of both the content and the writing of the article. The months they spent in a class focused on critical literacy and reading in the content area had given the students a significant amount of practice in reading for deeper meaning and message. As discussion was often used throughout all of the courses that I observed, the students were also experienced with this method. Not unlike other classroom discussions, this one included contributions from multiple students and guiding questions from the professor. Unlike the responses to *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Jacobs, 1861), the students responded to this story emotionally. These emotional responses borrowed from and built upon one another in such a way as to weave an intertextual conversation (marked by the re-wording and re-shaping of previously uttered words and phrases). Also, perhaps because of the focus on critically reading texts, social class and race entered into the discussion of the articles. The inclusion of these topics contributed to the polyphony (Bakhtin, 1994), or diverse perspectives, in the discussion.

### **Polyphony: Gender, Class, and Race**

The whole of the discussion was polyphonic in that no compact, unambiguous whole was constructed (Bakhtin, 1994a). In the Bakhtinian sense, polyphony here is used to describe a conversation or a text constructed by the presence of multiple voices, each of which maintains individual authority, validity, and perspective. The discussion presented here is that interaction between the participants who all provide their unique perspectives, and is in contrast to the idea of monologism where one discourse purporting a single discourse exists. Throughout the discussion, both before and after the re-written

article was presented, students grappled with the multiple and intersecting elements of gender, social class, and race in the articles. This discussion was no different from many in that it did not develop in a linear manner, but rather was marked by a pattern of some topics being abandoned while others were taken up or revisited throughout. As the students constructed arguments about gender discrimination, they discussed the intersection of gender and class, though as a majority they dismissed the intersection with race. They also missed the opportunity to connect the articles with a larger discourse of sexism in the United States.

**Building an argument about gender discrimination.** After the students read the first article and were sharing their thoughts with someone sitting close by, Dr. Browne circulated and spoke with a few groups. The last group that she spoke with was comprised of three males, John, Dave, and Evan, who sat silently for two minutes before she went over to check in with them. When she pulled the class back together, she opened the discussion with “John found it a difficult article to read and it’s very disturbing. (3 second pause) What other thoughts did you have about the article?” After an 11 second pause, Leah expanded with:

it made me angry. Like in addition it was difficult for me to read because the way it was written um was really angering to me. Spefici- specifically a lot of victim blame...and the fact that there’s concern expressed for the boys and the community but not for the girl.

From the very beginning of this lengthy discussion, gender took the lead as a topic driving the conversation and remained in the forefront throughout. Maddy agreed

moments later with “the ’these boys will live with this for the rest of their lives’ [comment] just got to me... yeah well what about the 11 year old girl who was raped by these boys?” These two statements set up the trajectory of a discussion where the students empathized with the female victim and disagreed with how she was portrayed in comparison to the male suspects. Initiating the discourse of blaming the victim from the first moment, Leah reacted emotionally to the story and connected her reading of it to this discourse present in the greater society. Isaac then added a bit of analysis and relayed the small group conversation that he had with Ted by adding:

I was sort of nodding my agreement yeah I agree I think particularly the placement of that just like 4 or 5 paragraphs in um putting that sort of put it back towards the front as if that’s a more important issue that the boys have to live with this that they’re sort of victims and then I thought Ted made a good point that they are questioning what the daughter’s or what the girl’s mother was thinking... but there’s no mention of what like all these boys’ mothers were thinking and how they went wrong um it seemed...troubling.

Here Isaac began to analyze the writing of the article and the placement of sympathy directed toward the perpetrators. Through explicitly stating that the article was troubling, Isaac discursively distanced himself and Ted from both the male author and the males in the story by determining that the author had “gone wrong” in the writing of the story and that boys had “gone wrong” in their actions. Critically reading into how gender played a role in the telling of this story in the newspaper helped propel the discussion into a realm

where the students could engage in their own analysis of the discourses reflected in the article.

Having this analysis initiated by Isaac and Ted was not unusual. Throughout the year, Isaac was often quiet in large group discussions adding just enough to spark conversation further with a question or critical statement. Slightly older than many of his classmates, Isaac was one of the two married students in the group. This, coupled with his prestigious liberal arts college experience and witty, dry sense of humor, set him just enough apart from the other students in a way that garnered him a sense of authority. In the summer course, he was the one student who attempted to address the sexual violence present in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Jacobs, 1861) explicitly with its mention in his part of the unit plan, even if he was uncertain how to specifically include the content. Having him initiate this analysis was consistent with his previously expressed concerns about social justice topics. Ted, who was re-voiced here by Isaac, was one of the more confident students in the cohort, and carried a considerable amount of social power among his fellow students. He was charming, well-spoken, confident, and even though he would occasionally fall asleep in the methods courses I observed, he would consistently speak with authority about the topic at hand, regardless of what it was. Having this analysis introduced by these two helped open the space to engage with the article in a critical manner as their social power in the cohort was enough to influence the discursive space.

From here, the students engaged in a conversation about the author's word

choices, questioning the phrase “young men being drawn into such an act” and how the author had described the assault. Paul continued the analysis with:

I think the word choices minimize how horrible this really **was**....this happened, they participated in it, the assault occurred, it minimizes I think how I think all of us are reading how horrible it was through the through the lines but the article, the language they're choosing, it kind of sanitizes the whole bit.

Critically engaging here with the article, Paul was trying to articulate how the invisible relationship between the female victim and the male perpetrators as portrayed in the article gives significantly more power to the perpetrators by positioning them as innocent participants. The consequence of this relationship is that power, in the form of validating who is telling the truth or portraying the boys as not having full agency, has been taken again from the girl, and while it has not only just sanitized the events, it has also re-victimized her by treating the topic in an insensitive and inaccurate manner. How the girl's appearance and behavior were written about also disempowered her. This glaring gender issue, of course, did not go unnoticed.

Dr. Browne: you brought up that they say that she dresses older than her age and wearing make-up and that her actions were appropriate to a woman in her twenties [quiet laughter] there on the second page and admits that she would hang out with teenage boys in the playground

Leah: I think it's interesting they found it appropriate to analyze and judge what an 11 year old is wearing to make that assessment

Angie: that that still would make it ok to do that to somebody no matter like what they like how old they were

Here Leah and Angie were critiquing the author for perpetuating the myth that what one wears can be interpreted as an invitation to violate the person. With particular concern that these statements were being made about a child, who cannot legally give consent, Leah and Angie articulated the absurdity of the writer's description, which was so inappropriate that it was sadly laughable by their peers. Neither voiced that this description was sexist or that it was an example of a greater societal problem, but nonetheless, they disapproved of the description and communicated this disapproval through questioning the appropriateness of the author's choice to include those elements.

Moments later, Dave returned to the section that Paul, Isaac, and Tom were speaking about in regards to how the girl and the boys were described:

This whole thing especially that part on the second page it reads like a boys will be boys type of thing and this is what led her to that and we were talking in our group about um like we get that things like this should be reported and things like that but what about the respect for the victim and this is going to get back to her at some point in her life and she's going to be reading these types of articles...it's I don't know I think it's disgusting

Dr. Browne: the way in which it is written?

Dave: yeah yeah um hm

Thankfully, the clarification question asked by Dr. Browne helped Dave communicate his disgust for not only the crime but also for the way in which the author of the article had

written about it. As he was talking circuitously around the implications that he could imagine, in essence he was distancing himself from the boys, empathizing with the girl, and was ultimately fearful of the impact this article could have on her in the future. As is vitally important to understanding discourses and how they are constructed, the setting here is important to consider as a possibility as to why Dave expressed his many ideas while also speaking for those other members of his group. Within the boundaries of a formal class setting while enrolled in a program to become a licensed teacher, there was an expectation that the students would engage intellectually with the topics and each other. Up to this point, the students had been asked to be critical consumers of information in many ways, but as Dave stated in an interview 10 months after this class session, this was the one discussion that pushed the students in terms of what they were comfortable with in their classes.

Dave: It was like a really powerful article obviously you know and honestly I think that was the most um uncomfortable that the group had been in discussing something like that you know just cause um I think that was in a way like I don't know how to say it but like the most **real** in terms of like us as like students being tested on something and having like the true meaningful discussion.... I just thought it was a really yeah just serious uncomfortable [laughing] situation but a good uncomfortable you know

KEE: so why was it uncomfortable?

Dave: I don't know I think it was just the subject matter and uh again the article the way it was written and all that stuff (Dave, Interview, March 9, 2012)

The weight and discomfort surrounding both the article's content and the manner in which it was written is likely to have caused a paradoxical effect of both silencing or stuttering around the discussion while being one of the most meaningful, though really labored-over discussions, of the year. Out of the class sessions focused on in this dissertation, this one was marked by longer pauses and more direct questions for clarification. While it is possible that this can be attributed to the teaching style and experience of Dr. Browne, it is also possible that the content of this sexual assault and its portrayal incited enough discomfort to stunt the verbal expression of the students. As Dave stated, both the content and the writing made him uncomfortable, but he articulated it as a "good uncomfortable" meaning that the studying of the articles produced something positive even if it created discomfort or uneasiness. What Dave meant by "being tested on" is not entirely clear; however, based on some later comments about the context of the article and how it was written, it is likely that he was referring to the expectation and subsequent pressure for them to read this article in a critical way and have a meaningful discussion regarding the greater implications:

It felt more personal than other discussions that we had about different things that we had you know as a group and breaking it down and figuring out if this element should have been included or not included or all that kind of stuff it felt more like you were really stepping out there and making value judgments on different things and more revealing of yourself and yeah which I think I don't know

maybe it was just me but I felt like uh we'd obviously been doing that for the whole year but for some reason that one felt more I don't know yeah personal so yeah I don't know why but it just did. (Dave, Interview, March 9, 2012)

Dave's assessment of this discussion feeling "more personal than other discussions" is connected to the making the personal public through airing "value judgments" to this cohort of people who, even though they had been in class with each other for 11 months, were still known to each other primarily in a professional setting. The rules of this professional setting and what was allowed in this space changed with the introduction of these articles and pushed the students to see each other respond in a very personal way to a story that, as Dr. Browne said, should "startle us and disturb us." As indicated by the long pauses, feelings of empathy for the victim, wanting distance themselves from the suspects, criticism of the writer, and Dave's memory of the discussion as being uncomfortable, the story and its presence in their class were disturbing, indeed.

**Intersectionality with social class.** As this initial discussion of the gendered elements of the portrayal of the boys and the girl were being analyzed, a simultaneous discussion regarding social class was being woven in by the students. Geoff's first contribution to the conversation was early on when they had just read the first article:

it kinda made it seem like it was, like this was an abnormal act and that it was occurring in a place where people were poor. Rather than I don't know...I felt like the emphasis on like this is a socioeconomic problem.

His comments about class garnered head nods from his classmates indicating that they too were critically reading the article as a comment on poverty. Karen later mentioned

this poverty narrative as something that the media uses as a way to “make ourselves feel a little bit better,” but it was Leah who expanded on this theme of social class as the driving theme of the article.

I think what’s really important is the discussion of poverty in this article ‘cause I feel like the central point of this article and the reason the headline is “Vicious Assault Shakes Texas Town” is that it’s supposed to be about this town is experiencing these economic trends and they’re sort of like naturalizing like once you have extreme poverty then you’re gonna have these problems... it seems like the purpose of this article is to create this like sensationalistic like way to view this town and the poverty in this town and not necessarily out of concern of anyone involved.

Here Leah clearly stated that she saw social class as the central point of the article and as something that had been written about uncritically and even in a sensational way. Maddy immediately agreed and offered support with, “Leah, I think you’re absolutely right, especially if you look at the last line it’s talking about how it’s tearing the community apart.” Karen and Valerie also then spoke of the “pocket of poverty” or the “working class neighborhoods” mentioned in the article and how they agreed that social class was a salient theme in the article. Geoff concluded this portion of the discussion with his reading of the article saying, “I really think it’s about class.”

Not unlike their classmates who were analyzing the word choice and how the power was maintained for the boys and taken from the girl in the article, these students were engaging in a critical reading of these elements with regard to class. Criticizing the

author for his insensitivity, and perhaps even intentionally including stereotypes of economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and the people who live in them, Karen connected this to a greater discourse of “poor as bad,” which she indicated is perpetuated by the media to insure a false sense of safety for the rest of the public. Reading the article critically and connecting how the author positioned the poor as less credible and upstanding than the middle class, Leah was clearly critical in her assertion that the article was carelessly written. Her statement and its clear articulation of the problem stand in juxtaposition to the more loosely organized and conceptualized statements that Dave made about the gender element. This is likely due to Leah’s background as someone who, from the beginning of the program, was concerned with social justice and inequities. The daughter of two professors, Leah spoke frequently and freely with a vocabulary tuned to these issues. Naturally reflective, she would struggle to find words to express thoughts in process, but once she spent time writing or first speaking to a partner, as they did in this situation, her thoughts would streamline and become clear. Her articulation of this critique was likely informed by her lasting concern and study about racial and class inequality.

The students then concluded the discussion of the first article with thoughts on who was seen as the victim in the first article, where they problematized the portrayal of the boys and the community as a whole as having been more victimized than the girl. Dr. Browne validated their thoughts on both the themes of social class and gender with, “I do think you are on to something with the school board member and the members of the basketball team. It humanizes them in a way but we don’t hear a lot about the girl except

that she dresses like a 20 year old and uh wears a lot of make-up and that kind of thing.” Paul then took this a step further with his visualization of what the potential trial would include. “I’m thinking of a trial I’m sort of visualizing it and what their attorneys are going to be saying in a trial the defense attorney is probably gonna say well you know here’s a member of the basketball team and here’s some school board member’s kid and over here we’ve got or the other attorney’s gonna say well yeah she’s dressing like a 20 year old.” Through the use of these two examples, the positive attributes of the boys and the negative attributes of the girl, both Dr. Browne and Paul are using hyponyms to reify the critiques of gender and class. “School board member’s kid” carries with it the inherent implication of middle or upper class and the young girl “dressing like a 20 year old” implies sluttiness and compliance in her assault, which are both discourses connected exclusively to females. Karen found support when she extended this critique of both gender and class by returning to her analysis that the author had written this article in such a manner as to fit into an existing narrative that made this story easier to accept:

Karen: I still think that the author’s trying to fit this into a story that we can recognize and accept so that because it’s truly disturbing like the volume of people involved and the age of the girl it’s just like it’s it’s an extreme situation I I kind of feel like that’s where where he’s trying to do I’m not even sure if he’s consciously trying to do it but I think it’s definitely one of those trying to minimize the amount of shock insofar as like if this is something that just comes

up on your newsfeed you know (2 second pause) trying to fit it into a story we recognize so that we can kind of feel better about the world

Dr. Browne: so, you mean by making the males more into victims?

Karen: oh no a lot about like connecting it to the poverty and making sure they address you know this way that she dresses this inviting way that she looks or what have you

Angie: like he's justifying

Karen: right right! like it's ok not like it's ok but more don't worry don't feel too bad

Dr. Browne: and maybe saying that if you don't dress like this then you won't have any trouble. [So is that the kind] of making you feel safer type of thing?

Karen & Angie: [right]

Karen: yeah

Connecting here to the hyponymy previously used, and Karen reiterated that these discourses of middle-class-as safe-and-upstanding and poor-female-as-slutty are false yet perpetuated by the author in order to mask the horror associated with this crime and make the masses more comfortable with reading the story. Here she critiques the victim blame narrative by indicating that the author engaged in minimizing the “shock” of the story with a stereotypical profile of the girl as poor and inappropriately dressed. In these statements, Karen was making the gender and social class aspects of her critique equals, valuing neither over each other. Much as Paul and Dr. Browne voiced their critiques as including both social class and gender, Karen and Angie did so as well. Even though

they weren't directly responding to Dr. Browne's question of humanizing the boys or Paul's imagined court case, they were engaging in this same conversation that both gender and class were important with their assessment of the reporter's motivation being to mollify the readers.

At this point, the students had been talking about the article for nearly 40 minutes and while they were implicitly talking about the messages surrounding gender and social class, no one had made a firm assertion that the language in this article could be directly tied to discourses of sexism and classism in the United States. Here Dr. Browne transitioned the class from the first article to the re-write by explaining that the ombudsman had received thousands of complaints on a petition "requesting that the *New York Times* give an apology for the way in which this story was written." She asked the students to read it to "see how the author is positioning you. 'Cause that's really what it's about here, how is this author positioning us as we're reading this?" After reading the re-written story, Dr. Browne opened the second part of the discussion with, "How is the framing of this story different? How does the framing of this story differ? (9 second pause) Do you think it does? (7 second pause)." The juxtaposition of the two stories offered an opportunity for a critical and direct comparison about how the girl, the situation, and the perpetrators were portrayed. More than just a plurality of voices, the resulting discussion centered on gender, co-existing with class and competing with race, thus exhibiting the polyphony of a diversity of viewpoints. The first comment about how the stories differ was from Ted:

[the second article] starts out by giving the girl, describing her as a person. I noticed too there were two authors this time, the inclusion of a woman author, and also this is written only 20 days later and so there's some pretty significant changes.

Here he noted both the different description of the girl, and the fact that an additional, female, author was added for the re-written article. These observations were agreed upon by his classmates and contribute to the overall thrust of the discussion being centered on the gender aspects of the articles and the ways in which they were written. In support of this continued attention to gendered issues, as mentioned above, Karen was critical of the portrayal of the girl in the first article as someone who brought this upon herself by dressing a certain way. Ted, with his comment about the girl being described "as a person" implied that the previous article did not portray her as a multidimensional person but rather as someone who appeared rather faceless. Leah also contributed to this critical discussion of how gender was simplified and stereotyped in the first article but was then changed for the second when she said that "you can really see like who was silenced in this first article and one of the parts that jumped out to me...was the [revised] description of the girl." These comments contributed to gender being a significant theme that carried throughout the discussion, even by Leah who had previously spoken so assertively about the social class aspects in the first article. Similar to the discussion of the first article, as students were talking about the different ways in which the boys and the girl were written about in both articles, they simultaneously wove in their thoughts on how social class was also a salient theme.

After they had read the second article, one student, John, who rarely spoke in the classes that I observed, asked why the *New York Times* would have picked up this story. This ultimately sparked a larger discussion about what kinds of articles are published in the *New York Times* and why this story would be newsworthy outside of the town where it happened, but the immediate response was from Leah who stated, “I know the *New York Times* has like, speaking broadly, an interest in class issues.” She did admit that she was not completely sure about how to answer the question but that she did see that connection. Geoff also offered an explanation related to the social class aspect of the story stating that it could be of interest to a national audience because “what I was reading was the set-up...that this crime was in a low income area, this crime was in a poverty stricken area, like ladies and gentlemen don’t let your children go to the poor neighborhoods.” This comment reifies his previous statement that for him the main thrust of the article to be about social class and not gender, as many of his classmates had been speaking of previously.

**Introducing race.** Shortly thereafter, Dr. Browne again validated this presence of social class as an equal theme in the articles, while reintroducing gender with the question, “Do these stories tell you anything about sexism or classism in the United States?” This explicit question was asked after their discussion around gender and class-based issues, where it would not have been a stretch for someone to make a statement connecting the themes of their conversation to sexism or classism. In an attempt to refine their thinking about this story and put it into a much larger context, and though she clearly and specifically asked the question about sexism and classism, the response

diverted gender and class and was re-focused instead on race. After a 15 second pause, Geoff said:

I was kind of surprised by how little they talk about race in either article. I mean like [the university] emails that we get when there's a crime on campus will always acknowledge whether the witness said it was a person who is of East African descent or they'll say they didn't know what and then there's a disclaimer at the bottom that says you know you can't nobody can be arrested based off a racial description but they'll still include it, you know. I mean it's like I don't know they just didn't it was something I thought of at the end as we were reading the first article they never once said what ethnicity anybody was

Geoff, a self-described "half-Mexican" student, frequently voiced concerns surrounding race and thus this comment itself was not out of character for him to introduce. The timing, however, of answering a question asking about sexism and classism with race, particularly when he had been vocal about how poverty was portrayed in both articles, served to divert the conversation. Two students immediately chimed in with the information that the second article identified the girl as having parents who came from Mexico. This discrepancy of mentioning race in the second article but not the first troubled Geoff and as he talked over his thoughts on the subject, Dr. Browne tried to direct his thoughts to a logical end:

Geoff: ....I just feel like maybe [race] would have been a bigger issue and I don't know

Dr. Browne: I am trying to understand. You think they shouldn't mention the race or

Geoff: well, I just think it's it just struck me as something that was odd. I we I don't know we hear about race all the time and it wasn't in the first article and now it's in the second article so it made me wonder I guess it's just made me wonder why it wasn't in the first article

Leah: and I think in the second one I could be wrong about this it's only in reference to the victim

Multiple Students: right yeah

Leah: they don't say 19 suspected White men

Geoff: they say eclectic they say eclectic group but that could be

Leah: criminal records

Geoff: but yeah that that was yeah I'm agreeing with you I'm saying the only reference I saw any indicator that would be eclectic group of men that could mean a lot of things too

Dr. Browne: so are you saying I I'm trying to get a - that it is important for them to mention race or you don't think so or

Geoff: I think it is something we do all the time so I question I question the motive of not including it the first time and then including it the second time

Dr. Browne: but only in terms of the victim

Geoff: well I mean victim or or like the actors too cause there's a lot of there's a lot of like I don't know there's just a lot at play here that I think it's odd that

there's this factor that wasn't included in the first one that was included in the second one I guess that's where my comment is mostly coming from

Dr. Browne: ok it used to be that race was always mentioned in articles and then um editors and the public consensus was what is the point of bringing up race, if there is a reason to bring it up then that is one thing um yeah

Geoff ultimately stood alone in his questioning of this aspect in the articles. None of his peers took up this conversation on race, either based on his suspicion of its absence or some other element that they could connect to, as they had with both the conversations surrounding gender and social class. Perhaps this was because the other students knew that race is only mentioned when pertinent, like Dr. Browne explained; because they were confused or even tired; or because Geoff was particularly attuned to and interested in issues of race and thus would "see" them more readily than his peers. If this option had been the case, it is possible that the other students who either identified as people of color or who were highly concerned with race would have come to his aid and agreed with his questioning. Notably, neither Dave nor Omar, the other students of color in the cohort, added or contributed here. Leah, the other student involved in this exchange who was also highly concerned with issues of race and racism, shared her reading of the word "eclectic" as having multiple interpretations beyond race. This, along with the silence of all of his peers, helped de-center race as a prominent theme.

This conversation ended with Ted bringing gender back as the primary focus of the article, and while there was considerable silence surrounding race as a central issue in the articles, this could be in part because of Ted's swift dismissal of Geoff's thinking:

I think that race is a secondary issue here in this article. Clearly if you if you think about this critically you have a male, the first article is even a male writing it, and then the filter, the mindset that he is in to include the quotes that he does means that he's of a certain mindset that hasn't changed. [It] has a lot to do with gender equality and how women are viewed in this country by men. I think gender is the primary issue.

Singlehandedly, Ted moved the discussion away from what he determined not to be the primary issue and refocused it on gender, which he determined to be the central issue. Labeling race as “a secondary issue” and using the highly directive “clearly, if you think about it critically...” indicated to his classmates that in Ted's analysis, there was no other way to correctly think about the article than being primarily influenced by gendered discourses. Ted's authority as socially powerful, assertive, White, and male likely contributed to his statement being unchallenged and the determination that his analysis of race was the correct one. It is also possible that this comment came from a place of White privilege, where perhaps there is a certain degree of color blindness motivating his dismissal of race as a topic central to the articles. How this element of race was centralized for Geoff and decentralized for Ted is likely connected to their racial identification and resulting perspectives on the world.

**Resisting sexism.** At this point, the students had been reading or discussing these articles for nearly an hour and yet some were still developing their ideas of what indication these articles were giving them about the state of the greater society. Dr.

Browne used Ted's assertion that he thought that gender was the "primary issue" as an opportunity to revisit the question that had been diverted previously and this time asked:

Again I would return to what does this tell us about gender or sexism in US society? A lot of times students or young people think oh there's no problem with sexism anymore, that was a long time ago, right?

Notably, Dr. Browne dropped social class from her previous question and reified Ted's analysis that the central topic was gender. By this omission, Dr. Browne refined the discourse to focus more clearly on gender. Kimberly, who had been uncharacteristically quiet up to this point in the discussion, confidently said, "still there's a double standard and there always will be." In clarification, Karen asked, "for women?" to which Kimberly replied, "oh yeah absolutely." Karen's questioning can be taken as an indication that even though she critically read the article previously, perhaps she did not agree with Kimberly's assertion that women face a double standard in U.S. society or that sexism is as prevalent as a critical reading of this article would suggest. Kimberly clearly agreed with Dr. Browne and validated her comment that often young people think that sexism no longer exists or is a problem in the United States; however, she was the only student who explicitly added her opinion to answer this question.

Previous to this question, Ted's comments indicated that he thought this article could tell us about sexism, particularly as a phenomenon of the past. When he spoke of the male author as having a "mindset that hasn't changed," presumably he was speaking of a sexist mindset that was prevalent in years past and that had not evolved to reflect the current, more politically correct, present. With this comment he was speaking to the

strides that had been made in gender equity, but that this author had not yet changed his “mindset” to be concerned with these issues. Valerie also spoke to the issue of gender or sexism through focusing on the change in authorship of the second article:

I just thought it was interesting that all of us picked up that they added the female author I mean even like – yup that is why this [second article] is written differently... I think that’s saying something too...like this guy could not really cover the story [so] they purposely, I’m guessing, added a female to it.

With this comment Valerie agreed with Ted by validating that she also saw a sexist or gendered slant to the first article that came specifically from the male author, and that adding a female author was the editor’s solution to mitigating the sexist presentation of the first article. This comment went unquestioned even though it entails the narrow-minded view of remedying sexism with a simple “add women and stir” (Noddings, 2001) approach. After these comments, the discussion ended with some closing statements about remaining critical, even when reading supposedly unbiased materials, and to be conscious of how authors position readers. Dr. Browne’s question “do these stories tell you anything about sexism or classism in the United States?” was never directly answered.

These two articles gave the students the opportunity to talk about gender in a critical way. For multiple students, the gendered aspects of the articles appeared to be their primary focus, and even though the discussion ended on a solely gendered conversation, the co-existence of the gender and class narratives seemed to be present throughout the whole discussion. Even though the gender talk was more prevalent as a

consistent theme throughout the discussion, it did not claim authority over social class as a valid reading of the bias in the articles. These two co-existing discourses speak to the polyphony present throughout this conversation. The discourse that did not receive the same validation or space in the discussion was that surrounding race. Posed by just one student, Geoff, and questioned or outright rejected by Ted and others, the reading of the articles as commenting on race or racism was not supported. In this way, Geoff's classmates placed greater authority in this conversation on gender and social class, rather than race, as pertinent subjects. If gender and class combined to share the center of this discussion, race was left to the margins.

### **Intertextuality of Emotion: Borrowing & Building on Dr. Browne's Words**

One aspect of this discussion that struck me as particularly unique was the prevalence of emotion that the students shared with one another. Never up to this point or after did the students share their impressions of a text presented in class with feeling words and how they connected through the affective domain.

After Dr. Browne brought the students back together from their reading and small group discussions about the first article, the first comment made was about gender when Leah said, "it made me angry. Like in addition it was difficult for me to read because the way it was written um was really angering to me." Leah's emotional response came after the prior use of the words "difficult" and "disturbing" by Dr. Browne who had started the conversation with, "John found it a difficult article to read and it's very disturbing. (3second pause) What other thoughts did you have about the article?" Even though Dr. Browne was voicing the words of another student, her initial use of these emotional

words opened the discursive space for other students to do the same. Leah’s use of “angry” to describe her feelings about how the article was written was echoed through the intense responses of four of her classmates who also used emotionally charged words to describe their thoughts on how the article was written. Table 3 details the words and speakers.

Table 3

*Uses of Emotional Words, by Speaker and Frequency*

Emotional Word	Female Speaker	Male Speaker	Total number of uses
Disturbing	Dr. B. (2); Karen (3)		5
Disgusting/ed		Dave (2)	2
Difficult	Dr. B. (2); Leah (1)		3
Horrible		Paul (2)	2
Angry/ing	Leah (2)		2
Troubling		Isaac (1)	1
Outraged		Dave (1)	1

Karen used “disturbing” or “disturbed” three times after Dr. Browne’s initial usage and posited that the article was written in such a way as to ameliorate the impact on the readers and “make ourselves [the readers] feel a little bit better and a little less disturbed that this happened ’cause it fits into a story that we have heard before.” She was referring both to the description of the girl in the news story as someone who wore make-up, dressed older than her age and who would hang out with teenage boys, and also to the description of the violence occurring in a poor part of the town. In Karen’s words, the article was written in such a way as to fit into a “she asked for it” narrative that supports Leah’s reading of the article as one that perpetuates blaming the victim for sexual assault. Two of the three emotionally charged words used by Leah and Karen were first used by Dr. Browne, suggesting that her use of the words were taken up by these two female

students and re-voiced within the classroom from the position of female professor to female students.

Three of the male students, Dave, Isaac, and Paul, also described the story or the way in which it was written with emotional words. Isaac was the first male to speak in the large group, referring to the focus of the article being on the boys as the victims, supported by a quotation in the article that “the boys will have to live with this,” as “troubling.” Isaac here was speaking to the way in which the author empathized with the boys accused of the sexual assault as opposed to the girl who survived repeated sexual violence. Three of his peers agreed with his disapproval of the author because of this and showed their agreement with nods or comments. Shortly after, Paul analyzed the writing of the first article in that “the word choices minimize how horrible this really **was**... I think all of us are reading how horrible it was through the, through the lines but the article, the language they’re choosing, it kind of sanitizes the whole bit.” Here he refers to the sexual assault twice as “horrible.” Minutes later, Dave supported Paul’s analysis in interpreting the language of the article as written in a manner where “it reads like a boys will be boys type of thing” and ends with the assertion “I think it’s disgusting.” To clarify, Dr. Browne asked “the way in which it is written?” to which Dave replied, “yeah, yeah, um hmm.” Later, Dave questioned the lack of balance in the article and why there were no quotations in support of the girl: “Don’t you think like a lot of people would be outraged by this...there’s always gonna be people that are just disgusted by this and have very strong opinions and would be willing to give a quote.” Here he uses “outraged” and “disgusted” in reference to the sexual assault as he questions the quality of the reporting

and ultimately the portrayal of the girl. His vocal criticism of the author and the perpetrators of the violence added to the emotional responses expressed by his classmates. As he mentioned in his interview months after this class, this discussion took on a decidedly “personal” tone that was “uncomfortable” due to the content of the articles and how they were written. Dave’s emotional connection here was strong enough to not only share in class, but to stick with him months after.

Along with Karen and Leah, these three male students were engaging with the article on a deeply emotional level and had given words to their feelings that were not qualitatively different from the words that their female instructor or classmates shared. Interestingly, though, the specific words they chose were different than Dr. Browne’s and serve to build upon and enrich the emotionally charged discourse surrounding this contemporary story of sexual assault. Even if Dr. Browne’s first use of these words was in fact a re-iteration from a student, the intertextuality present in the voices of the female students is a borrowing of their same-gendered professor, whereas the male students built upon this discourse with different words. Leah is the one female who generated her own emotional word, “angry,” and with this, she participated with her male classmates in building the discourse. However, there is a clear connection between the female professor and her female students in that the words that Dr. Browne chose are exactly the same as those used by Leah and Karen. This can be seen as evidence of the power of the instructor in the classroom in sanctioning or opening the classroom space to emotion. It can also be interpreted that among the multiple voices in the classroom, this female professor’s words mattered particularly to her female students enough for them to use

them as their own. While all of these voices are interwoven to create an emotionally connected discourse, it appears that the gender of the instructor matters to the kinds of contributions that her female students were willing to give.

### **Discussion**

The key discourse around gender here was complex. There was the influence of a female professor on her female students; the critical reading of an inherently gendered topic: a gang rape; and the co-existence of gender and social class discourses, which competed with and won over a race discourse. The ultimate positioning of these discourses was negotiated and agreed upon by the majority of the participants in the discussion. Sadly, and despite multiple attempts by Dr. Browne, the students never explicitly drew a connection between these articles and the greater discourses of sexism and classism in the United States. While their analysis of the articles appeared to be quite in-depth from a textual position, the explicit articulation of how these articles are evidence of greater societal issues was lacking. Perhaps it would have been too obvious for them to state, but sexism in the United States is insidious and only through critical examination is it able to be uncovered. When that uncovering occurs, the work then of eliminating it has just begun. The next step in moving toward gender equity is tying these hidden and seemingly unconnected instances of sexism to a greater framework of institutionalized practices. It was in this step that the students were unable to give Dr. Browne what she was looking for: a connection to policies, laws, and social practices that maintain sexism in U.S. society.

It is unclear if anyone but Kimberly saw sexism as a persistent problem, and even though there is evidence that Ted likely agreed with Kimberly, he never made his position overtly clear. Geoff and Leah spoke similarly around the issue of classism, never clearly voicing that these articles were an indication of a larger societal issue of how different strata of society serve to oppress and be oppressed. Throughout the discussion, the students were trying to engage critically, but despite their attempts to articulate the connection, they ultimately failed to draw a direct line from these articles to sexism and classism. As evidenced by their multiple attempts, it is likely that these students were still emerging as critical readers of their worlds and that they were still in the process of building a critical lexicon.

Important here is the role of the professor in choosing these articles as an example of how to critically engage with the newspaper. Whereas Dr. Browne could have chosen from a multitude of news sources and stories, her choice to explicitly have the students engage with the topic of sexual violence was a political move that brought in the topic of gender through this taboo content. Her requiring that the time and space be given to this story showed her commitment to social justice topics and their presence in the curricula of teacher education. Her inclusion of these texts and choice to use class time to have the students read and discuss them was successful at opening the discursive space to become a dialogic (Bakhtin, 1994a) place where they had the opportunity to explicitly construct a discourse surrounding gender through talking about and back to these two articles and each other. It is only through these labored exchanges, repeated questions, and opportunities to have “true meaningful discussion[s]” when students can experience

discomfort where they will refine and grow into more critical consumers of media and curriculum.

### **Pulling Together the First Two Moments**

Together, these two significant moments offer the opportunity to better understand how these preservice teachers talked about gender in two ways: how they saw themselves as part or not part of a gendered culture and how they talked about sexual violence historically and contemporarily, while at the beginning and nearing the ending of their program. Particularly with reference to the topic of sexual violence, their discourses changed from avoidance to direct discussion of the content. This is perhaps because the contexts within which they were talking were drastically different. Just days into the program with the first encounter of sexual violence, talking about an historical memoir with people they did not know well and many of whom had not read the book themselves, contributed to the unease and difficulty of talking about this topic. Later, after months of experience in practicum and student teaching experiences, students talking about a contemporary newspaper article within the context of a critical reading course where everyone read the same text, produced a robust, emotional, and more “personal” discussion than any one previous. Their comfort with each other had been established and their willingness to talk about the taboo topic of sexual violence grew after nearly a year of building their community.

The growth and vulnerability that developed over the course of months was fostered by the structure of a cohort model of teacher education. While there are drawbacks to any model, this study highlights a particular strength in that the community

building that naturally occurred as a result of having multiple classes together pushed the discussion of sexual violence further when it was revisited in the spring semester.

Clearly, this growth is dependent on more than a model, as previous or subsequent cohorts surely would not have an identical experience with the same texts; however, without the potential to grow together as a cohort, this depth of conversation likely would not have been fostered. As evidenced by the reluctance of many in the beginning weeks of the program, talking about gendered issues which are highly personal in nature is perhaps best done once community begins to form.

The undeniable progress in talking about sexual violence between the two significant moments begs the question of when and how should this topic, and other taboo topics, be approached in teacher education programs. The stunted conversations surrounding Harriet Jacobs's memoir were transformed into highly emotional, honest, and critical conversations in the spring with the introduction of the *New York Times* articles. Using Dave's interview as an indication of how personal this second discussion was, it is likely that the community that they built was conducive to their emotional approach to the *New York Times* articles. As is the nature of the cohort model, students spent a significant amount of time together in their classes, they worked on small group projects together, they shared practicum and student teaching experiences, and through all of it they built relationships with one another. This group of students built a sense of community throughout the year which was accompanied by a sense of safety and trust. It was this safety and trust that opened the space for them to be emotional in a way that they had not been able to be in the months previous.

In further examination of emotion in these two significant moments, Megan Boler (1999) states, “discourses of emotion in education are most consistently present and visible in relation to women” (p. 30). In both significant moments, and particularly with the analysis of the newspaper articles, the emotional responses shared by male and female students were in relation to the gendered topic of sexual violence, where in both of these instances, the survivors were female. Boler also asserts that “women are the repository of emotion in Western culture” (p. 31) and writes of the “masculinized erasure of emotions” (p. 36) throughout history. This supposed monopoly on emotion could be observed in the public space of the classroom during the Harriet Jacobs discussion. Only female students openly shared empathy and the most vocal critic, Geoff, was male. However, the shift that was observed with the discussion of the newspaper articles transgressed the gender boundary initially established in the beginning of the program. No longer were females the only “repository of emotion” nor did the males censor their emotions surrounding both the content of the articles and how they were written. This shift signifies progress in that the males publically shared their thoughts in an emotional way. Even though the students did not connect the articles to greater frameworks of sexism or classism, they showed a re-orientation and movement on a much smaller and more personal scale. It is in this personal shift that something very feminist happened here: the “personal is political” rallying cry of the Second Wave Feminists emerged as a small but marked change within this group of people, and it is those small moments of growth and transgression that foster social change. Still it is worth asking here if the first month of the program was too early to introduce the topic of sexual violence, or did it help frame a

program that would engage students in discussions about a variety of controversial topics? Based upon this small yet notable shift, the latter appears to have opened the students to achieve some level of critical awareness which will potentially (and hopefully) be carried with them into their future classrooms.

The next significant moment, presented in the following chapter, explores how these students saw themselves as gendered people and how intense emotions were expressed, though only publicly by females.

## Chapter Six: During the Program: Personal Connections

In the fall semester, the cohort took their second methods course, *Advanced Methods of Teaching the Social Studies*. The course met once a week on Tuesday afternoons; their first practicum experience ran parallel as a separate course. For six weeks in October and early November, the students spent the mornings at a local middle or high school, where they planned lessons and taught them for four of those weeks; in the afternoons they attended classes at the university. For that period of time, the students would come to class dressed professionally and often with lunch in-hand because they were all arriving directly from their placements. As their practicum ended, their dress became increasingly casual, and their level of alertness rose as they were getting more sleep and could focus on their coursework.

This significant moment took place on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. As students came to class, they were talking about their holiday plans and the traffic that they were likely to face on their ways out of town. All had finished their practicum and most were dressed casually in jeans and sweatshirts. They were comfortable with each other by this point in the program; many had found their friends and often sat in the same places each week. The instructor, Sophie King, had taught this course once before and, as she was a doctoral candidate, was preparing to collect her dissertation data at this time. She appeared to be comfortable with the material and the students, with whom she often joked. This course, more so than any other I observed, was filled with laughter, and this class session was no exception. Collectively, the students frequently referred to inside jokes to which both the instructor and myself were privy. It was common for students to

linger after class and talk with the two of us, either separately or together, as they were becoming more comfortable with my presence and looked to her with authority over the content and the program in general.

The topic for the day's class, as listed on the syllabus, was "Diversity in the Classroom," and included three readings on culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural education. The class had two separate parts with the first half dedicated to discussing the articles and the latter half to an activity that turned the concept of diversity inwards titled "My Multicultural Self." Adapted from a Teaching Tolerance lesson, Sophie handed out a sheet to each student where each was to put his or her name in the center and "choose five different aspects of your identity and write each of them in the identity bubbles provided" (directions on the sheet). She encouraged them to include at least three that were at a "more uncomfortable level" that could include things like religion, race, or ethnicity. She also gave them the additional direction of adding a "few notes about how this identity shapes you as a person and teacher." After the students wrote on their own for five minutes, Sophie directed the students to turn to a neighbor and share what they had written. Once they had shared, the students were directed to get up and mingle with each other until they found a group of people with whom they had one identity in common. They were to repeat this for a total of three times. Students grouped according to shared religious views, gender, place, and being a person of color. When finished mingling and sharing, the students were directed to go back to their seats and reflect in writing on the back of their handout. The PowerPoint slide that provided direction for the reflection stated:

Return to your seat and write a reflection on the back of your handout.

Think about...

How it felt to write these descriptors

How it felt to be part (or not part) of the different groups

How you would feel if someone ignored, overlooked, or assumed they knew a lot about one of your identities

What are three things you would like people to know about members of your group?

Sophie expanded on these directions by orally stating:

I'll be asking you to share out with the group um what are three things you would like people to know about members of your group or to know what you think of that group you can think of that as a chance to talk back to a stereotype that people have that you would like to disrupt. You can use that as a people don't know this and I think it's pretty rad you can use it as a this is something that my classmates don't know but I think they should since we have to spend the next 6 months together um however you would like to interpret that that is up to you.

After the students wrote for five minutes, Sophie led them in a whole class share out.

She said, "I would like to go around and have everybody speak to one of these...particularly that last [question] is one we could all benefit from hearing from each other." One by one, the students, all sitting in the large circle, shared something about what they had written or what they had thought about their different identities. Not unlike other times throughout the course, some students used the moment to share their

thoughts in a humorous way, though the general tone of this class session was thoughtful, respectful, and quiet. Because the sharing went longer than anticipated, class ended nearly 15 minutes late. One student was absent this day and another two left class early leaving a total of 23 students who participated to the end of the lesson. Data for this significant moment come from what the students wrote on their “My Multicultural Self” sheets and what they said in the whole class share-out.

Unlike the other findings chapters, where the students were talking about gendered issues in a memoir or how gender is portrayed and presented in the media, here the students were talking about intersections of themselves. These data are directly connected to these individual students and how they saw themselves as opposed to how they saw others and thus offer the unique opportunity to deeply understand the personal connections of these students to their cultures. It is with these findings that insight is gained into who these people were and how they saw themselves both as becoming teachers and as people within a society which still contains vestiges of sexism present through the discourse of “having it all” and multiple gender stereotypes. However, not all students described tension surrounding their gender. For multiple students, there were other areas of themselves where they described tension, notably religion and sexual orientation.

## **Findings**

### **Writing Female, Writing Male**

In asking the questions of how this group of people talks about gender and gender issues and what discourses they produce and reify, their writings here are important. By

analyzing their writing as well as what they shared in the whole group share-out, I am able to literally give voice and “listen” to each member of the cohort who was present. This opportunity to “hear” from every person reduces the ambiguity and questions about the students who were frequently silent (or silenced). Because giving voice to groups who are silenced is a primary aim of feminist poststructuralist work (Baxter, 2003), analyzing their writings as an indication of their thoughts is appropriate. While the writing itself was not all shared in the public space of the whole class share-out, much of the writing was seen by at least one other member of the cohort during the portion of the lesson where students were directed to pair up and share with each other. It is also likely that more of their writings would have been visible when they were trying to find groups to match up with when they were mingling with one another. Even if they did not share their writings with the whole group – as would have been possible if they had written extensively in the reflection portion and then decided to not share out those elements – their writings are nonetheless evidence of discourses that were circulating among members of this cohort.

When trying to make sense of these data and all of their complexity, I constantly returned to the questions of why the students decided to write down what they did and how they decided to then talk about their writings in the large group. In the directions of the activity, Sophie asked the students to write five descriptions of groups with which they identify, noting that at least three should be tied to areas about which they found talking about to be more uncomfortable. She also told them to add a “few notes about how this piece shapes you, how it’s impacted you, how important it is to you.” With this

direction and the directions on the sheet asking for “five different aspects of your identity” to be noted, the students wrote for five minutes. With Sophie’s direction to choose based on what makes them uncomfortable and what was important enough to shape who they were, the students filled out their sheets with all kinds of descriptors. Five clear themes reappeared on the sheets of multiple students: gender, sexuality, race, social class, and religion. All of the writings produced in this critical moment came from one class period, however different pieces were written at various points in the lesson. In their writings, reflections and references to the mingling portion of the lesson appeared mostly on the back of the sheet where Sophie asked them to write on the guided reflection questions. Any reference to a theme, regardless of whether it appeared on the front or back of the sheet, is included in the following table. Table 4 shows the breakdown of what appeared on the sheets by student, organized by gender and theme.

Table 4

*My Multicultural Self Sheets, Organized by Gender of Student and Theme*

Name	Gender	Race	Social Class	Religion	Sexuality
<b>Males</b>					
Omar		X	X	X	
Chase	X		X	X	
Brandon	X	X	X	X	
Geoff		X	X		
Ted				X	
Dave	X	X			
Isaac	X	X		X	X
John				X	
Martin	O			X	X
Evan				X	
Alan		X		X	
<b>Females</b>					
Tara	X	X		X	X
Rebecca	O	X	X	X	
Kimberly	O	X			
Holly	O	X	X		
Maddy	X			X	X
Bridgit	X		X	X	X
Karen	X	X	X		X
Greta	X				
Leah	O	X			
Angie	O	X	X		X
Valerie	X			X	X
Stephanie	X	X		X	
	5m; 12f	6m; 8f	4m; 5f	9m; 6f	2m; 5f
<b>Total</b>	17/23	14/23	9/23	15/23	8/23

X – explicitly written  
O – hyponym written

#m – number of males  
#f – number of females

From this broad painting of the data, it is clear that gender (n=17), religion (n=15), and race (n=14) were salient themes across the majority of the cohort with gender being the most prevalent theme on the sheets of the whole class. Gender was the only category that

all of the females wrote about; no other theme was written about by every male or female in the class. How the females wrote about gender varied from writing just the word “female” to writing full paragraphs about how their gender or “being female” is stereotyped, is a source of angst or struggle, or is something of which they are proud. The males wrote about themselves in very similar ways. While only five of the eleven males wrote about “being male” on their sheets, they too ranged from simply writing “male” to explaining their thoughts on “being male” as stereotyped, a site of struggle, or something of which to be proud.

**Being (fe)male is hard.** One of the common themes present in the writings of both the males and females in the cohort was that of struggle or angst in connection to their gender, which often appeared as a “you can have it all” discourse for the females. Describing tension between home and work life, Valerie, Leah, Kimberly, and Bridgit all connected to and perpetuated this discourse. Also prevalent was tension around not adhering to stereotypes of a particular gender. Kimberly, Tara, Karen, Holly, Greta, Chase, and Isaac all referred to specific stereotypes and how they saw themselves fitting into them.

In one of her five bubbles, Valerie listed “female” with two bullet points underneath stating “avoided higher education in math & science” and “protective of female peers and students.” She did not articulate why or from what she needed to protect them, but her choice of the word “protective” indicates that there is something dangerous or bad that she was trying to keep away from other females. On the back of her sheet, under the underlined heading of Female Adult, she wrote “struggle to find balance b/t

home/work life goals & reality.” Using the word “struggle” and referring to a work/life balance, Valerie invoked the “you can have it all” discourse that circulates in American culture while pointing out its limitations. Leah also wrote of limitations in her reflection on the back of the sheet:

Gender is important to me (although I didn’t list it [on the front]) because I feel like gender is important/central to my identity & how I view things, but I also feel a little gender-non-conforming in certain ways. I like being a woman & being a woman is central to my identity in some ways, but I still have angst about my identity.

Though Leah did not expand on how she saw herself as not conforming to her gender, she clearly indicated negative feelings, or “angst,” surrounding this piece of herself. Kimberly, too, wrote of tension surrounding an aspect of herself that she called “goody-two-shoes” writing that she “feel[s] I need to both live up to & break this image,” and Tara questioned how her gender would impact her role as a teacher with “classroom management?” under her bubble titled “female,” while Karen wrote “I feel like a stereotype sometimes” under hers. All of these writings include words with negative connotations about being female. Bridgit, a single mom, wrote about this and being female as two of her bubbles and on the back she wrote “still have outside interests → mom,” “not superwoman,” and “stereotypes of single moms.” While her tensions around being female were refined by her role as a mother, and thus carried a different interpretation, she joined in this discourse of female struggle with her identifying the tension between these pieces of herself. All of these statements carry either the explicit

communication of angst or struggle in being a female, or they imply the struggle with a question or an articulated tension of embodying two seemingly dissimilar positionalities. The paradox of “living up to and breaking” the image of being a “goody-two-shoes” is a similar tension to Valerie’s struggle to find balance between who she wanted to be and who she felt she can be in reality. This tension created enough dissonance for each of them to write about when thinking about the different cultures to which they belong.

Karen’s statement of feeling like a stereotype appeared alongside a bullet stating, “analytical with how people treat me.” Karen was one of the younger members of the cohort who was often smiling and laughing. She was a skilled artist who frequently wore brightly colored outfits and was clearly concerned with aesthetics. She often drew images to accompany group work in her classes, yet this sheet contained only words. On the back of her sheet she wrote, “Difficult to write. I think I struggle with my identity a lot – it’s hard for me to say who I am for sure because I want to be open to change and improvement...” Karen was acutely aware of how others perceived her and how she performed her gender, as evidenced by her describing that she analyzed how people treated her as a female. This awareness was echoed in the writings of Holly, another member of the cohort who was friendly and always dressed in trendy clothing. On the front of her sheet, Holly wrote both “female” and “daughter” as two of her aspects. Under “female” she bulleted “self-identity,” “males,” and “society, objectivization [*sic*].” On the back of her sheet, in reply to Sophie’s reflection questions, she wrote “I think I’d be most sensitive to judgements [*sic*] made about [where I grew up] or my gender. → objectivization [*sic*] (especially by students) → or questioning of what does it mean to

[be] female → gender: stereotypes.” Both writing of stereotypes and the awareness that they had about how other people perceived them as females, especially students in Holly’s mind, Karen and Holly shared the concern that they would be objectified, discounted, or reduced to a singular notion of a piece of themselves that they see as more complex.

The tension present on Greta’s sheet was decidedly different, yet it still revolved around her gender. She wrote extensively about being “shy” and “compassionate” with “I get really upset when people show disrespect/bully” and “I care about peoples [sic] feelings.” These statements are imbued with gendered connotations when referring to an adult female. Rarely is the word “shy” used to describe an adult male and expressing compassion and care are more often used in reference to females than males in contemporary U.S. culture. While she did not qualify “female” with anything in specific, she did so generally through the other aspects of herself about which that she chose to write.

This tension and struggle, however, was not isolated to the females in the group. Of the five males who identified their gender in one of their bubbles, two wrote about the tension connected to being male. Chase was one of the younger males in the cohort and would often speak to me about my work and what I was “trying to find.” Genuinely kind, he was quick to start a discussion and careful to not offend his classmates or instructors. On the front of his sheet underneath “male” he wrote “Try to follow what ‘male’ should be like (like football)” and on the back of his sheet he wrote “males: not all ‘jerks.’” Not in specific reference to any one bubble, but in reference to the activity in general he

wrote, “Even though I knew everyone well I was still afraid people would judge me...I know it may seem sort of weird, I wouldn’t mind if people overlooked me. That way I ‘fit in.’” His writing here suggests that he, too, was experiencing tension over what kind of a male he “should be.” Chase truly was not a “jerk” and while he was distancing himself from this stereotype, he was clearly aware of its prevalence. Tension was also articulated by Isaac, one of the two married males in the cohort. On the front of his sheet underneath “Male,” he wrote “interactions” and “expectations (pos/neg)” while on the back he expanded with “White males have boxed themselves in in many ways → these maladaptive identities need to be addressed.” While his writing is less personal and does not contain concrete examples as Chase’s did, his male gender identity influencing expectations both positively and negatively indicate that Isaac saw his gender as something that needed to be negotiated when interacting with others. This negotiation entailed both positive and negative elements, though he did not articulate specifically what or when. Also indicating tension was his assertion that White males in particular have “boxed” themselves into a place with significant limitations. That “being male” has been constricted is something that Isaac saw as in need of remedy in greater American culture. In comparison to the struggle and tension that the females and Chase wrote of, Isaac’s descriptions were far more generalized to the entirety of White males. Whereas Valerie wrote of the tension in her life between her goals and reality and Holly, Kimberly, and Karen all wrote of gender expression and different aspects of them being stereotyped, Isaac distanced himself from the personal elements and addressed the gender tension from the perspective of it being a societal rather than a personal problem.

**Being (fe)male isn't always hard; sometimes other things are harder.** Two other males, Dave and Brandon, along with four females, Maddy, Greta, Stephanie, and Rebecca noted gender on their sheets, but either simply wrote "male," "female," "lady," "woman," or they wrote the identifier and included a bullet point that referred to it in a matter-of-fact manner. Rebecca wrote "being a female is a huge identifier" and Stephanie added "show women's perspectives" likely referring to how she would include women in her curriculum. Neither of these statements indicated tension, struggle, or overt pride in their gender identification; however, there were places of tension present on their sheets. In another bubble, Stephanie wrote "White" with the bullet point "judged at [my practicum placement]...prove myself to certain groups." When I was supervising her the following semester, she explained that she had felt that because she was a 22-year-old White woman teaching in a school with a predominantly African American student population, she was literally challenged by some of her students who asked why she thought that she could teach them. As this class session was just one week after she had finished the practicum experience, it is likely that this was still fresh in her mind and perhaps dominated any other dissonances that she may have felt more strongly at other times. It is also possible that she, like Rebecca, had previously found resolution with some of these aspects of herself. Rebecca, at 28, was one of the older members of the cohort and had entered teaching as a second profession. She wrote on the back of the page how it was easy for her to find sameness within the cohort and how "some were ideas I had wrestled with before" indicating that the lack of struggle expressed on the

sheet was perhaps due to her having already resolved some of the tension surrounding elements of who she was.

Maddy wrote “lady” in a bubble on the front of her sheet. She also wrote “liberal,” “American,” “agnostic/diest,” and “a big gay.” The only out member of the cohort, Maddy had come out to her classmates in another class earlier in the semester; however, the struggle articulated on her sheet stemmed from this aspect of herself. She wrote:

I felt a little funny writing mine. I new [*sic*] what I wrote might make people a bit uncomfortable, and that made me self conscious as we were sharing. I think I found it easier to do so by making a joke out of it.

The joke she was referring to was how she decided to share her sexual orientation with the class, which was through the same phrase, “big gay,” written on her sheet. As she shared-out in class, however, her posture changed from relaxed and leaning back in her chair to fidgety. As it came closer to her time to share, she rubbed her palms on her jeans, shifted her legs from crossed to un-crossed multiple times, and played with her paper. The change in her behavior was so noticeable that Sophie King, the instructor, mentioned it to me after class and asked if I thought Maddy was truly as comfortable as she said.

Maddy: Oh boy oh well ok I guess the thing that would be the best service to the group um talk about that one um I wrote down a big gay [group laughter] and um [laughs] I suppose that was kind of a joke to make myself more comfortable but basically I guess I don't know...if there are 3 things I need everybody to know

but just that like it's ok to talk to me about or not if you don't want to but like I'm comfortable with it so you know like I don't know I'm here if you want to or not um it's inherent to who I am so that's kind of important I guess...

Below that statement on her sheet she wrote in reference to Sophie's reflective prompt of how it felt to group with people who shared one of their aspects: "I felt inherently separated from others in the room. I grouped with other females, but I had inherent differences from them. I felt on display." Maddy so clearly articulated her discomfort in sharing her sexual orientation with her peers and how she felt tension in being inherently different from the other females in the room. This tension was so palpable for her that she even executed and articulated her chosen coping mechanism of making a joke out of this disclosure, even though all of her peers already knew she was gay and accepted her as a leader in many ways. Her discomfort with sharing her sexual orientation must have been influenced by my presence as a researcher with the ever present audio recorder, yet her feeling like she was on display in the portion of the lesson where she had to find similarity with others was likely a site of struggle for her too, knowing that she was alone in this aspect of who she was with this group of people.

This struggle is perhaps not unlike what Dave wrote about in regard to another aspect of who he was. Dave wrote "male" as one of his bubbles and qualified it with "perspective on world," "competitive," and "more understanding of males." While this last phrase shows his camaraderie and identification with other males, not unlike how Valerie identified with her fellow females when she indicated that she was protective of them, the essence of this statement does not connote the danger that "protect" does. It

simply is. Dave did not question this, he did not feel tension around it, and he did not write about it in an overtly prideful way, either. This perhaps could be because the tension that Dave did feel was expressed in the two bubbles he labeled “Korean American” and “Adoptee” where he bulleted “confusion,” “i.d. w/others going through similar culture confusion,” and “minority.” In this case, the potential tension and discomfort resulting from being gendered was perhaps previously resolved or displaced by a greater tension arising from his subjectivity as a Korean American adoptee.

In their writings, both the females and the males perpetuated a one-dimensional view of what either gender is to be. Perhaps because they all identified as either male or female, the majority of their writings reinforced the gender binary and inferred that there are inherent differences between the two genders and their expectations in society. In addition, these writings implied that there seemed to be one correct way to either “be male” or “be female” and that diversion from these ways created dissonance, angst, and struggle. Only two students – Martin and Angie – transgressed the gender expectation boundaries with confidence and pride.

**Being (fe)male is multiple things.** Angie was the only female to describe her gender with only positive terms. A consummate optimist, Angie would bounce into class, often with a gym bag in tow, and greet her peers warmly. Also studious and thoughtful, Angie would contribute her perspectives to class discussions, selectively offering enough to move the conversations forward without dominating the space. At 22 years old, Angie showed incredible insight on her reflection on the back of her paper:

I'm more than 5 words & often 1 word has multiple variations. My group was "female" but this group means something different to everyone. I'm a bit of a feminist so I can confidently talk about how amazing us [*sic*] females are & we don't fit into 1 mold. 1) can be aggressive, 2) clean, cook, babies, skinny, beautiful 3) dirty, eat out, work/driven, all sizes.

Unlike any of her female peers, Angie articulated the diversity within the subjectivity of "female" and recognized no tension or struggle anywhere on her sheet. She identified as "a bit of a feminist" and used this position as the reason why she could confidently write about the many ways of "being female." Herself an athlete, from reading this sheet it is likely that Angie had previously encountered some of the stereotypes of being a female and had seemingly resolved them through the acceptance of the diversity of how her gender could be expressed. Her pride in being her version of female is clear here through her use of the words "confidently," "awesome," and not "fit[ting] into 1 mold." Her description is categorically different from how all of her female peers write about their gender as either something that entails struggle or something that just is. Angie was frequently smiling, upbeat, and energetic in class. Often arriving in athletic clothing, on her way to or from a coaching job, Angie mostly listened in class and would contribute regularly, though she did not dominate discussions. It is possible that her identification as a female athlete and coach dominated her view of herself or that she was wary of identifying as or sharing her stance as "a bit of a feminist." Either way, and even if she was uncertain about her stance as a feminist, Angie showed the possibility, even if in the

smallest of ways, that being a female can be multifaceted and free of the tension that so many of her peers articulated.

Martin, the other married male, joined this cohort for the fall semester of coursework. Having previously started the program a few years prior, he had deferred the continuation of the program to this fall. Older than most of the other students, Martin spoke with authority about schools and his experiences as a special education assistant in a local district. Besides Bridgit, Martin was the only parent in the cohort and frequently his wife and infant daughter would appear after class to pick him up. Martin titled one of his bubbles “Dad w/diverse interests,” with “dad” being a hyponym with “male.” This aspect of who he was qualified in the title of his bubble indicated that his role as dad was multifaceted. Underlining this element of who he was, he added the bullet points “can’t be pigeonholed” and “my family comes first” underneath. Suggesting that the way “dad” is usually performed or perceived lives in a singular expression, Martin was pushing on the boundary of what this part of him meant. Using “diverse interests” and not being “pigeonholed” showed the importance for him to explain that his role as father and how he expressed this part of his maleness is unique to who he was as a person and not to who he was supposed to be as a male. Unlike the tension that Bridgit wrote about in being a single mom and the perception of her in that role, Martin seemed to confidently lay out that the way he would be a dad would be his way, and that putting his family first was a point of pride. Martin truly lived this out when, at the end of the fall semester, he deferred for another year so that he and his wife could take their daughter on a months-

long trek along the West Coast of the United States in partial fulfillment of his wife's thesis project.

### **Speaking Female, Speaking Male**

During the share-out portion of the class, students chose something that they wanted to talk about to their peers. Not a discussion, students each spoke about anything that they wanted to share in reference to the My Multicultural Self activity. They moved their desks in the formation of one large circle and listened quietly as each person spoke. Sophie King, the instructor, joined in this sharing portion of the lesson as she had also filled out a My Multicultural Self sheet. Referencing the fourth prompt on the PowerPoint slide, "What three things would you like people to know about members of your group?" Sophie opened the share-out by saying:

If you haven't quite finished that's ok. But I would like to go around and have everybody speak to one of these um like I said there particularly that last one is one we could all benefit from hearing from each other and also one that when we talk about disrupting stereotypes and helping students understand that they may have stereotypes about each other and how to disrupt those that can be a very powerful thing in the classroom to break that down from the beginning so with that said is there anybody who wants to start?

The share-out then began without hesitation with Bridgit speaking about her role as a single mother and a student. From there, the students went around the circle and offered their thoughts without any significant pauses between people. The students looked at the speaker, listened intently to one another, and in most cases, did not react with more than

head nods or quiet smiles. Table 5 shows each participant and which of the major themes they spoke to in their share-outs. For the students who did not speak about any of the major themes, no additional themes are indicated.

Table 5

*My Multicultural Self Share-Out, Organized by Gender of Participant and Theme*

Name	Gender	Race	Social Class	Religion	Sexuality
<b>Males</b>					
Omar		X		X	
Chase					
Brandon					
Geoff		X	X		
Ted					
Dave		X			
Isaac			X		X/O
John				X	
Martin				X	
Evan			X		
Alan					
<b>Females</b>					
Tara				X	
Rebecca					
Kimberly	O				
Holly	O				
Maddy					X
Bridgit	O				
Karen					
Greta	O				
Leah					
Angie					
Valerie	X				
Stephanie				X	
Sophie King			X	X	
	0m; 5f	3m; 0f	3m; 1f	3m, 3f	1m; 1f
<b>Total</b>	5/23	3/23	4/23	6/23	2/23

X – explicitly spoken  
O – hyponym spoken

#m – number of males  
#f – number of females

In their share-outs, four of the 12 females spoke about gender either explicitly or through the use of hyponyms such as “daughter” or “mom.” None of the males spoke of their gender in explicit or implicit ways. The three students who spoke of race were the three students of color and notably, none of the White students made mention of race. Four participants spoke of social class, two of sexuality (one married and one gay), and six spoke of religion. Of the six that spoke of religion, two spoke to atheism, one Judaism, one Islam, one Christianity, and one “sacredness.” Examples of themes other than those presented here include “being transient,” “being an artist,” and “being a college student.”

**One way of being female gets talked about. No way of being male does.** Of the four females who spoke either explicitly or implicitly of being a female, all extended the discourse of tension or struggle in relation to their gender. Notably, Sophie had asked for the students to share something that would help their peers dismantle stereotypes that pertained to some aspect of themselves, yet each of the females who spoke added to the essentializing discourse of female struggle. Bridgit opened with:

um I wrote about being a single mom which is kind of a major part of my identity and um one of the things is I don't think people realize that there's a lot of tension between being single and being a mom and that is like feeling that tension is really a big part of my life um because I want to go out and hang out with people and date and all these things and I have a kid. um and then another thing and this is something that a lot of you guys mentioned to me and um it's fine totally fine but everyone's like oh gosh I can't believe how you do it like I know people have

said that to me and I know it's a compliment it's meant as a compliment but um I'm not a superwoman like I it's very hard and um and I'm like completely disorganized and I lose my bus pass and I can't keep things together so like just because I look like I'm all together sometimes and I know I don't sometimes but um anyway I guess that's that one part that's kind of a big part

In her words, Bridgit described the “tension” between being single and being a mother as a “really big part” of her life because she found them to be in direct competition for her time and attention. This tension between motherhood and her life as a single person was meaningful for her, but so was the tension between motherhood and her role as a student. She used this share-out time to reveal that she was “not a superwoman” even though she had interpreted comments from some of her peers indicating that she was successful at “doing it all.” Her difficulty in maintaining these multiple roles in her life all stemmed from her role as a mother of an infant. The stereotype that Bridgit was likely talking back to here is that of a “superwoman” who can effortlessly balance a family and a career and be happy doing it. While this discourse is clearly limiting and essentializes the complexity of either being a mother or being career oriented, it is one that was troubling for Bridgit and particularly for how she interpreted how others perceived her. Valerie spoke back to this discourse when she shared:

Oh ok I didn't write down three things but ah something I chose being a female adult just because I feel like what I'm constantly trying to balance between um being happy with like home or social family life and having a successful career

and deciding which is more important and trying to deal with having it all um  
yeah

While Valerie was not a mother, she and Bridgit were both in their mid-twenties and were not married. For Valerie, this tension between having a happy home life and a successful career is connected to being a “female adult.” The “superwoman” discourse was recycled here as a discourse of “having it all” but still entailed the same two elements of family and career. The tension Valerie articulated between these two aspects of herself was one of “trying to balance” them but ultimately having to decide “which is more important.” Valerie and Bridgit were troubling that there is such a thing as a “superwoman” or that one can “have it all” as an adult female, yet the way they spoke of this stereotype extended an equally disturbing discourse that being a female adult is rife with tension, struggle, and pain surrounding the necessity to choose family or career.

Kimberly spoke to a different side of a similar tension between personal and professional spheres, though she connected to it through how she saw herself as a student, particularly in high school. Younger than Valerie and Bridgit, Kimberly was 22 and often drew on her experiences in high school and college to illustrate what she was talking about:

I guess in high school one thing that I like identified with and that I tried to break away from is a goody two shoes identity um and that one was really difficult because I wanted to live up to those like expectations that people had of me but at the same time um people assumed that because I got class work done and that I had a job and that I was doing good that I didn't want to go out and have fun

and that I was going to ruin their fun if they broke any rules and um I found this followed me through college not that I tried to make it follow ....I just I want to live up that that image but I don't so that's part of my identity that I struggle with.

Kimberly echoed the previously voiced struggle through the gendered stereotype of being a "goody two shoes." Often used in reference to girls, as it is derived from a character from the 1765 English nursery tale of the same name, this phrase refers to girl possessing the qualities of virtue and piety (Roy, 1998). In the more modern era, this phrase is more commonly used as an insult in that it criticizes the notion of being a do-gooder or of doing well in multiple spheres of life including being well-liked socially and being academically successful. An image that she apparently tried to shed, likely due to her seeing these elements as being incompatible with one another, this enduring image of how others saw her bothered Kimberly enough to want to take this opportunity to share her thoughts on it. In doing so, she reified the discourse of female struggle in the attainment of personal/professional balance.

Shedding more light onto the ways in which being female is difficult, Holly spoke of her role as a daughter and how she was hoping to see a change in this role:

Um the identity that I picked to talk about was the fact that I'm a daughter and I think that this doesn't really work for like a group because I think daughters are very unique within their families um but I just picked it because like in the last 6 or 7 years my parents divorced and my mom has had cancer 3 times um and so basically my life has been completely shaped and geographically that's why I'm

[here] and at this point it's kind of a role that I'm willing to shed now that I'm 24 years old at this point it's like a transition um hopefully transitioning part of my identity.

Not unlike the duty of a mother to her child, as a young woman Holly had experienced being the caregiver for her mother while she had gone through multiple bouts with cancer and a divorce. Not overtly speaking to a sense of tension or struggle in her changing her life for her family, Holly spoke of her sacrifice, particularly as the daughter to her mother. While she did not speak of this despairingly, she did indicate that this was something she was ready to leave behind. Not explicitly contributing to the "being a female is difficult" discourse, Holly still expanded upon it by referencing how her life had been "completely shaped" because of her mother's struggles and the responsibility she felt in taking care of her. She indicated that great changes had been made in her life because of her role as a daughter. This sacrifice necessarily entails the giving up of something and in that image, Holly added her interpretation of female struggle through her role as daughter.

### **Discussion**

All four females who spoke of being female to the cohort in their share-out advanced the bleak reality that for them, being female was directly tied to a feeling of tension, or being pulled to home at the expense of work or vice versa. It is likely that they were trying to speak back to the discourse that women can "have it all" by pointing out the conflicts between work and family, but inadvertently they reinforced an equally damaging stereotype that the experience of being a woman 1) necessarily contains this

tension or 2) is not something that can find resolution. Whereas they could have chosen to speak to many different stereotypes of women or of other aspects that they wrote about, there is something significant in this being the consensus that was allowed to remain around being a woman. Angie, the one female who advanced a counter-argument to this discourse on her paper spoke of being the only athlete among her friends and not of being female. Seemingly the one opportunity to challenge and dismantle this discourse was left untouched. While this is disappointing and ideally one of the students would have spoken back to or even claimed a prideful stance of being female, all hope is not lost. Angie's articulation of herself as "a bit of a feminist," even if just on paper, is a glimmer of how women can hope to see themselves. Seemingly, Angie found some sense of resolution between elements of herself that are competing in the minds of some of her peers. This confidence, security, and pride in being who she was is a goal of all feminist movements and is something that, within Angie, is more than an ideal – it is a reality. Through this moment of resisting the dominant discourses of being stereotyped or needing to "have it all," Angie showed the possibility of what the future can hold for women and how they view themselves.

Also untouched was anything gendered in reference to being male. Of the five males who wrote about being male on their sheets, none spoke of anything related to their gender in the share-out. Dave spoke of the stereotypes about being a Korean adoptee; Brandon talked about the "struggle" he felt in being a college student being "not like a kid anymore" yet "not a full grown adult by any means;" and Isaac and Chase spoke of the strong bonds they have with their nuclear families. Martin, the one opportunity for a

father to speak, chose to speak about being an atheist. By not speaking of “being male,” even in an essentialized way, this group left the experience of being male entirely out of the portion of the lesson designed to dismantle stereotypes and damaging discourses. In this cohort, on this day, the absence of any mention of being male juxtaposed to the “struggle discourse” of being a female normalized male as something that is standard and not in need of accommodation and exoticized female as something that necessitates accommodation around fictional polarities. The resulting images of “being female,” “being male,” or “being trans” were sadly neither advanced nor complicated.

In connection to teaching social studies, these findings add to the body of literature that has established how previously held cultural beliefs play an important role when teaching and how there is potential for changing them (Percival, 2000; Wade & Raba, 2003; Wilson, 2001). While these studies did not focus on gender, they all addressed different cultural and global perspectives, such as race, that are equally important in the creation and implementation of social studies curricula. The beliefs that these students held about their cultures and how they articulated their gender as part, or not part, of a greater culture to which they belong has potential implications for their future classrooms. As they were preparing for their student teaching which included writing units and lessons, some students clearly indicated that they perceived gender to be a cultural group to which they belonged, while others did not. How teacher beliefs are enacted through curriculum in social studies, a field that includes the study of culture and prizes it as one of the Ten Thematic Strands (NCSS, 1994) as outlined by the National Council for the Social Studies, is largely unknown (Adler, 2008). It is with this question

of how they talk about gender in relation to themselves that in the next chapter I address how the three focal students talk about gender in relation to their first classrooms and the curriculum that they chose to enact.

## **Chapter Seven: First Year Teachers: Interviews with the Focal Students**

To pull these three significant moments together, this chapter focuses on the three focal students, Kimberly, Leah, and Dave. Coupled with interviews and including insights from how they communicated their conceptions of themselves in their “My Multicultural Self” papers from the third significant moment, the experiences of the focal students allow greater insight into who these three teachers became in their first year of teaching. The themes that become clear with the focal students offer three different insights into how individuals take up and then apply what they learned throughout their preparatory year. The three focal students are discussed individually with reference to what their unique experiences offer to our understanding of how these novice teachers talk about and conceptualize gender.

### **Findings**

#### **Kimberly**

Kimberly started her preparatory year as one of the more outspoken students in the cohort. She described herself as a “blunt and straightforward” person who had “no problem sharing [her] opinion,” which she often did in her classes. Particularly in her reading of Harriet Jacobs’s memoir, she was the first student to express empathy with students who had also experienced sexual violence. Her open acknowledgement of the sexual violence and her belief that it should be taught in the curriculum differed from some of her classmates, but ultimately opened the discourse.

Kimberly: I think it’s about pulling up the underlying concepts of the book.

Cause I read the same one and like the sexual content in the book, um I feel like I

know some high schoolers that would read it and ((snaps her fingers)) bam they totally understand that little cottage in the woods and why it was built but I know some that would be like oh so he's treating her really well, like they wouldn't notice that and I think the little things like that are things that you can kind of integrate depending on their age level and what they're ready for and what they've already been exposed to, like we were talking about high school they get that sex stuff, middle school probably but not all of them do cause some are more innocent than others and we can use stuff like this to develop new ideas new thoughts new perspectives and um bring it together.

This comment in the large group discussion initially silenced her classmates and initiated a subject change until Angie built upon Kimberly's thinking and supported her against a competing discourse of avoiding the topic of sexual violence, advanced by some of their classmates. By making this statement, Kimberly allowed some of her classmates to join her in asserting their beliefs that bringing controversial topics into the classroom was a good thing to do as long as it was done in an appropriate manner. Kimberly's strong assertion showed a sense of understanding greater societal issues and their impact in the lives of students in a way not shared by all of her classmates.

In the spring semester when examining the *New York Times* articles, which also addressed themes of sexual violence, Kimberly spoke less frequently in the large group discussion than she had the previous summer with the Harriet Jacobs book, but her acute attention to the greater issues was still expressed. After nearly an hour of discussion of the articles reporting on the sexual assault of a young Texas girl, Kimberly, who was

usually vocal in class discussions, had only spoken once. At the close, Dr. Browne asked the students to consider how these articles could be a comment on sexism or racism in U.S. society. Kimberly spoke up and answered, “still there’s a double standard and there always will be.” In her second contribution to the class discussion, Kimberly used her voice to include a previously unspoken view that sexism in the United States persists, and that in her opinion, it always would.

Based on her comments in these classes during two significant moments of troubling the gender implications in different texts, Kimberly was aware of and attuned to the gender injustices that women face in historical and contemporary United States. In the academic, teacher-as-scholar environment of her teacher education classes, and with a topic as emotionally charged as sexual violence, Kimberly was able to tease out educational and societal implications that allowed her, in connection to Harriet Jacobs, to make a statement about what should be in the curriculum. How her awareness translated to her first classroom, however, was slightly different.

In her first year of teaching, Kimberly was assigned to teach seventh grade Ancient World History and sixth grade American History. Because she was not a full-time social studies teacher, she also served as a building substitute and often saw her students in other classes throughout the day. Located in a suburb of the same city as the university, Kimberly described her students as mostly White with nearly half of the students receiving free or reduced priced lunches. In her interview, she spoke about classroom management issues, persistent behavior issues, and how she often felt inadequate as a teacher because she occasionally would resort to “boring” instructional

methods, which included guided worksheets, in order to keep behavior issues at a minimum. Even with this admission, she spoke of including simulations, reader's theater, and research projects, which she preferred even if the behavior was less easy to manage with these methods. When I asked her to identify what controversial issues she addressed and those she avoided in her classes, she named religion as a topic she avoided:

Kathryn: Is there anything that you avoid? Is there any controversial issue that you do avoid?

Kimberly: Um I try to avoid the religious stuff

Kathryn: Why is that?

Kimberly: Um because there is a diversity of religions in schools and it is something that is not necessarily a forefront in many of these kids' lives but those where it is it is very very central to their daily existence...it's such a touchy touchy subject.

Kathryn: Why is it touchy?

Kimberly: Because we make it touchy.

Kathryn: Like society?

Kimberly: Society yeah, you know look at politics. We have people who can't afford housing and we're talking whether or not women should have any control over their bodies and it's 2012. Get off it. You're not carrying it for 12 [sic] months. I am. It's my body and if I want contraception, I should not have to pay \$500. You're not the one taking it. You're politicians....And pulling religion in is such a big thing right now and I it's also something that I get very heated about

and I don't want to take my kids so far off topic. And I'm pretty honest with them about some things but when it comes to that I just push it aside. It's like you know what? This is not something that we really need to talk about. If you want to talk about it with me later, yes I'll talk about it with you but it's not part of the curriculum so we're gonna just leave it alone. (Interview, March 4, 2012)

Kimberly clearly saw modern religion as a controversial topic and one that, while she had strong (and gendered) feelings about it, she did not consider it to fit into her curriculum and she was apprehensive of including it because it was a “touchy” subject. Compared to her advocacy for the inclusion of the Harriet Jacobs memoir and the sexual violence in it, another “touchy” subject, religion was a topic that while she shared strong opinions on it, she could not find justification in the curriculum for its inclusion. Interestingly, in her description of why she avoided religion, she cited the topic of contraception. This topic was in the news because of a recent comment conservative radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh made in reference to Sandra Fluke, a Georgetown law student and an advocate for contraception to be covered by insurance (Geiger & Memoli, 2012). Contraception, which is directly connected to gender and was on the forefront of her thinking, was connected for Kimberly to religion and thus became a topic she avoided in her classes. Unlike sexual violence, which is not controversial (no one would advocate that society needs more sexual violence), the use of contraception is controversial particularly because of how different religions view this practice. For Kimberly, this religious connection and the constraints of her subject matter (history) had implications for how

she approached and avoided gendered topics in her classroom.

When I asked her later in the interview about how she approached gender as a topic, she spoke briefly about how she taught about the differences in how women participated in Ancient Greek society, specifically citing the differences between Athens and Sparta. She did not identify anything as controversial with these topics and even made the determination that nothing was controversial within her two classes:

Kathryn: so what do you teach about that either you or other people may find to be controversial in either U.S. History or Ancient Civ class?

Kimberly: umm, there's not a whole lot that comes up just because of the material. I really haven't run into anything controversial. (Interview, March 4, 2012)

What Kimberly did see as controversial was likely what she saw as “touchy” and was connected to modern politics. Controversial public issues, as the students in the cohort learned about, have the specific definition of “a social studies lesson, unit, course, or curriculum that engages students in learning about issues, analyzing them, deliberating alternative solutions, and often taking and supporting a position on which solutions may be based” (Hess, 2008, p. 124). While this definition does not limit issues to contemporary issues, many of the examples and solution-focused issues presented in classrooms are contemporary in nature. In translating controversial issues to ancient and early U.S. History curricula, Kimberly was unable to see the connections and possibilities. Even though she showed an acute awareness of greater societal issues both in class and in her interview, and as a preservice teacher she was seemingly unafraid to

address the topic of sexual violence in her future curricula, when her license was earned and she was on her own, these bold aspirations were not only unfilled, they suddenly did not exist. These missed opportunities point to areas of growth for Kimberly to acquire more content knowledge, and to the teacher preparation program to address how to approach the world history curriculum with a critical eye.

It is possible that Kimberly did not include these topics because of Lortie's (1975) "apprenticeship of observation," too. Once in her setting as a classroom teacher, it is possible that Kimberly reverted back to how she had been taught as a student. It is also possible that she simply didn't have the content knowledge to be able to know what she could teach about in connection to gender and ancient or early U.S. History. Additionally, Kimberly was a part-time first-year teacher who entered the field during a time of increased standardization which favored a more prescriptive curriculum. While she did not speak of this climate in specific connection to her school, it is likely that the requirement to teach to the standards limited her interpretation of what was controversial and what was allowed into the curriculum.

This incongruence points to potential. Not only did Kimberly show the impetus and the insight to appropriately include the taboo topic of sexual abuse as a curricular topic early in her program, she could articulate her perspective on sexism in connection to critically reading a newspaper article. Yet, when she was outside of the university community and planning curricula on her own, these insights and how to include them for her students were not used. Besides the casual friendships that were built and maintained after the program ended, students in this cohort did not have a venue or a

forum to which they could return and check-in for the continuation of their development as teacher-scholars. As a teacher educator, for me this points to the possibility of maintaining the academic relationships that were so carefully nurtured during the preparatory year with the aim of supporting the novice teacher in making research-based decisions for best practice.

### **Leah**

At the beginning of the program, Leah clearly set out her ideas of teaching for social justice. From the beginning, she spoke about the liberating potential of education and was becoming a teacher so that she could participate in creating a more socially just world. In the fall, she student taught at an urban middle school where she worked predominantly with students of color and students who came from low income families. She loved it. In the spring, she was placed at a suburban, predominantly White, middle-class high school where she struggled with students who did not see her as an authority and students who shared overtly racist and anti-immigrant sentiments in class. She was still highly concerned with class and race throughout these placements, perhaps because these were areas where she saw the greatest inequality. In one of her reflective journals, Leah wrote about one of her teaching goals and how she was struggling with matching her goals to the reality of teaching students with different beliefs:

I want my students to know that racism and inequality exist, and to be able to analyze current events, laws, and people's individual experiences through this lens. That's important to me. It is in some tension with what (I think) is my

desire to support my student's [*sic*] desire to develop political beliefs different than my own. (Reflective journal, March 18, 2011)

Her concern with these topics could be read through the curriculum that she chose to teach, particularly in her Human Geography class. Her cooperating teacher gave her a considerable amount of freedom in choosing units and lessons, and with this freedom Leah chose to teach about Hurricane Katrina, the Arab Spring (which was in process during the semester), and a series of units on immigration that included different ethnic groups and undocumented immigration. It is worth noting that when given the choice, Leah chose to focus on broad themes of race, ethnicity, class, and power most likely because these topics are what she was most concerned about and what drove her goals as a teacher. Gender appeared to be an area that she chose to not explicitly teach about and spoke less about in class or in our debriefing sessions after observations.

It is also possible that the growth that she determined to be most important for her students connected to themes of class and ethnicity, and that this is why she chose them as topics of study. One example she offered in a reflective journal from her student teaching recounted an incident in her Human Geography class when they were studying immigration:

[I asked,] "Why are there so many Hmong refugees in [our city]?" We had explored a similar question about Somali refugees in the previous week....Annie raised her hand and said, "because we are a welfare state."

Before I had a chance to think, multiple hands shot up in the classroom, and the paraprofessional in the room stepped in: his mother had worked for the county,

and he had heard numerous stories of welfare fraud. Other students jumped in with similar sentiments and concerns: stories they had heard on the news or from neighbors of people on welfare with flat screen TVs, people using food stamps to buy tattoos, people refusing to search for a job in order to stay on welfare. I felt physically uncomfortable....I could not stand by and listen to my students reconstruct myths about people on welfare or re-enforce stereotypes that draw lines between “welfare queens” and hardworking, individualistic Americans who earn what they have.

I also really didn’t know how to intervene....I found myself tongue-tied in this situation. I started by asking students [what their ideas were] about welfare. Did they know people on welfare? From the news? I asked this very aware that at least one student in the classroom—likely more—had a personal experience with welfare. How was that student—whoever they may be—feeling right now?

(Reflective journal, March 14, 2011).

It is understandable that she found these issues to be ones where the most teaching was needed. Encountering blatant prejudice surprised her and, particularly with her dedication to social justice, Leah clearly saw that these misconceptions needed to be addressed.

While she paid obvious attention to issues of social class and race, this does not negate her interest in or awareness of gender as an area that also needs attention. In fact, in the fourth week of her Spring student teaching, she taught a two-day lesson sequence titled “Gender and Population Growth” where she focused on gender roles and sexism in

India and Japan. However, with limited time and the constraints of the public school, Leah was only able to focus on areas that she deemed to be most pressing, and this simply did not include gender as an explicit topic in her first classroom. Race and class were also the areas within which she had the greatest background knowledge. Supported by Thornton (1991), teachers are the “curricular-instructional gatekeepers” who ultimately determine what is and what is not allowed in the formal curriculum. In this case, Leah was allowing in as much as she could to teach her students as much as she could, but with so much work to do concerning racism and classism, there simply was not as much time to devote to sexism or other social injustices.

This begs the question: Has gender been placed on the backburner? For Leah, gender was not as pressing as race and class in her student teaching. Later in her first year of teaching, gender and gender issues appeared to be less of a concern, too. She was hired at a small charter school located in the same city as the university, but that is in an area stricken with poverty, gang violence, lack of food security, and a high foreclosure rate. Her position was to teach high school social studies and language arts with the goal of having her students earn enough credits to graduate. The structure of the school allowed for students to drop-in throughout the day, which did not allow for traditional classes to form; Leah decided to structure her classes on an individual basis with each student essentially working as an independent study student. Many of her students had been incarcerated, were active members of gangs, were parents, and had significant struggles in their lives. All of her students were African American, and as a White woman who grew up privileged with two professor parents, Leah struggled with

watching her students make decisions that she “knew would make their lives significantly more difficult” and “reconciling that with the oppression they’ve experienced and the racism they experience on a daily basis” (Interview, March 4, 2012). Clearly, the basic need of security faced by her students dominated their lives and how she was able to approach them as students in her class. As we were talking about how she saw the struggles that her students live with, she synthesized her frustration with persistent systemic injustices by saying, “I feel bogged down by like, we literally have this group of students who we haven’t figured out how to educate.” Being aware of large scale social injustices affected Leah and how she approached her classes. Her relationships with her students also “complicated [her] own views about poverty and race,” which left her with more questions than answers about how best to teach her students. Her students were particularly attuned to issues of racism, which she shared with me through using a story about the Occupy Wall Street protesters who collected in a plaza downtown:

So I asked them, ‘Have you seen those protesters? Have you talked to them?’ And their immediate reaction was like ‘Well, they’re all White and if they were Black it would have been broken up after one day’ and I was like [laughing] fair point. She then went on to describe how she taught about government aid with her economics students and how “they really have a tension about that. And it’s interesting because they all receive some form of aid.” She spoke of how her students debated how government aid is both used by people they know to get out of poverty and by others who use aid as a way of life, therefore seeing government aid as both a help and a hindrance. How her students engaged personally to this topic interested Leah and encouraged her to continue

teaching to social class topics because of the relevance to her students' lives. With both race and social class, Leah not only acknowledged these issues within her curriculum, but within her students as well. As open topics of study and discussion, she and her students could share conflicting opinions and different insights. Whereas in her student teaching classroom, Leah included race and class because she observed an opportunity to correct oppressive and prejudiced views, in her own classroom, she included race and class as topics because they were demanding topics in the lives of her students because of their positionality as people who were oppressed. Either way, Leah made room for race and class to appear in her classes.

When I asked what she found to be difficult to address with her students, she replied, "for me the hardest things to talk about are gender and sexuality issues." When asked why, she described further:

Um, the homophobia is so strong in my classroom and I don't – it's something like in the beginning I was like, I want to try to figure out a way to address this and I think I'm at a point where I can do that one on one with certain students I have a strong enough relationship with but I'm not comfortable doing it beyond that um just because I don't feel like I have the skills or the tools or the relationships to be able to do that. It's yeah, it's not something that I'm like proud of but I've like definitely avoided talking about gay issues or transgender issues.

(Interview, March 4, 2012)

Her discomfort with teaching about gender and sexuality was increased by the fear of backlash by her students and her self-perceived inadequacy on how to properly address

their prejudicial views on the gay and trans communities. While Leah was shocked and disturbed by both this form of prejudice and that which she encountered in her student teaching classroom, her response was different. The prejudiced views that her student teaching students shared on immigrants and people in poverty spurred Leah into teaching more about the facts of government assistance and immigration; the prejudiced views that the students in her first classroom shared on the LGBT community nearly silenced her completely. In both instances she indicated that she was unsure of how to best address the issues and even described herself as “tongue-tied” in her student teaching, but when the students were White and privileged, something that Leah could relate to directly, and the topics were within her expertise, she found a way to talk about them. In her work with students whose experiences were so vastly different from her own and with a topic that she did not have as much expertise in, she avoided the topic except with specific students with whom she had built strong relationships. It is also possible that some of her decision to avoid LGBT topics with her students was motivated by fear. Having expressed reluctance to comment on decisions that her students make that “will make their lives significantly more difficult” for fear of being “judgmental or missionary,” it is not unreasonable that this reluctance also translated to her decision to avoid topics that she predicted may be incendiary because she did not want to position herself in opposition to her students.

Leah’s work with bringing controversial topics into her classes is commendable, though incomplete. She found ways in two very different groups of students to include the topics of race and class as areas important enough to formally study. She made the

space in different contexts to best meet the needs of her students. There is, however, a cost to bringing in some topics and not others. In both settings, Leah was accountable to state standards, school credits, the administrations, and countless other stakeholders who dictated what needed to be taught in her assigned courses. With her own dedication to teaching for social justice and her lenses of race and social class, Leah made space for these topics, even when she was unsure how to best proceed. These topics both seemed to be the most pressing in each setting, too. In her student teaching class, Leah found the demand to be one of deconstructing prejudice through the curriculum, whereas in her own class, the demand seemed to be within the lives of her students and the prejudice that they lived daily. Leah found these issues to be compelling enough to address, even when she felt unprepared to do so. However, gender and gender issues were less prominent and even avoided in her first classroom. If gender issues or gender-based discrimination were more prominent, blatant, or demanding in the lives of her students, perhaps then she would have included gender into the curriculum in a similar way. It is possible that with everything that she had to cover in her curriculum, to prove that the students earned the credit, that Leah paid most attention to the pressing issues at hand and that the expense was the inadvertent non-existence of gender as a social issue worthy of study.

### **Dave**

Dave perhaps made the biggest change throughout the year, though it could not be fully observed and realized until he was teaching in his own classroom. In the first summer session of his preparatory year, Dave described the repeated sexual abuse that Harriet Jacobs endured with a quick description of her “being hit on” by her master.

Following this complete avoidance of talking about sexual violence with his peers, months later when investigating the *New York Times* article in another class, Dave seemed to be more comfortable talking about sexual violence with the same classmates he had previously dismissed. When I asked him about why he approached the same topic of sexual assault in two different ways with his cohort members, he spoke of the Harriet Jacobs memoir first:

Since it was so early all I was focused on was like the lesson plans and writing the unit and all that kinda stuff and it was my first the first time us doing that...it was all these different elements that like went into [the unit plan] that the content was one of the least of my concerns like I wasn't as focused on that you know it was just trying to figure all this out. (Interview, March 9, 2012)

His admission that he was less concerned with content than with the operational aspects of planning a unit and a lesson for the first time is powerful. Understanding that novice teachers are highly concerned with the “doing” of teaching and what discreet aspects need to be completed, as if teaching can be reduced to a check-list, is a valuable reminder of where preservice teachers are at the beginning of their preparation (Kennedy, 1999). Less concerned with content, Dave was not yet at a place developmentally to address this aspect of teaching, which demands a more refined and specific knowledge gained throughout the course of a master’s level program. Months later and after more advanced coursework, experiences in two different schools, and the development of a sense of community within the cohort, he recalled the experience of talking about the *New York Times* articles in Dr. Browne’s class as having a different approach:

It felt more personal than other discussions that we had about different things that we had you know as a group and breaking it down and figuring out if this element should have been included or not included or all that kind of stuff it felt more like you were really stepping out there and making value judgments on different things and more revealing of yourself. (Interview, March 9, 2012)

The growth between these two moments is substantial in that Dave seemingly made a reversal of avoiding the topic of sexual violence to opening himself to considering it as a topic in this public space. “Stepping out there” and becoming more vulnerable in this discussion was the opposite of how he approached the same content the previous summer. Perhaps because the operational aspects of planning instruction had been mastered and he experienced the daily schedule of teaching school, he was more ready to dive into and discern the “what” of teaching social studies because he no longer was occupied with the “how.” It is also likely that because the community of the cohort had been established, that he was now in a safer space where he was willing to engage in conversations about “more personal” topics. Dave’s growth in approaching taboo gendered topics did not end at the culmination of his licensure program, however. In his first year of teaching, Dave became bolder and, even at the risk of making mistakes, brought select controversial and gender issues to his middle and high school students.

Dave was hired as a first year teacher at a grade 6-12 math and science charter school located in a suburb of the same city as the university. In his first year, he taught 8<sup>th</sup> grade ancient civilizations and civics and high school political science and economics, both of which consisted of mostly upperclassmen. Academic achievement was a focus of

the school, which advertized stringent requirements for graduation, including passing calculus, six years of Spanish, and a variety of science classes. When Dave described his school, he said they had a 1% free and reduced priced lunch population and that most students were middle or upper-middle class. Ethnically, he described the school as 15-20% Asian, 2% Latino, 2% African American, with the remaining students identifying as White. Admittedly, Dave described his first semester as often missing the mark with curriculum that was much too easy or much too hard for his students, but with each new unit, he found that he was able to better focus the topics to fit the needs of the students. When I asked him about what controversial issues he included in his classes, he listed an array of topics that spanned all four of his classes: the ethics of archaeology, the validity of having a government, the Dream Act, if the United States should sign a global peace treaty, intervention in foreign wars, the equal protection clause, free speech and Fred Phelps, race in the United States, and societal expectations of different genders were all mentioned as topics he introduced into his classes. With many of these topics, he spoke of using them in both the 8<sup>th</sup> grade civics class and in a political science class where he tried to make the discussions more in-depth, though he said that sometimes the students did not have background knowledge sufficient enough to produce the kind of discussion he had hoped.

One of the elements that made Dave's position as a first year teacher unique was the fact that for the first semester, he taught his classes in the classroom of a veteran social studies teacher who also taught civics and political science. He described her as often sitting in the back of the room working on her computer while he was teaching and

mentioned that on multiple occasions, she would offer critical comments of his teaching. While he said that he was given considerable academic freedom by the school board and his administration, he spoke of this colleague as making comments on how he should teach, which he said made him feel awkward. Before the academics director noticed and moved his class into another room, an indication that they supported his curricular decisions and wanted to help him feel free to teach his way, Dave and this colleague had multiple exchanges about his chosen curriculum. One such exchange happened when he asked her about teaching about gender. He described how he went to ask her what she taught regarding gender topics in her classes, because he did not want to extensively teach about it if the students would learn a lot in their American History course when they got into high school. The differences in their thoughts became clear as he described why she did not teach about gender in her history class:

Dave: She said that she didn't um go into it almost at all because she felt it was kind of overblown

Kathryn: Into gender?

Dave: Yeah into gender

Kathryn: As an entire-

Dave: Yeah as an entire topic she thought it was overblown

Kathryn: What does that mean?

Dave: I don't know cause then well I was assuming she meant that it's not a reality anymore and stuff and gender differences and treatment and all that kind of deal

Kathryn: Oh, the fight has been won?

Dave: Yeah it's over [laughter]

While there was some uncertainty in Dave's description of the conversation, as evidenced by his making assumptions about her comments, his impression of her views was nonetheless not positive. His response was to conduct a fishbowl discussion with his students about the gendered messages they had received from society and the people in their lives. Dave used this within a unit on rights and responsibilities in citizenship and admitted that the students did not see the connection until he made it for them. It was, however, important to him to include even if he had to make the connection clear, particularly since he saw this as a gap in the subsequent curriculum.

Another critical message he received from this colleague was in a discussion surrounding race in the United States. He brought up his sister, also adopted from Korea, whom he described as "still in denial that she's not White" and how he "talked about that with the kids." According to Dave, this colleague said:

'it's a little bit too personal and if they ask you about it that's something but for you to just be telling them that it kind of clouds the relationship of authority figure-student' and whatever...I can stand by that choice [to share that personal information]. (Interview, March 9, 2012)

Here Dave's decision to share personal information with his students and connect them to the political sphere is classically feminist (Hanisch, 1969) and even when coming from a male, is marked by the same criticism that being personal is somehow dangerous to the teacher-student relationship. His confidence in this decision and in his decisions to

include controversial topics, including the broad categories of race and gender, were seemingly unshaken by his colleague. This would have been uncharacteristic of Dave at the beginning of the program.

The “fear of community reprisal” as a reason to avoid issues (Phillips, 1997) or to not disclose personal views (Miller-Lane et al., 2006) has been a documented concern for pre- and in-service teachers, however for Dave, this did not appear to be a compelling consideration when he chose his curriculum. While he clearly understood the potential of “getting into trouble” with his chosen curriculum, he taught it anyway because of who he wanted to be as a teacher.

Dave: Since I like first decided I wanted to teach I’ve still got this really weird cloud where I’m like I’m gonna end up getting some giant lawsuit against me or something [laughs] that’s how my career’s gonna end because like I just see so many little landmines you can walk into you know [I’m] just waiting for something terrible to happen [laughs] but until then I’m just gonna I’m just gonna go full board just because it’s, well first of all I think it’s more interesting ... to me as a teacher and to the kids um and it’s something that I didn’t get until I mean on a lot of this stuff I didn’t get it until the program which is why

Kathryn: Until our program?

Dave: Yeah which is why I always speak extremely highly of it you know and it’s I mean it’s true and so like if I can have a renewed love for social studies like at what 26, 27 you know um I feel like I should be trying to pass that on...it’s one of those things like if you don’t have a teacher who’s willing to put their neck out

there and do it there's no guarantee they're ever gonna get it and that's that was my whole rationale...there's no guarantee these kids are ever gonna have this candid discussion and to understand this whole other world that's out there...yeah I just feel like I buy into it I mean I buy into that through teaching you're trying to make a change and you're trying to teach for social justice and all that kind of stuff and um if it gets to a point where I can't so then, I don't know, we'll see.

(Interview, March 9, 2012)

Even with a fear of “landmines”, a colleague who was vocal about her criticism of his teaching, one negative parent email, and a student whom he described as “being really sheltered” because her mother does not allow her to watch Harry Potter, Dave chose to teach controversial topics to his students. Understanding and being aware of the potential “landmines” only fueled his decisions to include controversial topics further. While this is promising and counters previous findings about novice teachers avoiding controversial topics, Dave did censor certain issues. When I asked if there were any topics he avoided, he noted that he avoided talking about “homosexuality and gay rights” but that it was not completely off limits because of its importance in current events, something that he does every day with his students. Even at that, though, he stated,

I always cut it off and try and bring it back to the legal aspect of stuff just because I don't want to get into a discussion of morals just because I don't see it going anywhere and I see it splintering groups and making people feel bad...I kinda want to tiptoe around having that full out discussion. I feel like if I can mold it and put the spin on so we're only talking about it from like a legal aspect and like

the rights and whatever then I have more control over it. (Interview, March 9, 2012)

While he did not impose a complete ban on talking about LGBT issues, he did censor them. Only allowing their discussions to include the legal and rights-based interpretations limited the potential discussions for his students and prevented their full engagement with LGBT issues. Introducing these issues in a legalistic sense is a step toward a more equitable ideal and is better than censoring them completely; however, if the fear of “splintering groups” or “making people feel bad” directs the flow of a course, the resulting curriculum will be disappointingly anemic.

Dave’s growth throughout his preparatory year and his desire to include controversial topics in his classroom was unpredictable considering how focused he was on the operational aspects of teaching in his first few weeks of the program. Dave grew significantly throughout his preparatory year, and it is clear that he wanted his students to engage with controversial topics. Seemingly, Dave found more room in his curriculum than either Kimberly or Leah for the discussion of certain controversial topics. This difference is likely due to who Dave is as a teacher, but is also potentially connected to the community where he was teaching.

It is noteworthy that his student population was highly motivated, purposely attending an accelerated charter school, and had privileges that neither Kimberly nor Leah’s students experienced. With little economic hardship and high parent involvement, the daily struggle and lived experiences of prejudice were simply less dominant in the lives of most of Dave’s students. With their ability to focus on schoolwork and a teacher

who “bought in” to teaching for social justice through controversial issues, Dave’s students received more exposure to controversial issues and gender issues than either Kimberly or Leah’s students. While the context within which he was teaching was different, he still faced criticism and worked with people who did not share his views. It is also worth noting that Dave is the only male and the only person of color in the three focal students. Having been raised as a male in the United States surely afforded Dave a certain amount of confidence in his abilities and training; having worked through his positionality as a Korean and as an adoptee meant that Dave entered the program having already done a lot of the “hard work” of knowing who he was. These qualities, coupled with his willingness to learn and his “buying in,” afforded Dave enough courage to teach for social justice, even if he sometimes got it wrong, was criticized by a colleague, or still found certain issues difficult to teach. While far from perfect, it is in this that Dave showed one potential way for a novice teacher to begin engaging with controversial issues in his classroom.

## Chapter Eight: Conclusion

This is a study of how a group of preservice secondary social studies teachers talked about gender and gender issues in their methods courses. Seeing conversations through a feminist poststructural lens, I explored how they talked to one another about the taboo topic of sexual violence and how they saw themselves as gendered people. After following this cohort throughout their preparatory year, I then interviewed three focal students to see how they incorporated gender and gender issues into their first classrooms. Threaded throughout the findings are instances of upholding and transgressing the status quo, evidence of both great change and disappointing stagnation, and ultimately questions of where and how their views could have been troubled more.

In answering the question of how this group of preservice teachers talked about gender and gender issues, I came to understand the multiple and overlapping ways in which they spoke about gender. Through two of the three significant moments, the topic of sexual violence was highlighted as one that was talked about in multiple ways. Likely influenced by timing and the individual who was speaking, this topic was avoided, dismissed, uncertainly included, advocated for, emotionally talked about, and complicated with intersecting topics of race and social class. In the second of these moments I also found that the females appeared to re-voice the words of one of their instructors in an unusually emotional moment in their preparation. This connection still intrigues me. The third significant moment offered acute understanding into who these students saw themselves as becoming teachers and members of different cultural groups. With a primary finding that the females engaged with gender as a cultural group much

more than the males, this significant moment offers insight into how the female students see “being female” as something unique worth noting, and sadly, as something that for many of them is a source of tension in their lives. Like the moments of advocacy and inclusion in the first two significant moments, this moment also offers the example of Angie as a woman who did not articulate this tension and showed how being a female can be conceptualized differently. Throughout the program and after, as evidenced by the interviews with the three focal students, there were differing views of how much attention should be paid to gender and gender issues in the formal curriculum. After the program, when the participants were in classrooms of their own, how they spoke about gender in their classrooms varied greatly and leads to questions of whether the program pushed them to think about gender enough, and to what extent a teacher education program can truly prepare future teachers to teach about gender in schools. As I conclude this dissertation, I offer suggestions and implications for teacher education and research based upon these findings.

### **Implications for Teacher Education**

#### **Uneven Follow-Through**

One of the more disheartening findings present in the data is that the growth observed while students were earning their licensure was not necessarily maintained once they entered classrooms of their own, even though they all had been enrolled in a program that included gender issues as a topic of study throughout and even included either *Global and Multicultural Education in the Secondary Classroom* (CI 5746) or *Developing Civic Discourse in the Social Studies* (CI 5762) where controversial issues

were a focus in each curriculum. Both Kimberly and Leah seemed to regress in the way they addressed gender as a topic worthy of study; Kimberly found difficulty in identifying gendered topics present in the curriculum, and Leah found that other issues dominated the lives of her students to an extent that resulted in the diminishing of gender as a topic of study. Dave also found difficulty in the implementation of controversial issues, stating that his initial lessons often did not succeed in the ways that he predicted or planned and that he tended to avoid including LGBT topics. All three of the focal students showed growth and promise throughout the year in identifying gender or the gendered issue of sexual violence as topics that were worthy of study in the secondary social studies classroom; unfortunately, as of March of their first year of teaching, none of the students were able to report successful teaching of these topics. These findings build upon Lortie's (1975) "apprenticeship of observation" theory that novice teachers teach the way that they were taught in school, and Thornton's (2005) assertion that teacher education has less impact on how teachers teach than we would hope. These findings, however, are not as grim as they first appear. There was a glimmer of hope with the inclusion of gender in Dave's curriculum, even if initially it was not a clear success. Additionally, Leah indicated that she understood the importance of including gender, even if she was unsure as to how to best approach it with her students. The lesson here for teacher educators is one that connects to the importance and impact of relationship building. When the students were supported, pushed, troubled, and engaged intellectually with the methods of teaching in their university classrooms, they attempted to address controversial topics in their student teaching sites. Still, the growth that was seen at the

university was not maintained into their first year of teaching. The implication here is that ways must be found to encourage novice teachers to develop curricula in their first classrooms that will engage their students with topics surrounding gender, gender issues, and other controversial topics. If the bridge from preservice to in-service teaching of these topics is not created and our teachers feel unsupported, the risk for self-censorship is great.

### **Context Matters**

Another powerful finding particularly present in the interview data was the overwhelming significance of the context within which each participant taught. Leah, who taught in an urban charter school with students who were not successful in a comprehensive school environment, engaged in self-censorship surrounding LGBT issues because she was unable to determine how to teach about these topics with her students. Dave found these same issues to be the ones that he avoided, even though he taught highly compliant students motivated by in-school success in a charter school with significant academic freedom. Kimberly also engaged in self-censorship, but around the topic of religion because she found the topic to be too personal and emotionally charged. With the vast differences in these three educational contexts and all of the students unwilling to teach about at least one controversial issue, context and how to teach controversial topics with many different groups of students should be addressed in teacher education coursework, because ALL of our students deserve the opportunity to intellectually engage with ideas that are different from their own. The teaching of controversial issues is needed if we are to understand how we can best educate future

teachers to teach their students to grapple with ideas and topics that are uncomfortable, yet important in understanding the diversity of human experience. I ask: What are the possibilities when we ask our students to be personal and emotional in our classrooms? When the personal-political boundary is transgressed and our classrooms open to uncharted territory, what are the consequences and what are the potential outcomes? How can our classrooms serve as training grounds for students to enter a society where they are less afraid of engaging in democratic dialogue with those around them, and what can we do to prepare teachers, like Leah, to mitigate their reluctance of addressing topics with students who are from different cultures? And then, is it possible for our novice teachers to be prepared for such a heavy mantle or is this something that can only come with the confidence and security afforded by experience (and tenure)?

### **Pushing the Definition of Gender**

It is clear from the findings that gender was presented, viewed, and talked about in a binary way. While instances of a broader conceptualization of gender arose, as in an interactive lecture presented by a guest speaker on the Native articulation of Two Spirit people, the students and their instructors overwhelmingly maintained a binary approach to gender. This is not surprising considering the dominance of this view in mainstream U.S. culture and the absence of any trans people in the cohort or teaching faculty. However, the conceptualization of gender as binary is noteworthy because it is an indication of the current state of how gender is talked about within this group of people. The binary perspective of gender then frames – and limits – the conception of what gender equity entails.

Gender equity is something to be strived for – not something that has been achieved in the university or in the schools. We still treat women as a special group to pay attention to, as if being a woman is enough of a special distinction to warrant inclusion. In this way, this particular program seems to be attentive to the inclusion of women, yet falls short in implementing a vision of being appreciative of and able to relate to the experiences of people of all genders. Beyond the inclusion of women and their experiences, and building upon the binary iteration of gender, there is still the possibility of pushing the definition of gender to be inclusive of all genders and their expressions. If gender equity is to be truly achieved, the multiplicity of gender must be present in teacher education classrooms, syllabi, and research if it has a chance to be included in our K-12 classrooms. This demands that teacher educators articulate their stances on gender clearly and publicly if our students are to understand that they must as well. If we do not put gender into the forefront of our syllabi and activities, there is little hope that our students will when they graduate and teach in their own classrooms. This modeling is essential and one that can take a lesson from the successful implementation of race and ethnicity as topics worthy of study in teacher education standards and programs throughout the United States.

### **Implications for Research**

#### **Importance of Longitudinal Studies**

In this study, significant value and insight were gained with the addition of interviews with the focal students within their first year of teaching. Understanding not only their experiences throughout their preparatory program but also how their

development continued into their first year as licensed teachers offers a new perspective to the existing body of preservice social studies literature. Additional insight could be gained by interviewing these focal students throughout their induction years or through observations in their classrooms. This in-depth investigation into the process of becoming a teacher only offers potential for further insight and understanding. It is my hope that this work will encourage more longitudinal studies that follow students into their first years of teaching.

### **Reinvigorating Gender Study**

This study is additionally meaningful in that it reinvigorates gender as an area worthy of study in social studies. As has been asked before regarding gender equity in education, the “are we there yet?” question must be revisited if we are to understand our progress and map the path for the future. The answer to that question offered recently by Christine Woysner (2011) is that while progress in the last four decades can be documented, the need for teacher educators to be attentive to gender issues in their work with preservice teachers persists. The findings presented here concur with Woysner’s conclusion. Gender equity is still a goal worthy of attaining, but if we are to be truly equitable in our attention to gender, the conception of gender must be broadened. In fact, the question of “if we are there yet” perhaps might better be phrased as “what is the state of gender equity today and how do we know?” Assuming that gender equity is a place is limiting in that it is based upon the assumption that gender equity is a findable truth that once found cannot be lost or moved. Instead, I see gender equity as more of a moving target that can shift and change with the influence of people, places, time, and attention.

It is something that must be constantly worked toward and not something that can be seen as fixed or permanent. It is also clear here that the “gender equity is a battle that has been fought and won (by our mothers, mostly)” is a discourse that is, very simply, a myth. Also based upon an assumption that this violent ‘battle’ has ended, and actually has seen victory, this myth negates any need for ongoing attention and work to end gender-based oppression and is further based upon a binary definition of gender.

In a small way, this dissertation is intended to answer Carole Hahn, Jane Bernard-Powers, Margaret Smith Crocco, and Christine Woysner’s (2007) call for more attention to be given to the topic of gender in social studies education within preservice teacher education. By offering longitudinal insights and an understanding of how these students talked about gender and gender issues, I hope to build upon past knowledge one page at a time. Additionally, through the deconstruction of the participants’ words, I hope to have found the places and possibilities for reconstruction, which include the taboo topic of sexual violence, the binary conception of gender, and the prevalence of self-censorship among these beginning teachers. Through identifying these areas of weakness, further research can address and, I hope, find ways to fill these gaps.

Potential areas for further study regarding these topics include the investigation of how sexual violence and abuse are currently present in the social studies curriculum, including an in-depth investigation into memoirs and historical personal accounts that can be used to broaden the view of women’s experiences throughout history. How sexual violence appears as part of current events study in secondary classrooms could additionally inform understanding of how this topic emerges in schools. In connection to

the binary conception of gender, continued work into the teaching of the Two Spirit conception of gender can broaden the field while maintaining a direct connection to culture and history in social studies education. Finally, investigating self-censorship, including which teachers are more likely to censor which topics and why, will offer guidance for further development of pre- and inservice teacher education, which could help build confidence in teachers to teach taboo or controversial topics in research-based ways that benefit their students and schools.

### **Intersectionality**

Alone, gender does not make a person, but together with race, social class, religion, sexual orientation, immigrant status, ability, and many other subjectivities, the complexities of the individual exist (Collins, 2000). In this dissertation, I have focused closely on gender in hopes of gaining in-depth understanding into how this group of preservice teachers talked about this topic and those related to it. My goal of deeply understanding this can then inform how to best focus future efforts toward gender equity in hopes of moving toward a more just society. When people come together and interact in our schools and in our democracy, it is no wonder that these places become busy and even (delightfully) messy. While it is worthy to examine these individual subjectivities to gain in-depth understanding, as I have tried to do with gender here, my thought is that true insight into the complexity of the person can only be gained by investigating the intersections of these multiple pieces important to who we are. This is further work to be done and is important in social studies because of our charge for teaching citizens to operate within a pluralistic democracy. With greater understanding of these elements,

both for individuals and groups, the possibilities and potential for creating an anti-oppressive curriculum, inclusive instruction, and tolerant – or perhaps even accepting – classrooms, schools, and society opens.

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Appendix A<sup>3</sup>  
Interview Protocol<sup>4</sup>

1. Tell me about your current teaching position.
2. Can you describe the composition of your student body?
3. What do you see to be the most important job you have as a social studies teacher? What is it that you want your students to leave your class knowing?
4. As you know, I am interested in knowing about issues that can be controversial or difficult for students and teachers. What issues do you find to be controversial?
5. What kind of controversial issues come up most often in your classes?
6. What issues tend to cause the most controversy? How do you treat those issues in your classroom?
7. Are there issues that you tend to avoid discussing in your classroom?
8. Do you perceive any resistance to teaching issues that may cause controversy in the classroom? If so, from whom?
9. In your classroom, what, if anything, do you teach about gender or gender issues? Where does gender come up in your curriculum?
10. How might the composition of the student body influence what controversial issues you address and how you address them in your classes?
11. How would you describe the impact of the M.Ed. program on your practice as a teacher?
12. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about that we haven't already?

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<sup>3</sup> Page 40

<sup>4</sup> Some questions are adapted from King (2009).

Appendix B<sup>5</sup>  
Observation Protocol

Course Number  
Class session  
Date

Environmental Notes

Agenda

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Narrative field note

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Initial analysis

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Follow-up notes

Appendix C<sup>6</sup>  
Data Collection Subject Matrix Organized by Date, Course, and Topic

	Date	Gender	Race	Sexuality	Religion	Notes
CI 5741	6.23.10	x	x	x		text analysis/concepts
	6.28.10		x			lecture/unit planning
	6.30.10	xx	x			Harriet Jacobs; sexual violence
	7.7.10					
	7.12.10					
	7.14.10		x			citizenship
	7.19.10	x				GIRL activity
	7.21.10					Simulation/role play
	7.26.10					microteaching
	7.28.10					
	8.2.10					
	8.4.10					
CI 5742	9.7.10					introductions
	9.14.10				x	
	9.21.10				x	
	9.28.10	x		x	x	Guest: Two Spirit
	10.5.10					
	10.12.10					
	10.26.10				x	Student teaching notes & Firere
	11.2.10					Guest: Debates
	11.9.10					Guests: former teacher panel
	11.16.20	x	x	x	x	NCSS & CI/TIP
	11.23.10	xx	x	x	x	CRP/Multicultural self
	11.30.10					Best Practices/posters
	12.7.10	x	x			Professor Observes
	12.14.10					
CI 5745	4.14.11	x				Read NYT articles
	4.21.11	xx				Discuss NYT articles; sexual violence

x = Subject was talked about

xx = Subject was talked about for a lengthy period of time

Appendix D<sup>7</sup>

## Fairclough's (2001) Ten Questions for Critical Discourse Analysis

## Vocabulary:

## Question 1

What *experiential* values do words have?

- What classification schemes are drawn upon?
- Are there words which are ideologically contested?
- Is there *rewording* or *overwording*?
- What ideological significant meaning relations (*synonymy*, *hyponomy*, *antonomy*) are there between words?

## Question 2

What *relational* values do words have?

- Are there euphemistic expressions?
- Are there markedly formal or informal words?

## Question 3

What *expressive* values do words have?

## Question 4

What metaphors are used?

## Grammar:

## Question 5

What experiential values do grammatical features have?

- What types of *process* and *participants* dominate?
- Is agency unclear?
- Are processes what they seem?
- Are *nominalizations* used?
- Are sentences active or passive?
- Are sentences positive or negative?

## Question 6

What *relational* values do grammatical features have?

- What *modes* (*declarative grammatical question imperative*) are used?
- Are there important features of *relational modality*?
- Are the pronouns *we* and *you* used and if so how?

## Question 7

What *expressive* values do grammatical features have?

- Are there important features of *expressive modality*?

## Cohesion:

## Question 8

How are (simple) sentences linked together?

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<sup>7</sup> Page 48

- What logical connectors are used?
- Are complex sentences characterized by *coordination* or *subordination*?
- What means are used for referring inside and outside the text?

Text structures:

Question 9

What interactional conventions are used?

- Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?

Question 10

What larger-scale structures does the text have?

Appendix E<sup>8</sup>

## Transcription Conventions

.	a period indicates falling (final) intonation
,	a comma indicates low-rising intonation suggesting continuation
PP:	several or all participants talking simultaneously
<b>good</b>	<b>bold</b> letters indicates marked stress
(1second pause)	a pause of one second
Dave: [yes]	
Martin: [yeh]	simultaneous, overlapping talk by two speakers
(think)	single parentheses indicate unclear or probable item
[laughter]	verbal description of actions noted in the transcript, including non-verbal actions
((unintelligible))	indicates a stretch of talk that is unintelligible to the analyst

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Appendix F<sup>9</sup>  
The Unit Planning Assignment

From the syllabus:

Teaching Slavery: Curricular Unit and Lesson Plan

Three part project that involves a group book study and discussion, the creation of a collaborative curriculum unit and assessment task, and an individually written lesson plan focused on slavery in U.S. History.

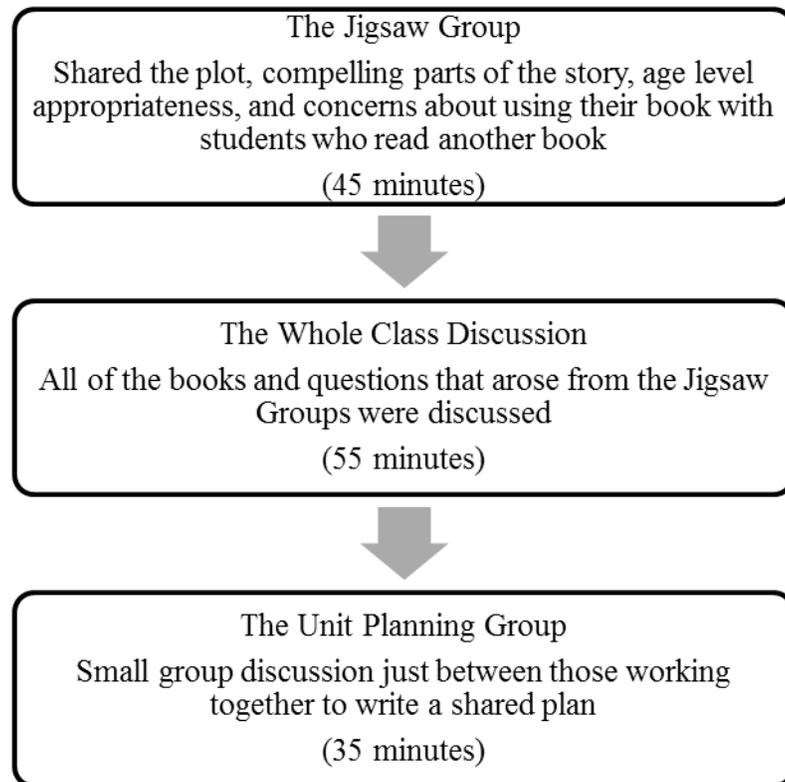
Oral instructions given in class:

For your assignment in this class, each group member will write one plan but the unit calendar and graphic organizer will be together. Each lesson on the calendar will have the concept, content, instructional strategy, resources/materials.

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Appendix G<sup>10</sup>  
Instructional Flow of the Lesson



Appendix H<sup>11</sup>  
 Discussion Participants, Separated by Book Read and Unit Planning Group

Participants who read <i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i> , separated by unit planning groups	Participants who read other books on American Slavery
Greta <sup>12</sup> Isaac Rebecca	Angie Emily Evan Geoff Maddy
Dave John Kimberly	

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<sup>11</sup> Page 53

<sup>12</sup> All pseudonyms are listed alphabetically

Appendix I<sup>13</sup>

*New York Times* Articles Read in CI 5745

March 8, 2011

## Vicious Assault Shakes Texas Town

By [JAMES C. MCKINLEY Jr.](#)

CLEVELAND, Tex. — The police investigation began shortly after [Thanksgiving](#), when an elementary school student alerted a teacher to a lurid cellphone video that included one of her classmates.

The video led the police to an abandoned trailer, more evidence and, eventually, to a roundup over the last month of 18 young men and teenage boys on charges of participating in the gang rape of an 11-year-old girl in the abandoned trailer home, the authorities said.

Five suspects are students at Cleveland High School, including two members of the basketball team. Another is the 21-year-old son of a school board member. A few of the others have criminal records, from selling drugs to robbery and, in one case, manslaughter. The suspects range in age from middle schoolers to a 27-year-old.

The case has rocked this East Texas community to its core and left many residents in the working-class neighborhood where the attack took place with unanswered questions. Among them is, if the allegations are proved, how could their young men have been drawn into such an act?

“It’s just destroyed our community,” said Sheila Harrison, 48, a hospital worker who says she knows several of the defendants. “These boys have to live with this the rest of their lives.”

The attack’s details remained unclear. The police have declined to discuss their inquiry because it is continuing. The whereabouts of the victim and her mother were not made public.

The allegations first came to light just after Thanksgiving, when a child who knows the victim told a teacher she had seen a videotape of the attack on a cellphone, said Stacey Gatlin, a spokeswoman for the Cleveland Independent School District.

The school district's security department interviewed the girl, 11, who is a student at Cleveland Middle School, and her mother. The security department determined that a rape had taken place, but not on school property, and then handed the matter over to the police, Ms. Gatlin said.

On Dec. 9, the police obtained a search warrant to go through a house on Travis Street and a nearby trailer that had been abandoned for at least two years. An affidavit filed to support the search warrant said the girl had been forced to have sex with several men in both places on Nov. 28 and cited pictures and videos as proof, according to [The Houston Chronicle](#).

The affidavit said the assault started after a 19-year-old boy invited the victim to ride around in his car. He took her to a house on Travis Street where one of the other men charged, also 19, lived. There the girl was ordered to disrobe and was sexually assaulted by several boys in the bedroom and bathroom. She was told she would be beaten if she did not comply, the affidavit said.

A relative of one of the suspects arrived, and the group fled through a back window. They then went to the abandoned mobile home, where the assaults continued. Some of those present recorded the sexual acts on their telephones, and these later were shown among students.

Residents in the neighborhood where the abandoned trailer stands — known as the Quarters — said the victim had been visiting various friends there for months. They said she dressed older than her age, wearing makeup and fashions more appropriate to a woman in her 20s. She would hang out with teenage boys at a playground, some said.

“Where was her mother? What was her mother thinking?” said Ms. Harrison, one of a handful of neighbors who would speak on the record. “How can you have an 11-year-old child missing down in the Quarters?”

Cleveland, a town of 9,000, lies about 50 miles northeast of Houston in the pine country, near the picturesque [Sam Houston National Forest](#). The town's economy has always rested on timber, cattle, farming and oil. But there are pockets of poverty, and in the neighborhood where the assault occurred, well-kept homes sit beside boarded-up houses and others with deteriorating facades.

The abandoned trailer where the assault took place is full of trash and has a blue tarp hanging from the front. Inside there is a filthy sofa, a disconnected stove in the middle of the living room, a broken stereo and some forlorn Christmas decorations. A copy of the search warrant was on a counter in the kitchen next to some abandoned family pictures.

The arrests have left many wondering who will be taken into custody next. Churches have held prayer services for the victim. The students who were arrested have not returned to school, and it is unclear if they ever will. Ms. Gatlin said the girl had been transferred to another district. "It's devastating, and it's really tearing our community apart," she said. "I really wish that this could end in a better light."

Mauricio Guerrero contributed reporting from Houston.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/09/us/09assault.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/09/us/09assault.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print)

March 28, 2011

## 3-Month Nightmare Emerges in Rape Inquiry

By [JAMES C. MCKINLEY](#) and [ERICA GOODE](#)

CLEVELAND, Tex. — A year ago, the 11-year-old girl who the police say was the victim of repeated gang rapes in this East Texas town was an outgoing honor roll student, brimming with enthusiasm, who went on hikes and planted trees with a youth group here.

“She has always been a really bubbly child,” said Brenda Myers, director of the [Community and Children’s Impact Center](#), who worked with her. “She always had a smile on her face.”

But in October, just after starting sixth grade, the girl became withdrawn, Ms. Myers said, and in November, she stopped attending the center’s meetings.

What happened during those months is the subject of a criminal investigation that has sent waves of shock and sorrow through this impoverished town and has provoked anger across the nation.

The police say the girl was raped on at least six occasions, from Sept. 15 to Dec. 3. Nineteen boys and men, ages 14 to 27, have been charged in connection with the rapes, the most recent arrest last Wednesday.

Court documents and dozens of interviews over several weeks with the girl’s family, her friends and neighbors, as well as those who know the defendants, provide a more complete picture of what occurred as well as a deeper portrait of the victim. What begins to emerge is the nightmarish ordeal of a young girl over two and a half months involving an eclectic group of young men, some with criminal records, who shared a powerful neighborhood bond.

In his first interview, with The New York Times, the father of the girl, a 57-year-old carpenter named Juan, said he became aware of his daughter’s abuse in late November, when she arrived home at 3 or 4 a.m. after having slipped out without permission. She was shaking and weeping when her mother opened the door to their small white frame house, he said, and she immediately closed herself in her room.

Later in the day, she told her mother she had been raped after her parents found sexually explicit photos that had been sent to her father’s cellphone, which she had been using. She told her father that the men had threatened to kill her.

Juan, whose last name is being withheld to protect his daughter's identity, said his wife reported the crime to the police three days later, but in court documents the Cleveland Police Department said it was first alerted on Dec. 3 by school authorities.

Juan said his daughter had been a bright and easygoing girl, adept at schoolwork. As she reached puberty, he said, she had grown tall for her age and had begun to talk about wanting to be a fashion model. Yet she was still a child; her bed was piled high with stuffed animals. "Her mind is a child's mind," he said. "That's what makes me so angry."

The arrests have raised fundamental questions about how a girl might have been repeatedly abused by many men and boys in a tightly knit community without any adult intervening, or even seeming to register that something was amiss, until sexually explicit videos of the victim began circulating in local schools.

"It wasn't that anyone was asleep," said the Rev. Travis Hulett Jr., the pastor of the New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, which anchors the Precinct 20 neighborhood where most of the defendants live. "You can be awake and see things and still not do anything."

The Cleveland police and the local district attorney have released little information about the alleged rapes and the evidence, and their silence has allowed rumor and speculation to flourish. Judge Mark Morefield of State District Court issued a broad order two weeks ago prohibiting law enforcement officials, defense lawyers, potential witnesses and relatives of the girl and defendants from speaking about the case to reporters.

According to court documents, the police seized the telephones of three men arrested, and the father of the girl said his family's phones and computer were taken for evidence, as well. Eighteen defendants have pleaded not guilty; the 19th has yet to be arraigned.

The police interviewed the girl in early December, after school security officials heard rumors about sexually explicit videos circulating among the students. Then an elementary school student told a school employee she had seen pictures of the girl having sex with two young men, one of them a high school basketball star.

The girl, a sixth grader whose parents are immigrants from Mexico, told investigators that one of the defendants called her on Sunday, Nov. 28, during the Thanksgiving break, and asked if she wanted "to ride around," according to four police search warrant affidavits.

That defendant, Eric B. McGowen, 19, who was on probation for burglary, and two other male teenagers picked her up at her house, and took her to a house in Precinct 20, the affidavits said. The wooded community is a hodgepodge of small houses, trailers and

churches, bordered on two sides by railroad tracks and on a third by a prison. Everyone is related by blood or friendship.

The girl was taken to a blue house with white trim and a heart-shaped welcome sign — a house with a troubled history. The head of the household, Rayford T. Ellis, has a long criminal record and is a registered sex offender; one of his sons, Authur Ellis, 27, was arrested this year on murder charges. Neither man is charged in this case.

The police say a younger son, Rayford T. Ellis Jr., 19, an iron worker known as Mookie, shot and killed a teenager at the same house in August 2008. The younger Rayford Ellis was awaiting trial on manslaughter charges when he was arrested in early February on charges that he had raped the girl. (He has fathered at least five children with four young women, according to paternity suits.)

It is unclear from the affidavits if the younger Mr. Ellis was there the night of Nov. 28. But the girl said that a cousin, Timothy D. Ellis, 19, was there, and ordered her to strip, telling her that he would “have some girls beat her up” and would not drive her home if she refused, the affidavits said.

The affidavits said the girl told investigators that she then “engaged in sexual intercourse and oral sex” with several of the men present, among them Jared G. McPherson, 18, a high school basketball player, and Jared L. Cruse, also 18, who has since been charged with robbing a grocery store in the next county.

During the sexual assault, the girl said, she heard Mr. McGowen call someone on the phone and invite him to the house to have sex with her, the affidavits said. Four more men whom she did not know arrived.

The assault was interrupted when Timothy Ellis’s aunt arrived at the house, the affidavits said, and the men took the girl out a back window to a squalid abandoned trailer a block away, where the sexual attack continued. Her underwear was left behind.

According to indictments, one man accused of participating was Kelvin R. King, 21, who was out on bond while awaiting trial on rape and robbery charges. Another was Marcus A. Porchia, 26, who worked at a local mental health clinic. Yet another, Isaiah R. Ross, 21, the son of a local school board member, was also present at the Nov. 28 rape, according to a search warrant affidavit for his telephone.

The November assault was not isolated, court documents say. Mr. King’s brother, Xavier M. King, 17, and Devo Shaun Green, 20, are accused of raping the girl on Sept. 15. Mr. McGowen and two others — Jamarcus N. Napper, 18, and Cedric DeRay Scott, 27 — are charged with sexually assaulting her on Oct. 25. Carlos B. Ligons, 22, is charged with sexually assaulting her on Dec. 1. The last indictment, released Monday,

accuses Walter J. Harrison, 26, of raping her on Dec. 1 and Dec. 3. The police released no details about those episodes.

Four of the defendants are charged with continuous sexual abuse of a young child. The rest are charged with a single count of aggravated sexual assault of a child under 14. Both felonies carry a sentence of 25 years to life in prison. In Texas, a child under 17 cannot give legal consent and, as in most states, ignorance of a child's age is not a legal defense.

Bertha Cleveland, an aunt of Mr. Cruse, said her nephew went to church regularly, held down a job at McDonald's and had told her he intended to go to college. "Our younger generation is running rampant," she said. "The devil is in full control."

Residents of Precinct 20 were torn between condemning the crime and defending the young men. Several expressed doubt that all of them were guilty. The grandmother of Mr. Napper said he was out of town at the time of the assaults.

Xavier King, a high school student accused in the Sept. 15 rape, told The New York Times that he did not know the girl and that he thought he had been arrested because "the people I hang with probably said my name, and if they go down, I go down with them."

The small house where the girl lived is on a dusty road on the outskirts of town, about 10 miles from Precinct 20. There were chickens in the yard and a trampoline out front, where her father sometimes slept during the afternoons. She lived there with her parents, two older sisters who were in high school and a younger brother.

A 36-year-old cousin of the girl, who lived next door, said her family was in dire economic straits since Juan stopped working. The water and electricity had been cut off at times in recent months.

The house is empty now. Two weeks ago, the family moved to another town after detectives told the parents that they were in danger, Juan said.

The father said he had been worried about his daughter's safety for months before the assaults. She had been sneaking out of the house two or three nights a week, he said, climbing out a bedroom window. Some nights she would come home as late as 11 p.m. or midnight, saying she had visited girlfriends. He said he and his wife had scolded her almost daily.

Both parents are plagued with health problems. Juan injured his back in November 2009 and has not held a steady job since. A diabetic, he receives disability checks of \$700 a month. His wife, 42, was told last year that she had a mass in her brain, and a doctor had

said it should be removed, friends said. She suffers frequent headaches and fainting spells.

Yet she put off surgery and continued to work at night as a cashier at an underground gambling parlor, friends said. “She wasn’t interested in living,” said Maria Luisa Lopez, a longtime friend. “She felt very sad.”

Two months ago, when the arrests started, the state Child Protective Services placed the girl, who had also received threats, in a foster home. “They told her it was best that they take her away from this town,” Ms. Lopez said.

A case worker has informed Juan that he and his wife must attend family therapy sessions to regain custody. Juan said he was despondent at the prospect of losing his daughter permanently. He said that she was doing well but that she was still fearful. “You can see she’s not happy,” he said. Then he added, “She will never recover from this.”

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