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# Preservice, Secondary Social Studies Teachers' Perceptions of Gender Equity

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Preservice, secondary social studies teachers' perceptions of gender equity

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The United States is a patriarchal society<sup>1</sup> (Lerner, 1986). The most powerful national institutions continue to operate in the public sector (political, economic, and military) and are dominated by male citizens and supportive of traditionally male attributes, such as aggression, competition, and strength (Lerner, 1986; Noddings, 1991/1992). While American women have made significant gains over the past century in their struggle to have their perspectives and experiences recognized, their progress has largely been measured through increased inclusion into traditional social structures, rather than by the reshaping of American life into a gender balanced society (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). Sectors traditionally dominated by female Americans, namely social and private institutions, continue to endure a secondary and more marginal status (Noddings, 1991/1992). While females are increasingly represented in positions of power and prestige in the American government, economy, and military, their presence is not indicative of the greater American populace and is still considered an exceptional accomplishment.

For at least the past two decades, the rhetoric of equality has surrounded American females. Young American women have never known a world without feminism<sup>2</sup> (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). For them, “Feminism is like fluoride. [They] scarcely know that [they] have it- it’s simply in the water” (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 17). In many ways, the constant barrage of empowering messages may be viewed positively as an effort to steep young women in a belief of their own limitless potential. However such discourse must also be viewed with caution, given the reality that gender inequities endure. The obvious danger lurks in encouraging young women and men to become accustomed to seeing equality where inequality exists. Such a perspective might prevent an individual from recognizing that their “limitless potential” is, in fact, bounded by societal injustices and not entirely by personal failings. This tendency is

compounded by the powerful, yet subtle nature of contemporary gender biases (Lundeberg, 1997).

Contemporary American feminism, while still active and strong, has simultaneously become less visible and mainstream (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). According to Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, Susan Faludi (1991), the quieting of the American women's movement has largely been the result of a conservative "backlash" against issues of equity in the 1980s and early 1990s. Faludi cites several examples of feminism being systematically tempered by the media, the government, and other vehicles of popular culture<sup>3</sup>. From more subtle examples, such as movies and books that present the American feminist as a bitter, man-hating radical, to more overt attacks, such as Pat Robertson's assertion that, "Feminists encourage women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, become lesbians, and destroy capitalism" (in Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p.61). Feminism has, quite simply, become a bad word. This negative connotation is clearly demonstrated by women's general endorsement of feminist ideals- but widespread rejection of the "feminist" label (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). This backlash is also reflected in American education (Sadker & Sadker, 1994), where the topic of gender equity in the schools and in the classroom seems to have fallen into a period of neglect (Hahn, Bernard-Powers, Crocco & Woyshner, 2007), despite the persistence of gender inequalities in American classrooms (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

The social studies, in particular, have been heavily critiqued for a glacially slow reaction to issues of gender equity in regards to curriculum, classroom materials, and teacher practices (Hahn et al., 2007; Bernard-Powers, in Gaskell & Willinsky, 1995). According to Hahn et al (2007), gender equity and other gender issues now exist in a "holding pattern" in the social studies (p.350). This is especially disturbing given the potential that exists within the social

studies curriculum to address issues of injustice and to question oppressive societal structures (Crocco, 2001). As Crocco (2001) states, “ Social studies educators are in a unique position to consider gender...because of their defining interest in citizenship education” (p.66). Research has demonstrated that students’ gender consciousness can be raised in secondary classrooms where gender-related topics have been given explicit attention (Tetreault, 1986b). Women’s studies courses, in particular, have been shown to be powerful agents to combat sexism and the acceptance of unfair gender roles (e.g. Harris, Melaas, & Rodacker, 1999; Howe, 1995; Stake et al., 1994; Stake & Rose, 1994). Unfortunately, these classes are rarely offered in American middle or high schools, which is why the vast majority of this research has been conducted at the post-secondary level.

Given the evidence of persistent gender bias in curricular materials, such as the national standards and textbooks, the responsibility for addressing issues of gender and gender equity falls heavily on the social studies teacher. Unfortunately, research has found that social studies teachers overwhelmingly favor textbook based instruction (Hahn et al., 2007) and often fail to adapt their curriculum to include gender equity (Hahn, 1996; Tetreault, 1986a). Explanations for this phenomenon are difficult to identify. Is this pattern simply a matter of convenience or time? Do teachers defer to the textbook’s authority? Do teachers lack the pedagogical knowledge needed to address such issues? Or is it that teachers fail to recognize gender equity as a significant issue?

This situation is made even more complicated by the fact that existing research has largely been conducted with teacher participants who were witnesses to the Women’s Rights Movement of the 1960s and 70s. One might assume that gender equity issues could be “on their radar”, so to speak. Teachers who are currently emerging from teacher education programs,

however, were largely born in the late 1980s, a time in which teacher education had also “quieted” in its approach to gender equity. Contemporary research, which will be reviewed at length in the pages that follow, suggests gender equity is given only marginal status in most programs (Brown, 2000; Campbell & Sanders, 1997; Sanders, 2002). Thus, while the responsibility for addressing gender inequities hinges on the classroom teacher, these young educators have never known a life without feminism and its victories, nor have many of them been formally confronted with these issues. How do they feel about gender equity issues? Do they feel that gender equity is a significant issue in their own classrooms or in their own lives? This study seeks to examine these very questions. Specifically, this study examines the perceptions of a sample of pre-service, secondary social studies teachers in regards to gender equity in their classrooms and their own lives. The following research question will be pursued:

- How do pre-service, secondary social studies teachers perceive gender equity?

Additionally, the following secondary research questions will be examined:

- How have these perceptions been informed by the participants’ individual life experiences?
- What other factors have contributed to the development of the participants’ current gender perceptions?

### Theoretical Framework

This study is framed by a poststructural feminist perspective, heavily influenced by St. Pierre’s (2000) comprehensive application of this theoretical approach to the field of education. Over the last thirty years, poststructuralism has emerged as a response to the fixed and unwavering assumptions of humanism, asserting that societal structures, which humanism assumes to be intrinsic, are unfixed, human creations (Schwandt, 2001; St. Pierre, 2000).

Although an “uneasy tension” has always existed between poststructuralism and feminism (St. Pierre, 2000, p.477), these two theoretical approaches have often been combined as “...feminists have found [in poststructuralism] possibilities for different worlds that might, perhaps, not be so cruel to so many people” (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p.1). Indeed, although poststructuralism is both complex and weighty, it offers a means for the examining and deconstructing everyday events and commonplace situations (St. Pierre, 2000). This attribute is of particular interest to feminist scholars for whom women’s ordinary lives provide the most compelling evidence of inequalities (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). This is certainly the case for this study, which examines how preservice teachers’ perceptions of gender equity in the social studies classroom and their own lives have developed within societal structures, both at the macrolevel (e.g. patriarchy) and microlevel (e.g. teacher education programs).

Poststructural feminism also provides a sense of agency and urgency that feminist theory alone often fails to deliver. Feminist perspectives, in general, focus on the central beliefs that gender inequalities exist in society that are detrimental to women, that these inequalities should be analyzed, and that gender equality should be promoted through a greater awareness of the female experience (Blackman, 2003). Adding poststructuralism to these general feminist assumptions provides scholars with a framework through which gender inequities can be both analyzed and deconstructed. Viewing the patriarchy or male/female binary as socially constructed, rather than as “taken-for-granted truths” allows these structures to be dismantled and changed (Schwandt, 2001, p.203). Additionally, poststructural feminism places the responsibility for change squarely on the individual’s shoulders (St. Pierre, 2000). For many scholars, the possibilities this perspective allows for are nothing less than “energizing” (i.e. Butler, 1995 in St. Pierre, 2000).

Poststructural feminism demands that individuals be both conscious of damaging social structures and seek to undo them, theorizing, in a sense, the feminist “click”<sup>4</sup>. This belief powerfully supports the goals of this study, which seeks to determine preservice teachers ability and/or willingness to perceive such social conditions. It is important to examine how preservice teachers view social structures and the role that they play in their personal and professional lives. No doubt these perspectives will inform their interactions with their students, colleagues, and subject area content. This examination is particularly urgent for preservice, social studies teachers whose courses and classrooms are often seen as the venue for developing well-informed democratic citizens. In this sense, social studies teachers play a powerful role in developing future generations views on important societal structures.

#### Review of the Literature

Within this poststructural feminist framework, contemporary literature regarding gender equity in the schools, the social studies, and teacher education programs will now be considered to situate this study within a relevant research base.

##### *Gender equity in schools*

In 1992, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) issued a disturbing report on the status of gender equality in the American K-12 educational system. In their publication, titled “How Schools Shortchange Girls” the AAUW charged that American girls were receiving an education that was markedly inferior to that of their male peers. The group based their claims on curricular biases, such as stereotypical or insufficient female perspectives; classroom inequalities, whereby more attention and feedback was being given to male students; and gaps in achievement, particularly in math and science. The inflammatory nature of this report prompted a mild flurry of research in the area of gender and education; however, the issue

was quickly subsumed by other disciplines, such as multiculturalism, which were more apt to attract federal funding (Hahn et al, 2007).

In many ways, gender inequity is firmly entrenched in American classrooms (Fry, 2003). Researchers have found that male students often dominate classroom discussions, participate more frequently and more aggressively, and tend to receive more direct feedback from teachers than their female peers (Lundeberg, 1997; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). These types of inequalities are often so subtle that they go unrecognized by classroom teachers or the students. However, research has shown that they can be illuminated through intentional classroom observations (Brown, 2000; Lundeberg, 1997). Troublingly, this research has also revealed that many educators perceived these inequalities as the *student's* responsibility, not the teacher's. As Lundeberg writes, "Their reason typically goes something like this: How can a teacher help it if only male students want to speak? Or if male students raise their hand first? It isn't the teacher's fault that the female students feel too insecure to speak up" (p.2). This is an indication of the complexity of gender equity in the classroom. As the authority figures in their classrooms, teachers have to become conscious of their role in perpetuating gender-biased practices. Thus, a classroom that exemplifies gender equity would exhibit fair policies towards both male and female students and present curricula with which both males and females could identify. At minimum, care would be taken to employ gender-neutral language, gender balanced visuals, and non-biased evaluation procedures (Brown, 2000). Although often unintentional, these patterns of discrimination serve to undermine female students' overall potential (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Silber in Brown, 2000).

*Gender equity in the social studies*

Traditionally, the assigned social studies curriculum favors a Protestant, white, male perspective. This is particularly true for courses, such as United States history, where the dominant narrative has tended to mirror the male perspective of history and is often portrayed as universal. According to educational philosopher Nel Noddings, (1991/1992, 1992) the social studies curriculum is inherently biased by the masculine nature of its focus on political history. For example, a standard course in American history typically emphasizes government, military, and economic institutions that remained closed to women for the better part of the nation's past. Thus, Noddings contends that women's lives and efforts go unrecognized, since they are not valued by the tradition. A new tradition, valuing the private sphere, pacifism, spirituality, and/or the role of the family in citizenship, would need to be developed in order to place equal value on women's contributions (Noddings, 1992).

Such radical adjustments seem unlikely given the resilience of the social studies against change (Bernard-Powers, 1996). However, some researchers have suggested that powerful results are possible if women's topics are infused throughout the curriculum (Cruz & Groendal-Cobb, 1998; Dam & Rijkschoeff, 1996). This approach appears to be particularly effective in regards to female students' attitudes towards history. Several smaller studies have revealed more positive female attitudes towards a social studies curriculum that explicitly includes women's history (Cruz & Groendal-Cobb, 1998; Dam & Rijkschoeff, 1996; Marcus & Monaghan, in press). This is particularly noteworthy given a number of studies suggesting that many teachers do not consider women's history, and its related topics, to be a priority (Brown, 2000; Cruz & Groendal-Cobb, 1998; Dam & Rijkschoeff, 1996; Hlebowitsh & Tellez, 1993).

Thus, current research not only suggests that gender inequalities exist within the social studies curriculum, but that conscious efforts by the classroom teacher to remedy this inequality may result in greater feelings of connectedness between the content and female students.

In the recently published *Handbook for Achieving Gender Equity through Education*, Hahn et al (2007) provide a comprehensive review of research focused on gender equity and the social studies. These researchers asserted that, “The research synthesized here suggests that attention to gender in social studies has been partial, sporadic, and ebbing in recent years” (p.335). Overall these authors, who represent some of the most well-established scholars in the field, concluded that the social studies has entered a “holding pattern” in regards to issues of gender and gender equity (Hahn et al., 2007, p.350). These authors cite numerous factors contributing to this lost momentum, including the general decreased emphasis on social studies (largely non-tested subjects) in an era of high stakes testing, the assumption that gender equality has been achieved, the misplacement of gender issues under the umbrella of multiculturalism, and decreased federal funding for gender-related research (Hahn et al, 2007).

Comparing the current findings to those released in the 1985 version of the handbook<sup>5</sup>, Hahn et al (2007) identified evidence of some progress, especially in terms of sex differences in student achievement in the social studies. Overall, the researchers concluded that very few major differences exist between male and female students in terms of their knowledge, skills and attitudes towards social studies. However, significant gender inequities still persist when the research on curriculum standards and textbooks are analyzed. Research pertaining to these two elements will be considered in-depth below.

*Curriculum standards.* Following a review of research examining national and state curricula standards in the social studies, Hahn et al (2007) concluded that these documents are mostly silent with regards to women and gender-issues (p. 342). This is largely due to the

documents' overwhelmingly traditional interpretation of the historical record. Approaching these subjects from a perspective that favors political, military, or economic events makes it very difficult to infuse women in meaningful ways (Hahn et al., 2007). At the same time, merely changing the standard's language to reflect a more gender inclusive attitude (i.e. "common man" to "common person") does little to authentically balance the topics that are being given significance (McKenna, 1989, in Hahn et al., 2007, p. 343).

The political atmosphere surrounding the so-called "history wars", which resulted from the creation of competing national standards, adds an interesting dimension to Faludi's (1991) belief in a political "backlash" against feminism and gender equity. In 1994, the National Center for History in the Schools released its first version of the *National Standards for History*. This document was immediately subjected to intense criticism from a variety of strong political actors and organizations. Among the most incensed of the detractors was Lynne Cheney, the former president of the National Endowment for the Humanities, who vehemently railed against the standards in a series of editorial letters published in *The Wall Street Journal*. In a letter, which appeared on October 20, 1994, Cheney condemned the document. Chapin (1995) summarized Cheney's editorial saying the standards were "...a too gloomy picture of America, one that's too critical of all things white and too uncritical of all things brown, black and other" (p.8). In Cheney's opinion, the National Center for History in the Schools presented an overly liberal, negative, and unpatriotic slant of American History (Chapin, 1995). In 1994, the *Curriculum Standards for the Social Studies*, were developed by the National Council for the social studies and are now more widely used and accepted.

*Textbooks.* Research examining gender equity in social studies textbooks has overwhelmingly concentrated itself on the frequency with which women and women's issues are included as compared to men. Over the past 30 years, many studies have demonstrated an

obvious lack of attention to women in high school texts (Clark, Ayton, Frechette, & Keller, 2005; Hahn et al., 2007; Tetreault, 1986a), while also documenting mediocre improvements in both gender inclusive language and frequency of mention. For example, Clark et al (2005) analyzed six of the most commonly used textbooks from the 1960s, 1980s and 1990s and found that women appeared more frequently over time. This increased presence, however, was a gain from a ratio of 3.2 women for every 100 men in the 1960s to 10.6 women for every 100 men in the 1990s (Clark et al., 2005).

Further analysis has led many researchers to criticize the *quality* of material included to present a more gender-balanced text. As Loewen (1995) articulates, “Mentioning is part of the problem” (p.313). Tetreault (1986a), for example, found that women were frequently mentioned for their roles in supporting male leaders or for their role as nurturers within the family. Given the fact that textbooks are often perceived as having the authority of the school behind them, these biases can have damaging consequences (Tetreault, 1986a). Female students, unable to recognize themselves in the textbook narrative, may become apathetic and fail to develop a sense of their own history (Sadker & Sadker, 1991, in Clark et al., 2005).

Evidence of a more conservative defense also appears in the debate over textbook content. An article appearing in *The Social Studies Review* in 1992 offered arguments in favor of a more traditional view of history and contends that it is simply the nature of history, which prevents an equitable mention of women. The author<sup>6</sup> writes, “In politics and economics, which encase us all, men have until very recently played an almost exclusive leadership role” (p.4). This defense is furthered by the argument that it is not the role of textbook to address issues such as gender equity, claiming, “Textbooks are conceived to convey grammar and spelling,

numeracy, the foundations of democratic civilization, and more. They are designed to instruct, not act as remedies for human and social failings” (p.4).

In spite of the myriad of opinions surrounding the appropriate content of textbooks, the research is clear on their overwhelming use by teachers to guide social studies instruction (Hahn et al., 2007). Therefore, if these texts promote gender-biased perspectives, it is likely that social studies teachers will reinforce these biases in the classroom. This might be avoided if teacher education programs instruct their pre-service candidates to recognize and combat gender inequities in the classroom and the curriculum. This issue will be further examined in the following section.

#### *Gender equity in teacher education programs*

Although often regarded as an important and worthwhile topic by teacher educators, there is a severe lack of attention to gender equity in teacher education programs (Brown, 2000; Campbell & Sanders, 1997; Sanders, 2002). On average, teacher educators report themselves as interested, but uninformed, in regards to gender equity (Campbell & Sanders, 1997). This has resulted in scant coverage of gender equity in the classrooms and a perception of the topic as marginal (Campbell & Sanders, 1997). In fact, upon surveying 353 science, math, and technology methods instructors, Campbell and Sanders (1997) found that while three-fourths of the participants felt that gender equity was an important topic, most devoted less than two hours discussing it in class. In addition, the majority of this class time was spent discussing the problems of inequity, not solutions or classroom strategies that might be used to overcome them (Sanders, 2002). Although social studies teacher educators may be more likely to include gender equity issues in their methods classes, research documenting this practice is unavailable.

Common constraints, such as time, program limitations, and state requirements, often hinder the inclusion of gender issues in teacher education programs (Brown, 2000; Campbell & Sanders, 1997). These topics also suffer from vague definitions and parameters. Most teacher educators can reach consensus around a notion of “fairness” in regards to gender issues, but it is unclear how that should translate into the teacher education classroom. For some, encouraging pre-service teachers to treat all of their students equally might be sufficient, while others might choose to examine, question, and rethink dominant societal ideology (Brown, 2000). Such broad possibilities encourage gender issues to be given either a mere cursory mention or to be seen as too far beyond the scope of a class to be included at all.

Student resistance to the topic of gender equity is also a significant barrier (Brown, 2000; Campbell & Sanders, 1997). Pre-service teachers, in general, have displayed a resistance to social justice issues, which they perceive outside their immediate teaching concerns (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2001). The ability to recognize gender bias, in particular, continues to be problematic in contemporary American society (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; Brown, 2000; Lundeberg, 1997). For American women, many of whom view themselves as strong and liberated, admitting the presence of gender bias is very difficult to accept. Young women, especially, often demonstrate a refusal to recognize gender inequities in their own lives and a reluctance to recognize it in the lives of other women (Brown, 2000; Campbell & Sanders, 1997; Lundeberg, 1997). As the authors of the groundbreaking book *Manifesta* put it, “[Recognition means] addressing uncomfortable topics: the humiliation of being discriminated against, the fact that we are vulnerable when we walk home at night or even in our homes, or the sadness of discovering that the sons in our families are treated altogether differently from the daughters. Injustice and oppression are hard to face...” (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p.61).

Gender bias in the classroom, as well as in society, cannot be combated if the ability to recognize inequities, however subtle, does not exist. Research has shown that this ability may be developed through intentional observation and analysis with a gender lens (Brown, 2000; Lundeberg, 1997). Teacher education programs represent the ideal venue for such observation and analysis to take place.

Given the power of teacher education programs to shape pre-service teachers' ideas, values, and practice, the lack of attention to gender issues is significant (Brown, 2000; Lundeberg, 1997). It is simply not enough to assume that a pre-service teacher's "good intentions" will be sufficient to create and sustain a non-biased classroom (Campbell & Sanders, 1997; Lundeberg, 1997). These intentions must be supported by teacher education programs that instruct pre-service educators to recognize patterns of discrimination, which might occur in interactions, content, and pedagogy in their classrooms (Brown, 2000). Without this support, novice teachers may in fact "...inadvertently harm girls' performance and aspirations" (Campbell & Sanders, 1997).

This study examines how these various elements have come together to shape preservice teachers' perceptions of gender equity in their classroom and their own lives. Research demonstrates that the assumption that gender inequities are either nonexistent, harmless, or will be naturally remedied by the classroom teacher is dangerous and wholly unsupported by the evidence. It is essential to pause and examine our future teachers to determine their opinions regarding these issues.

## Methods and Procedures

### *Data Collection*

This study was designed for the purpose of conducting basic research within the qualitative paradigm (Patton, 2002). Case study methodology was determined to be the ideal design for this study given that it is “the preferred strategy when ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon with some real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 1). According to Merriam (1998) it is essential that the boundaries of “the case” be clearly defined. The following criteria were used to establish case boundaries and generate a participant sample:

- ***Post-secondary education.*** Consistent enrollment in the Integrated Bachelor’s/Master’s Program (IBM) for secondary, social studies educators at Northeastern State University
- ***Age, Professional experience.*** “Traditional” 5<sup>th</sup> year, master’s student
- ***Professional aspirations.*** Preservice, secondary social studies teacher intending to begin a full-time teaching career in the fall of 2008

Sampling was purposeful and may be defined as a sample of convenience (Patton, 2002). Nine students were identified as eligible for this study (four males, five females). All nine were invited to participate. Six individuals volunteered to participate (three males, three females). All six completed the entire interview protocol.

Seidman’s (2006) focused life history, three-round interviewing model was used to develop the study and design the interviewing protocol. A pilot study was completed with one female volunteer in the early spring of 2008. The pilot subject initially met all case study criterion, however, she had recently decided to pursue a graduate degree in School Psychology and would not be beginning a teaching career in the fall. This made her an ideal pilot participant. Instruments were revised based upon the results of that pilot study and the final interview protocol was developed (see Appendix B).

Data were collected during the spring and summer of 2008. All six participants completed three rounds of in-depth interviewing. Each round of interviews served a distinct and important purpose based upon the specific research questions. Questions about the gender equity were embedded in the interview protocol for the first and second rounds. During round three, questions about gender were asked more directly. This was done to allow perceptions about gender equity to emerge more authentically. The topics of each interview are articulated and related to the proposed research in the table below:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Primary research question:</b><br/>How do pre-service, secondary social studies teachers perceive gender equity?</p> | <p><b>Secondary research questions:</b><br/>-How have these perceptions been informed by the participants' individual life experiences?<br/><br/>-What other factors have contributed to the development of the participants' current gender perceptions?</p> |
| <p><b>Interview 1: Focused Life History</b></p>  | <p><b>Topics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childhood</li> <li>• School experiences (elementary, middle, high)</li> <li>• Impressions of education (teaching methods, memorable projects)</li> <li>• Memories of social studies</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Interview 2: Focused Life History</b></p>  | <p><b>Topics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work</li> <li>• College</li> <li>• Teaching</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Interview 3: Reflection on the Meaning</b></p>   | <p><b>Topics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender equity</li> <li>• Classroom practice</li> <li>• Relate perceptions of gender equity with classroom practice.</li> </ul>   |

The semi-structured design of the three rounds of interviews allowed the participants to respond to pre-planned questions in a very conversational manner. Conversation flowed naturally, but was focused by the interview protocol. This allowed the participants to discuss similar components of their life histories (i.e. family, student life, college, etc.), but elaborate as they were compelled to do so. Participants were aware that the researcher was examining how

personal experiences impacted their professional practice, but were not told that gender equity was the focus of the study. Gender equity issues were not pursued directly until the third and final round of interviewing.

Seidman (2006) argues for the use of interviews as an important and strong methodology. He asserts that the act of telling one's story forces the participant to reflect on and make meaning of his/her own experiences (Seidman, 2006). This was essential given that the research questions obliged participants to contemplate their perceptions and opinions on matters that they may not consciously take into consideration on a regular basis. The three-round model also allowed the participant to revisit the ideas they put forth in earlier interviews and develop them further.

#### *Data Analysis*

Data were transcribed and analyzed inductively (Miles & Huberman, 1994) allowing participant responses to shape general categories. The researcher allowed initial codes and themes to emerge from the data in accordance with Creswell's (1998) analogy of the "data analysis spiral", whereby meaning is developed through analytic circles of reading, reflecting, interpreting, and comparing (p.142). Initially, any response related to gender and gender equity was marked. Individual memos for each participant were then completed. These memos were compared and transcripts reread to note commonalities and differences amongst participant responses. Transcripts were then reread with these patterns in mind and the data were coded deductively (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This spiral provided the basis of the emerging themes, which will be presented at this time.

#### Results

Although all six of the participants met the sampling criterion and shared the majority of their teacher education experiences for the past five years, their life history interviews also revealed an extraordinary array of experiences as children, students, and workers. This diversity of experiences was surprising to the researcher given the fact that the participants also shared several major demographics in common, such as age (all 22 or 23 years old), race (all identified as white) and socioeconomic status (all identified as middle class). The table below illustrates a summary of the participants:

Table 1: Abbreviated Summary of Participants

| Participant | Sex    | Type of school attended?          | Immediate family?   |
|-------------|--------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Kristen     | Female | Public, suburban                  | Mother, Father, older brother   |
| Sonia       | Female | Public, rural                     | Mother, Father, older half-brother, older-sister                            |
| Arthur      | Male   | Parochial, urban/Public, suburban | Mother, Father, Step-mother, step-father, older sister, younger half sister |
| Brian       | Male   | Public, suburban                  | Mother, Father, older brother   |
| Michelle    | Female | Public, suburban/rural            | Mother, Father, older sister, older brother                                 |
| Patrick     | Male   | Public, suburban                  | Father, younger sister  |

Participants were not asked about gender equity issues directly until the third and final round of interviewing, however, two questions about women’s history were asked at the end of round two. Gender related topics were always pursued if participants initiated the subject. This approach allowed participant perceptions on the topic to emerge more naturally. For example, participants were first asked during rounds one and two about *multiple* perspectives in their experiences as social studies students and teachers, before being asked about women’s history at the very end of round two. This allowed the participants to either bring up gender on their own and/or talk about those perspectives that they prioritized.

Early data analysis indicates the emergence of several interesting themes. For the purposes of this paper, I would like to focus on one theme, which is particularly relevant for teacher education programs. This theme may be summarized as: the disconnect between preservice teachers' intentions regarding gender equity in their classroom and their classroom practice. Despite preservice teachers' best intentions, it appears as though they are not including gender or gender equity issues in their social studies classrooms.

The first important component to this theme emerged when participants were asked to reflect on their own experiences as social studies students. Participant descriptions of their K-12 social studies classes ranged from, "A joke" (Kristen) to "Rigor, rigor, rigor" (Patrick). All of the participants agreed, however, that as students they were exposed to a very traditional social studies curriculum characterized by a majority perspective. When asked if they remembered if multiple perspectives were presented in their social studies classes, all three female participants responded negatively.

- No. Not at all. It was just the stereotype. Like, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, we learned that, basically. It was whatever was written in the textbook, that's what I learned most of the time. (Kristen)
- No. There's so much that I didn't know that I learned in college. (Michelle)
- No. Definitely not...I didn't even know that there was a Black History Month, Hispanic History Month, like any of it until college. (Sonia)

The males responded similarly, yet less definitively.

- It was very trite I think...You know the people we always learn about? That was what the big projects were on. (Brian)
- It was token. (Patrick)

- I'd say it was tokenism, but overall, no, because it was still very much a white middle class narrative. (Arthur)

Participants hypothesized that several factors, such as time, lack of knowledge and a conservative school system, may have contributed to why they were not exposed to a variety of voices in their social studies classes. However, despite acknowledging that these “barriers” still exist, all of the participants were adamant that multiple perspectives *would* be part of their own teaching. In fact, all of the participants claimed to have already brought multiple perspectives into their teaching. However, this was not done without some additional effort. All six responded to varying degrees that they felt it was possible to bring multiple perspectives into the social studies classroom while adhering to the state and national standards, however, they agreed that it was the responsibility of the teacher to make these experiences meaningful. A sample of their responses included,

- I sense places where the students will be able to connect with it [the curriculum], but its up to me to make them connect with it. (Sonia)
- I don't mind it [the curriculum], to be honest. I really don't. Like you can make it whatever you want. (Kristen)
- I have to look for it...And I am very picky about what I pick out, too. So it takes a while. I spend a lot of time on the Internet and, um, the archives. Things like that. (Michelle)

Thus, all of the participants communicated an intention to break away from the model of the social studies curriculum that they had been presented as students and include perspectives that they felt were “non-traditional”. In their minds, this intention did not require a radical

departure from the standard social studies curriculum, only additional effort on the part of the teacher.

When participants were asked why it was so important to put in this effort and work to include multiple perspectives, making the curriculum relevant to their students was the most common response. The participants spoke passionately about the need to make connections to students' lives and the struggle to help them identify with a social studies curriculum that might seem foreign or irrelevant to them. As Patrick said, "I had the kids coming in every day [asking] – how does this relate to my life?...I couldn't say feudalism... and the three-field planting system was beneficial to their life cause I'd be lying to them." Teaching topics from perspectives that more closely matched those of their students seemed to be a viable solution to this problem.

Similarly, several participants spoke about how their own interest in the social studies came from their ability to empathize with historical figures and that this was something they tried to inspire in their students. Brian, for example, said that his love of history came from "...Just envisioning...what it would be like, you know, to be in the boat with George Washington crossing the Delaware and, you know, did they have any idea what they were doing, you know, that guy paddling?" Picturing himself in the historical narrative piqued his own interest in the subject. Thus, participants' rationales for including multiple perspectives were based on ideas about relevance and identification.

The participants' intentions and convincing rationales regarding multiple perspectives seem promising, however when pressed more directly to provide examples of *how* they had incorporated or intended to incorporate multiple perspectives into their classrooms, the participants struggled. For example, they said:

- Um, I don't know, like I automatically think about Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. But I feel like they are very mainstream, like typical. (Sonia)
- I feel like I tried, I really- well, I had an opportunity because I taught an African history class, so that's kind of rare...but at the same time, like in some of my classes I'll admit like I was just trying to get through. (Kristen)
- There's a lot of perspectives I miss. Part of it is we don't have a lot of written record about those perspectives so it's very hard to teach something that we don't have a lot of resources on. (Patrick)
- I was really concentrated on content and I don't know what's going to happen my first year. We'll see how it goes...Um, I tried to do that with the Great Purge, with Stalin. Except that stuff [on the lower class] is completely, it's so, it's non-existent. (Michelle)

None of participants offered meaningful examples of how they had or might incorporate gendered (women's) perspectives. Responses included,

- I haven't thought about it yet. And I think it's going to be [tough] doing world history, like ancient history, because there's a lot less women recorded doing anything as opposed to US history. Um (pause) I was thinking more along the lines of independent projects for students were they get to pick and choose...because its going to be difficult doing just regular content on top of that. (Michelle)
- I think that it's taught in such a way where, you know, you learn about like Susan B. Anthony and Sojourner Truth and, you know, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and then women in the 20's that were really important and maybe Harriet Beecher

Stowe and then, you know, you get into like World War II and the Depression where other than Eleanor Roosevelt, you know, there really aren't many significant women. Significant enough to make it into your standard history textbook. (Brian)

Three participants were able to detail instances of bringing gender into their classroom; however, none represent an attempt to discuss gender relations or gender equity issues. Instead, the participants appeared to be highlighting the few instances in which women were discussed in their classes. Patrick described showing clips from the movie "Iron Jawed Angels" to his class when talking about women's suffrage, while Sonia and Arthur cited projects that they did with their students which included female icons. Sonia described a project for Black History Month where students were broken into four groups and given a black woman, such as Sojourner Truth and Rosa Parks, to research and present. Arthur described having his students write letters to Sojourner Truth reflecting on her life. While the sentiment behind these projects is genuine, both focus around a small sample of extraordinary women and neither seems to seek a greater understanding of gender as a goal. In fact it was race, not gender, which provided the framework for these assignments and neither participant indicated that emphasis was placed on how the individual's life was situated within the larger context of gender equity. Patrick's use of "Iron Jawed Angels" certainly places gender at the center of the lesson, however, it does so under the overused and token-like topic of suffrage. These lessons alone could not provide more than a surface understanding of (a limited) female experience.

When the participant's definition of "multiple perspectives" was probed, all of the participants interpreted the phrase as any perspective other than the traditional dominant, white male viewpoint of history. Perspectives of race and class, however, were clearly favored. Three

of the participants did not volunteer gender as a perspective. This supports the notion of Hahn et al. (2007), which suggests that gender has largely become lost under the umbrella of multiculturalism. Some participants directly stated that they felt race and class trumped gender in their minds. Sonia's response was perhaps the most telling. She said, "Race is just so controversial right now and like prominent in everything. That's why I am interested in it and why it appeals more to the students, more so than gender." However, when prompted to consider gender as an underrepresented perspective, all of the participants agreed that *women* should be an important part of the social studies curriculum. Gender, as is common, was seen as synonymous with women's issues.

This disconnect between the preservice teachers' intentions and their actions is further complicated by their perceptions of their students as gendered beings. Although it was clear that most of the participants had not consciously considered how the gender of their students influenced them as social studies students, the participants' responses did indicate some awareness of their students as gendered beings. Participant responses included,

- The female students more aptly get excited about content when it's more in a story form or when there's more...when there's more of that like people interaction element rather than presidential, economic, history...you know, teaching that sort of straight history. (Patrick)
- I think it is just norms on what they've been used to, but the boys would love to learn about fighting and wars and battles and ships and all of this. And I think the girls are much more into the daily activities and what was life like? What was a family like in those days? And I think that was pretty obvious. (Arthur)

It would stand to reason, then, that participants might consider gender as an important student attribute when lesson planning. This would certainly be in harmony with their rationales for including multiple perspectives, which hinged on increased feelings of relevance and identification. However, none of the participants considered their students' genders when designing their classroom lessons. They did, however, claim to consider the race and/or class of their students when lesson planning. Unlike race and class, gender was not seen as "a big deal". The status quo in this case was not ideal, but it was acceptable. For example,

- I think they notice it [the absence of women in social studies] but I think they accept it more easily. I think they say- they see history as a subject where you learn about a lot of men...They don't see women constantly as a part of it so they just think well, you know, history is like the man's subject. (Brian)
- [Speaking of herself as a student] Not studying women didn't upset me 'cause I didn't know any better, like, I just figured, you know, we do males. (Michelle)

The participants also communicated interesting perceptions of how their *own* gender influences them as a teacher. In this case, the differences between the male and female responses are notable. While all of the males said that their gender was a factor in their professional practice, all also explained that this was because of behavioral norms that governed their one-to-one interaction with students of the opposite sex. As Arthur said, "I would never hug." Their gender was significant because it made them more cautious around students, females in particular. The female participants, on the other hand, all initially said that they did *not* think that their gender impacted their professional practice, but when asked to elaborate all offered instances of when it might.

- ...I actually do think it's a little but harder to get the respect right off the bat from your kids when you're a girl. (Kristen)
- I don't know if I would have been a teacher if I was a guy... Teachers aren't valued too high, so I would want to be something a little bit more, especially if I hadn't been a girl. (Michelle)
- The students might listen to me more...I don't know, like I could see myself maybe being like higher up in education as a male. (Sonia)

While all of the female participants began by saying that their gender did not influence their professional practice, their subsequent statements suggest significant possible professional consequences. This makes the omission of gender related topics in their classrooms all the more surprising.

Thus, to summarize, while the preservice teachers in this study did not feel that they had received a social studies education that included multiple perspectives, all intended on including multiple perspectives in their classroom in order to make the curriculum more relevant and identifiable for their students. They included gender as an important perspective, but it was not considered as frequently as race and class. However, a disconnect seems to exist between these intentions and participants' ability to articulate how they would incorporate multiple perspectives into their lessons. An additional disconnect seems to exist specifically around gender. While the participants did recognize the influence of gender on their students' experiences and their own professional experiences, they did not consider gender when designing lessons and were less likely to identify gender as an important perspective to be included in the classroom.

## Discussion

In a recent article in *Educational Researcher*, Glasser and Smith (2008) called for increased clarity regarding the use of the term “gender” in educational research. The authors argued that without a clear definition of the term by the researcher, readers were left to interpret the meaning of the term on their own, often equating “gender”, a social construction, with “sex”, a biological description (Glasser & Smith, 2008). The authors’ point is very valid and certainly appropriate to this research study. For the purposes of this study, “gender” has been conceptualized within the social constructivist paradigm, which contends that gender is constructed as individuals interact with their environment. In this sense, an individual’s gender identity is not a product of one’s nature; rather “...gender performances actively create the individuals identity” (Glasser & Smith, 2008, p.347). This perspective is consistent with the poststructural feminist framework.

Conceptualizing “gender” as a developing and essential component to one’s identity casts the initial results of this study in an interesting light. If preservice teachers claim that multiple perspectives should be included in social studies classrooms in order to make the subjects more relatable and relevant to students, while simultaneously agreeing that gender is an important and underrepresented perspective, then one might assume that gender would be considered when they were lesson planning and teaching. Yet in the case of these participants, all of whom also recognized the impact of gender on their students lives and their own professional lives, it is not. Instead, the participants’ intention to teach a curriculum more inclusive of female perspective seems more like lip service or “...another form of classroom courtesy” (Levstik, 2001).

Perhaps the key to this disconnect is the way in which the participants conceptualize gender. Without exception, the participants interpreted “gender” in the social studies classroom as lessons about women and women’s history. This may have been encouraged by interview

questions that also asked about women's history, however this substitution is a common tendency. The participants' responses indicated that they talked about women occasionally or exceptionally, if at all. Talking about gender meant talking about suffrage, Sojourner Truth, and Rosa Parks. There was little to no indication that gender relations or gender equity was considered.

This conceptual difference represents an important distinction. When gender is interpreted as a developing component to individuals' identities (both male and female), then beyond the incorporation of more women, arguments for the inclusion of gender in the social studies classroom might also encourage social studies teachers to recognize gender (both male and female) as an important component to the human experience. Gender is seen as a filter through which individual's view the world (Hahn, 1996). Thus, a careful and continuous examination of changing gender roles and gender relations over time would be seen as an essential component of the social studies curriculum and an important lens to use when engaging in historical inquiry. Part of this examination would naturally include an infusion of women into the social studies curriculum, but simply mentioning more notable women would not be enough. Instead, themes, such as gender relations, gender equity, and gender norms, would be revisited throughout the year in order to develop an increased gender consciousness that could be applied to both past and present issues. Such a practice could be more inclusive of GLBT issues, as well.

Teacher education programs can play a key role in alleviating this disconnect by devoting time to explicitly discussing gender and gender equity issues. Preservice teachers should be allowed the opportunity to debate the role of gender in and out of the classroom and the possibilities that exist in the social studies. Women's contributions to the history should be highlighted, in order to contribute to a larger examination of gender relations over time. Teacher

educators should take the time to introduce relevant research and instructional opportunities into their methods classes and throughout teacher education programs.

The fact remains that a significant gender gap exists in the United States<sup>7</sup>. Continuing to recognize and combat gender inequity is important. This is particularly true for young preservice social studies educators. These women and men have been reared in the wake of the successes of second wave feminism, thereby enjoying the gains made over time, in particular the Women's Movement of the 1960s and 70s. They are also children of the 1980s and 90s, a time when feminist critique has (been) quieted, yet the rhetoric of gender equality has increased (Baumgardner & Richards, 2001; Faludi, 1991). They are products of Title IX and "girl power", and their postsecondary education may or may not have addressed gender inequities (Brown, 2000; Campbell & Sanders, 1997; Sanders, 2001). If it did, the research base for these initiatives was likely over a decade old. Efforts must be made to reintroduce gender inequity as an important and worthwhile topic. General ignorance and acceptance of gender inequities as part of the status quo allows injustices to continue unchallenged.

<sup>1</sup> See Lerner (1986) for an account of the origins and development of patriarchy in the United States.

<sup>2</sup> In an effort to establish clear terminology, throughout this paper I will be employing Baumgardner & Richards (2000) definition of “feminism” as “...the movement for social, political, and economic equality of men and women” (p.56).

<sup>3</sup> A complete recount of Faludi’s (1991) examples is beyond the scope or intention of this paper. For details, please see “Introduction” of Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The undeclared war against American women*. New York: Crown Publishers.

<sup>4</sup> In a 1970 issue of *Ms. Magazine*, Jane O’Reilly described a woman’s movement into feminist consciousness as a “click” of sudden awareness. It is the moment when the injustices one faces as a woman become obvious and is often seen as the result of conversations about the female experience with other women.

<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note that the 1985 handbook was titled, *Achieving Sex Equity through Education*. Note the change from “sex” to “gender”.

<sup>6</sup> Published by California Council for the Social Studies, I was unable to identify a specific author for *The Social Studies Review* (1992).

<sup>7</sup> American women earn on average seventy cents to every dollar earned by males, head fewer than 3% of the Fortune 500 companies, and hold less than one-sixth (87 of 535) of seats in Congress<sup>1</sup>. More disturbingly, the National Organization for Women reports that each day four American women die as a result of domestic violence (approximately 1400 each year) and that over 132,000 American women survive rape or attempted rape each year, it is estimated that two to six times as many women do not report these crimes. For information on the wage gap, see <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0763170.html>. For women CEO’s in the Fortune 500, see [http://money.cnn.com/galleries/2007/fortune/0704/gallery.F500\\_womenCEOs.fortune/index.html](http://money.cnn.com/galleries/2007/fortune/0704/gallery.F500_womenCEOs.fortune/index.html). For women in the American government, see [http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast\\_facts/index.php](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/index.php). For information on domestic violence statistics, see the National Organization of Women at <http://www.now.org/issues/violence/stats.html>

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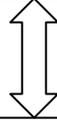
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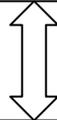
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**Life History**



- Including, but not limited to...
- Gender
  - Race
  - Class
  - Ethnicity
  - Religion
  - Geography
  - Family life
  - Politics
  - **Education**



**Perceptions of gender equity as preservice, Social Studies educators**

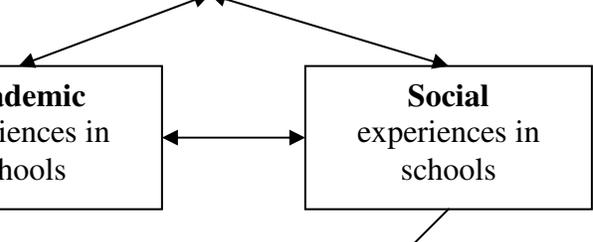
**Education**

**Academic**  
experiences in schools

**Social**  
experiences in schools

- Including...
- K-12 curriculum
  - Undergraduate coursework
  - Teacher Education Program
  - Field experiences

- Including...
- Classroom interactions
  - Extracurricular activities
  - Interpersonal relationships



## **Appendix B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL<sup>1</sup>**

### **Round 1: Focused Life History**

The purpose of this round of interviews is to establish a general life history of the participant. Questions are designed to develop a sense of this life history, with particular attention to events/details that may shed light on issues of gender equity. Participants will be told that the study is attempting to determine what has made them the teacher they are today.

Prior to the interview beginning participants will be asked to draw a quick, informal map of their childhood neighborhood and to complete a free-write about a typical day in their childhood both at home and at school.

#### **1. Personal Information**

- Participant's name, address, year of birth, birthplace.
- Can you describe for me some of your most vivid childhood memories?
- Who do you identify as being in your immediate family? How many brothers and/or sisters do you have? Birth order and spacing.
- Did your family move a lot when you were young? For what reason did your family make these moves?
- How old were your parent's when you were born? Occupations? Hours? Did they have other jobs before of after they became that? Did they also do part-time jobs? What are their highest levels of schooling/education?
- Who looked after you while your parents were at work?

#### **2. Life at Home**

- Tell me about growing up in your family.
- Are your parent's married? In whose house did you spend most of your time?
- Did your parent's pay anyone to help around the house or for childcare? Who? Hours? Tasks? Time spent by children with parents?
- Who was responsible for looking after the children? Who did the following with or for you: cooking? Bathing? Reading? Telling stories? Carpooling? Taking you places?
- What chores were you responsible for regularly carrying out at home? For how long were you responsible for these chores?
- Where did your family have their meals? Who did the cooking? Where? Did all the family sit at the table for the meal? How was the meal served (by whom)?
- Who did most of the talking during meals? What sorts of things did you talk about?

#### **3. Childhood Activities**

- What were some of your favorite things to do as a child?
- Whom did you play with? Brothers, sisters, neighbors, cousins, etc?
- What games did you play? Where did you play games?
- Did you have any hobbies? What were they?
- Did you take part in sports? Which ones?

- Did you belong to any youth organizations?

#### **4. School**

- Tell me about your earliest memories of school.
- Were you given any lessons by anyone before going to school? Who?
- How old were you when you first went to school (includes preschool, daycare, etc.)?
- What type of school did you go to? (public/private/day school/ boarding school/religiously affiliated, Montessori)
- What do you remember about how you were taught in school? (discussion, teacher-directed, student-directed).
- What kinds of things do you remember reading in school? What kinds of writing do you remember doing in school?
- Would you say you were a “good” student? Did you like school?
- Describe what you did after school.
- What was your homework like?

#### **5. Work**

- Tell me about your first job. Best job? Worst job?
- When did you get your first job? What was it? How did you get it? What were your duties?
- What hours did you work? How did you learn to do this?
- Do you have a job now (or recently)? What is it? How did you get it?

#### **6. College**

- How did you decide to come to this university?
- What is your current living situation? Describe house/apartment.
- How do you prepare your teaching lessons? Where?
- What are your classes like? What kinds of classes have you taken?
- When and why did you decide you wanted to be a teacher?

### **Round 2: The Details of Experience**

The purpose of the second round of interviews is to concentrate on details articulated in the life history in order to begin to focus in on perceptions of gender equity. Teaching will be the main focus of this interview. The interview will begin with a review of first round highlights and will connect these comments to the participants teaching practice. If needed, the researcher will present the participants with a teaching scenario involving gender equity issues to respond to.

#### **1. Review/Follow up: TBD**

#### **2. Social Studies**

- Describe your experiences with the social studies in elementary school? Middle and high school?
- What attracted you to the subject?

- What types of activities did you enjoy doing most in your social studies classes?
- What types of resources were used?
- What topics were covered?
- What perspectives were covered?
- Describe your social studies teachers. What did you like best/least about them?
- What kinds of criticisms can you make of the social studies curriculum? Are there any criticisms that you do not agree with?

### 3. Teaching

- Why did you decide to become a teacher? Why a social studies teacher?
- Briefly articulate your philosophy of teaching. How has it changed since being in your teacher education program?
- After taking your methods class, how have your viewpoints of social studies changed? social studies instruction?
- Think about how you were taught social studies; are your views on social studies instruction consistent/inconsistent with how you were taught? If so, how?
- Do you try and include a variety of perspectives in your classes? How?
- Do you make any extra effort to have other perspectives included? If so, how?
- How do you feel about women's history?
- How do you think women are represented in social studies classes?

### 4. Respond to the following teaching scenario

Sarah Turner is in her second year of teaching at Elmtown North High School, which is one of two high schools in a predominantly White, middle- to lower-middle-class community. She teaches social studies to 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders. This year her 11<sup>th</sup> grade course fits perfectly into the schedule of several members of the football team. Sarah is trying to interest them in early 20<sup>th</sup> century American history and is currently teaching a unit on the progressive movement. Sarah is pretty pleased with the school year so far, but she worries about this class. A few of the students, usually led by the team's fullback, the good-looking and popular, Bobby Angell, seem to enjoy disrupting the class with distracting comments. Kids whose dress, appearance, or beliefs seem unconventional bear the brunt of Bobby's jokes and jabs. Sarah has overheard the boys referring to girls as *bitches* and *sluts*, while words like *faggot* and *homo* have been fired at a few boys. It bothers Sarah to hear these words and see the pained and embarrassed looks on students' faces. Sarah often makes a mental note to address the issue, but so far she has not interfered, having been mainly concerned with keeping the class in order. She often says to colleagues, though, "Boy, when Bobby and his buddies are absent, it's a lot easier in there!"

One November afternoon, Sarah observes, from a distance, Bobby and two other boys approaching Frank, a quiet and nervous sophomore enrolled in the class, in the hallway on their way to class. Checking briefly to see if they are being watched, the boys surround him and knock his US History textbook to the ground. Bobby and the boys begin their taunt: "Hey, sweetie, heading to class?"

Just then, from the corner of her eye, Sarah sees another class member, Holly, approach the group from the other direction. Holly is pretty outspoken in class and occasionally tells these guys to shut up when they are making too much noise in the back of the room. Holly's comments are usually met with eye rolling and under-the-breath insults, which she ignores. Recognizing that Frank is cornered and needs help, she now yells, "Cut that out, you jerks!" Hearing this, the boys' attention suddenly shifts. Sarah sees a heavy arm go up and push Holly against the corridor wall outside the classroom. Sarah heads angrily toward the group just as the boys make a circle around Holly so that Sarah can no longer see her. She hears them taunt Holly, telling her to "use that body to straighten Frank out" and "give him a blow job to show him what he's missing." The boys' sneers and giggles end abruptly as they notice Sarah coming their way. After much shoving, they all tumble into the classroom, Holly pale and shaken, Frank with his head down, and the other boys looking defiant and embarrassed. Glancing around, Sarah realizes that the whole class has heard this interaction. Holly stumbles to her seat, but Frank suddenly bolts from the room. An eerie silence blankets the class.

- What do you see as the "major issues" of this scenario?
- What should Sarah do? If you were Sarah, how would you handle this situation?
- What types of dilemmas are you struggling with as you are considering this situation?

### **Round 3: Reflection on Meaning**

The purpose of this round of interviewing will be to pointedly discuss the participants' perceptions of gender equity. The participants will be asked to reflect on their life histories and connect details to their classroom practice as it relates to gender equity.

#### **1. Review details provided in interview 1. Prompt participants to connect details to responses in interview 2.**

#### **2. Perceptions of Gender Equity**

- Do you think that men and women are equal in society? In schools?
- Tell me about these opinions. How did you arrive at them?
- Do you think your life would be different if you were a male/female? If so, how?
- Do you see your gender as having a significant effect on your school experience?
- How about on your life as a teacher? Would your teaching practice be different if you were male/female?
- What is the role of gender in your classroom?
- What do you think of when you hear the word "feminist"?
- Do you think of yourself as a feminist?

<sup>1</sup> Johnson, A. S. (2007). An ethics of access: Using life history to trace preservice

teachers' initial viewpoints on teaching for equity. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 58 (4), 299-314.