



Gendering Social Studies: Teachers' Intended and Enacted Curriculum and Student Diffraction

Andrea Watson-Canning*

* University of South Florida, Tampa,
Florida, USA.
E-mail: watsoncanning@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Due to intransigence of social studies curriculum-makers to broaden the scope of who and what is studied, women (especially non-white women) are lacking representation. However, some teachers go beyond the textbook to select alternative curriculum lenses. Utilizing curricular-instructional gatekeeping, complementary curriculum, and queer theory, this article examines how two secondary teachers who incorporate issues of gender and/or women's experiences into their social studies curriculum describe their reasoning and intentions, how their expressed aims are manifested within their classrooms, and student reaction to the incorporation of gender and women's experience in the social studies curriculum. Findings indicate participants value multiple perspectives and parity in social studies curriculum and map these ideas onto the explicit curriculum. However, student responses tend to resist teacher intentions and enactment of challenges to normative gender roles. This diffracted curriculum interferes with teacher aims, creating a curricular space where traditional assumptions of the gender binary play out in teacher-student and student-student interactions. These findings indicate a more relational approach to social studies curriculum may be needed to encourage students to engage constructively with nonnormative social ideas.

KEYWORDS

Education; Curriculum studies; Gender; Women; Social studies education; Curricular-instructional gatekeeping; Teacher beliefs; Student response

INTRODUCTION

For nearly fifty years, feminist scholars have advocated for the inclusion of women's experiences and gender in the social studies classroom (e.g., Bernard-Powers, 1996; Crocco, 2008, 2018; Engebretson, 2016; Grambs, 1976; Levstik, 2009; Noddings, 1992, 2001, 2015; Schafer & Bohan, 2009; Tetrault, 1986; Trecker, 1973). And while the past half-century has seen an increase in the addition of women to the traditional textbook narrative and curriculum standards, this inclusion has been mainly white, emphasizing gendered and racial stereotypes, and stagnating in recent years (Bohan, 2017; Clark, Allard, & Mahoney, 2004; Clark, Ayton, Frecette, & Keller, 2005; Commeyras & Alvermann, 1996; Gordy, Hogan, & Pritchard, 2004; Hahn, Bernard-Powers, Crocco, & Woyshner, 2007; Schmeichel, 2014; Schmidt, 2012; Schrader & Wotipka, 2011; Williams & Bennett, 2016; Woyshner & Schocker, 2015).

Most scholarly work about incorporating women and gender in the social studies curriculum analyzes curricular materials or discusses trends in pedagogical methods for preservice teachers (Bohan, 2017). Practitioner articles are ameliorative, proposing what to teach about women and how to teach it (e.g., Bair & Ackerman, 2014; Bousalis, 2012; Charter, 2015; Crocco, Pervez, and Katz, 2009; Kim, 2012; Kirkwood-Tucker, 2011; Lapham & Hanes, 2013; Schmeichel, Janis, & McAnulty, 2016; Wei, 2011). However, little research explores how teachers teach about women and gender in their social studies courses, how they discuss their intentions, or how students respond to the altered curriculum (Bair, 2008; Hahn, 1996; Levstik, 1998; Levstik & Groth, 2002; Stevens & Martell, 2016, 2019; Ten Dam & Rijkschroeff, 1996; Ten Dam & Teekens, 1997). How can we know the work we produce has an ameliorative effect if we do not go into the classroom and examine what happens when those experiences are integrated?

This study examines how teachers think about and include women and gender in their classroom as well as the ways in which student responses to this curriculum challenge teacher attempts to produce content with non-normative gender roles.

Teachers make choices about content and pedagogical methods to use. These decisions define teachers as curricular-instructional gatekeepers (Thornton, 1991, 2005). These choices are influenced by teachers' values and beliefs, leading them to create a complementary curriculum (Moroye, 2009). Implicitly and explicitly, teachers graft their values and beliefs onto the explicit curriculum. Thus, while studies demonstrate social studies teachers rely heavily on the textbook (Loewen, 2007; Thornton, 1991), teachers can go beyond the textbook to select alternative curriculum lenses.

Regarding gender, scholars have suggested heterosexuality is implicitly taught as the normative sexual relationship (Mayo, 2017; Mayo & Sheppard, 2012; Pascoe, 2012; Pascoe & Herrera, 2018; Schmidt, 2010). This heteronormative discourse is deeply etched into the explicit, implicit, and hidden curricula. Students encounter it when they invite their mothers to

“tea” and fathers to “daddy-daughter” dances, when high school students select homecoming courts with “Kings and Queens,” and when female students’ clothing is policed because male desire is inscribed upon their bodies.

Utilizing the concepts of curricular-instructional gatekeeping and complementary curriculum as well as queer theory, this study explores: 1) the intentions of teachers who choose gender and women’s experiences as a curricular lens; 2) how their intentions are enacted in their classrooms; and 3) how students respond to that curricular enactment. I use educational connoisseurship and criticism¹ as conceived by Eisner (2017) to structure my analysis and portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005) to present my data. Educational criticism provides an opportunity to move away from traditionally positivist and post-positivist research methods and into more creative and experiential ways of knowing. Portraiture allows the researcher a method for creating narrative structures to help make sense of the classroom environments studied.

GENDER PARITY IN THE CONTENT AND THE CLASSROOM

Scholars have argued that without the inclusion of gender as a topic for analysis, gender parity will never be achieved (Lerner, 2009; Sadker, Sadker, & Zittleman, 2009; Sanders, 2002). Much of the standards and content within history and other social studies courses reinforce a view of women as nonparticipants in shaping the public sphere (Engebretson, 2014; Lerner, 2009; Scott, 1997). Without antecedents participating in political, social, and economic change, female students may not see themselves as full participants in contemporary society and male students may not view women as capable agents of change.

Sanders (2002) argued to counteract gender biases in the classroom, gender equity content should be systemic and infused throughout teacher education courses. Teachers may reflect gender biases, providing male students with more attention and feedback (positive and negative), while praising female students for their behavior but rarely calling upon them to respond to questions (Sadker et al., 2009). Young women become silent spectators in their education, an experience continuing through college (Crawford & MacLeod, 1990) as male students aggressively commandeer classroom discussion (Segall, Crocco, Halvorsen, and Jacobsen, 2018).

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

A small but growing body of research discusses the construct of gender and the norming of heterosexuality in the school and social studies classroom (Crocco, 2001, 2002, 2008; Loutzenheiser, 2010; Mayo, 2017; Mayo & Shepard, 2012; Regenhardt, 2009; Schmidt, 2015). Zook (2002) argues gender is not only about women—men should also see they are gendered:

¹ Henceforth, educational criticism.

“We need to teach our students...that both masculinity and femininity are concepts that have been defined, restricted, limited, and challenged from time immemorial” (p. 374). This analytic development arises from the use of queer theory as a lens with which to focus research in social studies education. Queer theory emphasizes the iteration of sexuality, and through that, gender. It calls attention to the binary assumptions located within heteronormative practices. The repetition of these practices provide “intelligibility” to gender. As Butler (2006) argues, “‘Intelligible’ genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire” (p. 23).

METHODOLOGY

For this study, I combine educational criticism as conceived by Eisner (2017) and Lawrence-Lightfoot’s (2005) concept of portraiture. In educational criticism, one describes, interprets, and critiques the event researched and then develops themes to make sense of the experience (Eisner, 2002). Eisner is clear this work constitutes a creative act by the researcher. He argues “the self is the instrument that engages the situation and makes sense of it” (2017, p. 34). Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) maintains “the portraitist emerges as an instrument of inquiry” (p. 11). The researcher must acknowledge her interactive participation in the moments of collection and the construction of meaning as she seeks to define themes. As Eisner (2017) reflects, the researcher is situated in a transactive space between “two postulated entities, the objective and the subjective” (p. 52). Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) captures this paradox as a “dynamic between documenting and creating the narrative, between receiving *and* shaping, reflecting *and* imposing, mirroring *and* improvising. [...] The effort to reach coherence must both flow organically from the data *and* from the interpretive witness of the portraitist” (p. 10).

Research Design

The first part of my process involved interviewing teachers about their beliefs and values about social studies education. For the second part of the study, I observed the teachers in at least two different disciplinary classes for a minimum of two weeks. I utilized Eisner’s “ecology of schooling” (1988) during observations, including the 1) intentional: teacher explanations about including gender and/or women’s experiences in their course curriculum; 2) structural: the ways in which teachers viewed how textbooks, standards, and course curriculum help and/or hinder the addition of curriculum; 3) curricular: the content provided by the teacher; 4) pedagogical: the manner in which the teachers disseminated the content; and 5) evaluative: the ways in which the teachers assessed the students’ understanding of the curriculum. Data collected included observations of classroom lessons and activities, lesson artifacts including handouts, lecture notes, readings, textbook materials, and audio recordings of interviews of participating teachers.

I created two-part portraits (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005) of my participants. The first part incorporated my interviews with my participants and explored their intentions: why they aspired to incorporate women's experiences and gender into their classroom curriculum and how they defined that incorporation. The second part of each portrait is a "scene" taken from a classroom observation examining how my participants enacted their intentions and how students responded to the enacted curriculum. The scenes are detailed, a critical factor, as Eisner (2017) argues, "the text should [...] enable readers to get a feel for the place or process and [...] for the experience of those who occupy the situation" (p. 89). While multiple events during observations provided data, for brevity, I have selected two scenes to act as synecdoches for the observation experience.

My work is situated within a constructivist framework. I concur with Eisner (2017) that "[t]here are multiple ways in which the world can be known [...]. Human knowledge is a constructed form of experience and therefore a reflection of mind as well as nature: Knowledge is made, not simply discovered" (p. 7). Thus, I do not purport to provide the singular explanation as to why teachers choose to incorporate gender and/or women's experiences into the social studies curriculum and how students respond; rather, I seek to provide an account for these occurrences and then evaluate the information for its potential to illuminate the process for other teachers and teacher educators.

Context of the Study

The research presented here follows two female secondary teachers, one Jewish (Sonya Woodhull²), and one bi-racial, Filipina-white (Elena Anthony) working in central Florida. Sonya is in her sixth year at Cypress Glen Preparatory High School, a public charter secondary school. According to the Common Core of Data for 2018-2019 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019), the total school population was 609 students; 343 were listed as female and 266 were male. Twenty-six students were identified as Asian, 116 as Black, 158 as Hispanic, 285 as white, and twenty-one were identified as two or more races. Elena is a first-year teacher at Lakeview Catholic, a coeducational parochial school. According to the Private School Universe Survey for the 2017-2018 school year (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018), the total school population was 764 students; twenty-two students were identified as Asian, seventy-three as Black, 300 as Hispanic, 339 as white, and twenty-six were identified as two or more races. Data on sex-gender identification was not available.

RESULTS

My research questions asked how participants described why they wished to incorporate women and gender into their social studies curriculum, what that looked like in their

² All names and locations are pseudonyms.

classrooms, and how students responded to that enactment. Findings suggested teachers who incorporate gender and women's experiences into their curriculum held idealistic and ameliorative views of that incorporation, and their pedagogical methods for incorporation were influenced by their personal experiences as students; however, student responses to the incorporation of gender and women's experiences attempted to reify the traditional gender roles their teachers challenged, diffracting the intended and enacted curriculum. Finally, this diffracted curriculum seemed to be impacted by the different ways discussion manifests in the classroom.

Idealism in Social Studies Education

Demonstrating a sense of idealism, both teachers viewed the purpose of social studies education as teaching students to see multiple perspectives and develop empathy for others. Sonya Woodhull believed the purpose of social studies education was to prepare students for citizenship. For Sonya, however, citizenship was more than learning about the structure of government or how to vote. Indeed, preparation for citizenship meant understanding that people hold different perspectives, respecting those differences, and learning to compromise for the larger good: "[F]or me, citizenship is about being able to take on multiple perspectives, the ability to engage in dialogue, sometimes make compromises, a willingness to understand another's point of view. Things like that." She hoped her students developed a "greater complexity when they look at the world."

Elena Anthony saw social studies education as an opportunity to build tolerance for other cultures. She wanted to encourage her students to step out of what she considered a narrow worldview and to consider other perspectives:

[T]hese kids grow up predominantly within the same demographic of, you know, white families, middle to upper class, especially in private school. And I think World History is a really great way to get them out of that singular perspective and help them understand different cultures and why they are what they are today.

Social Studies as Ameliorative

Both teachers also valued gender parity in the classroom. This was seen in their attempts to include more women in their content, as well as in their belief the inclusion would encourage young women to be more socially and politically engaged.

When thinking about incorporating women's experiences and gender into her curriculum, Sonya mostly considered integration in compensatory ways, seeking women who have contributed to the field and whom she feels had been ignored. For example, she recognized the psychology curriculum fostered a male-dominant narrative. Textbooks are "full of white men as our major theorists [...]. So I try to incorporate different positions besides the dominant theorists." She added:

I thought: “Why am I just telling stories about these men?” So, I did a little bit of research for myself and also for a project. [...] I looked into a slew of, probably about ten famous women in psychology, and not just women today, but women throughout the history of psychology. And I’ve been finding ways to bring up their names more actively in class, and to do the same thing I would do for the male theorists that I’ve been doing: I might put their picture on the board, tell some back story, talk about their greatest contribution to the field. And I’ve tried to do it in a way that is seamless, so it’s no different than the way that I talk about different famous men in the field.

A significant argument Elena provided for incorporating women into her World History curriculum was for her female students. She believed it is critical for the young women in her class to have strong historical figures with whom they could relate:

You get constant mention after mention of men, men, men. So, when you get to Byzantine [Empire], there’s a small spark of hope for Theodora. [...] She makes her way to the top. She convinces Justinian to stay in the city after a rebellion, puts *down* the rebellion because of her. And the girls are suddenly like, “Yeah, OK!” It’s that representation that I think we don’t really get a whole lot of, and the girls, they don’t really see a whole lot of it; they don’t find any kind of connection they can make until I feel like I can make that.

Pedagogical Experiences as Students

Past experiences with high school and college instructors also played a critical role in how these teachers viewed the purpose of social studies and shaped how they think about constructing their curriculum.

As a former psychology major, Sonya believed it was important for her students to recognize the motivations behind their actions. She saw this as crucial for understanding others’ perspective: “One big takeaway I love to see is that students explain their own behavior and have an ability to understand why people do the things they do.” A major influence in her thinking about perspective-taking arose from her memories of a college multicultural psychology course where students examined their own identities through the lenses of privilege and oppression:

[W]e did a few readings about things ranging from, like, microaggression to cultural experiences. And then, in class, we would come in and all talk...and every week we had to say whether or not this aspect of our identity had been privileged or oppressed.

Elena preferred her history courses to other social science disciplines because she appreciated its narrative potential. In particular, she mentions a professor who taught economic history to make her point:

I realized he told history like it was one giant story, and I had never thought of it like that before. And so [...] I went to his lectures and pretended like he was just telling me a story. Everything [was] just so much more fascinating.

Enacting a Complementary Curriculum and Student Response

The following scenes explore how these idealistic and ameliorative beliefs regarding the purpose of social studies education as well as personal educational experiences played roles in developing each teacher's complementary curriculum, the conscious and unconscious mapping of values and beliefs onto the explicit curriculum. They also demonstrate how students responded in resistant ways to a curriculum featuring nonnormative gender values.

“Why have two different places if we're the same?” Sonya's belief in the importance of teaching multiple perspectives is a critical component of her classroom. She often provided students opportunities to discuss their own experiences with each other. Prior to the following scene, she asked the students to share their personal experiences about gender socialization in small groups and then brought the conversation back to the larger class.

“Whole class recap: first question: Messages you received?” A male student kicks off the discussion. “We talked about toys. I had a bunny and blue blanket.” A young woman adds, “Girls have to wear dresses.” Sonya asks, “Was this enforced?” Several female students concur.

The female students begin discussing their experiences as children. One offers, “I was a tomboy, but my mom would always do my hair and make me wear skirts.” Another young woman replies, “My parents stuck me in ballet and my brother in soccer.” “I would sit with my legs spread and my mom would correct me.” Sonya adds, “Manspreading—a gendered term.”

“What about Question Two? Have you ever systematically considered how you developed your gender identity?” A male student offers, “When I was younger, I used to think about the fact that we had two separate locker rooms and bathrooms, and then my mom explained why, and it made sense.” Sonya asks the young man to clarify his statement: “Explain that and use the most academic language you can. What made sense?” The young man replies, “Why have two different places if we're the same? But she pointed out the differences.” Sonya helps the young man explain: “Body part differences.” He agrees. “Yes.”

Sonya moves to the next question: “How are your gender identity and expression informed or affected by your experiences growing up?” A female student describes the difference between identity and expression: “Identity is: ‘Do you feel like a boy or a girl?’ Expression is how you show it, like Jaden Smith wearing skirts.” Sonya follows up. “Do body parts have anything to do with it?” A male student replies, “Sort of. I didn't have an existential moment, but I have ‘this,’” he refers to his body, “so I'm like this.” Sonya questions the student's assumptions: “But for some people, what they have and what they feel don't match.”

A female student asks: “Question: if you’re a boy but if you like girly things, why can’t you just be...” She trails off. Another female student asks for clarification. “Identity is female anatomy rather than sex?” Sonya tries to explain: “Gender identity disorder³ is when someone feels they should have been a boy or a girl: Their gender identity does not match their sex.” A young man asks, “So if you got male parts but identify as a girl, you’re still a girl?” Sonya adjusts the term: “You’d be a transgender female.” Another young man jumps in. “Ok, I just need clarification. People talk about trans, but I don’t understand.”

Sonya breaks down the various terms for gender identity. “The term for you if you identify as your born sex is ‘cis.’ ‘Trans,’ if you identify as female and have male anatomy.” A female student asks, “So if you identify as female and were born as a female, you are cis-gender?” Sonya nods her head. “Yes. Sometimes allies use these terms too.” A male student says, “I wish more people would do that.”

Sonya asks, “Why do we need this answered?” A young woman replies, “I want to know to use the right term.”

And a young man responds, “Yes, but also if you’re going to flirt...”

Sonya follows up. “So, thinking about your own sexual preferences, you’d want to know?”

She throws the question out to the larger group.

Several young women respond. “We grew up boy/girl, but now I need to know just for reference.” “It’s still like everyone’s tiptoeing around because everyone’s not used to it. It’s human curiosity—we want to know.” “I don’t want to use the wrong term.”

Sonya moves on to the next question on the PowerPoint, “What messages do you send others regarding what it means to be a ‘boy’ or a ‘girl?’” This question seems to be tough for students to answer.

A young man responds. “If you’re told to man up, you will tell others.” A young woman counters, “I wouldn’t say anything now because you don’t know how people will respond. I don’t want to tell someone to be lady-like or ‘man-up’ because I don’t want to be attacked.”

The conversation peters out, and Sonya moves on. She clicks to a slide defining gender socialization and students write down the definition. When they are finished, she has them copy down a chart for the upcoming gender socialization lab. Students complete the chart with small side conversations: I overhear one young woman in the back make a joke to another student, “Excuse me Ma’am’ [Deep voice.] ‘I’m not a ma’am’ [Back to her regular voice]. We can’t even call people a boy or a girl anymore.”

³ In 2013, the American Psychological Association changed the term “gender identity disorder” to “gender dysphoria” thereby placing emphasis on the need to “resolve distress” over an individual’s feeling a mismatch between identity and body. In 2018, the World Health Organization changed the term to “gender incongruence” and moved it out of the category of mental disorders. (Russo, 2017; World Health Organization, 2018).

Throughout the above scene, Sonya demonstrated her desire to foster dialogue among her students. Dialogue, as she mentioned, is a critical component of civic education tied to compromise and the acknowledgment of others' perspectives. Most of her interventions within the activity supported and reinforced student comments; she also prodded them to think deeper by asking follow-up questions. There was only one point in which Sonya "led" discussion in a traditional manner—when the students specifically asked for clarification regarding sex, gender identity, and gender expression.

Much of the female students' commentary revealed the unsurprising forced parental gendering of their appearance and activities. Simultaneously, they revealed their desire to transgress those same gendered norms. Male students in the class were more apt to reify the gender binary as biologically determined. And this biologically defined concept of gender is rooted in sexual activity. In their discussion of cis- and transgender identity, when Sonya queried why a male student would want more people to specifically identify their "non-normative" gender category, another male student responded, "if you're going to flirt." The implication was that the heterosexual, cis-gendered male student can only engage in sexual banter and, perhaps, activity with a heterosexual, cis-gendered female.

Both male and female students seemed to demonstrate discomfort at the disruption of the gender binary. Students sought to label identity and expression as knowable categories that can be compared against cis- and hetero-, thus reifying heterosexual as the dominant pole of the binary. Finally, there was flat-out resistance to the disruption of the gender binary, as one young woman quietly commented to a peer, "We can't even call people a boy or a girl anymore."

"I bet no one took her serious." Elena was influenced by storytelling as a pedagogical tool through her fond memories of her own teachers. This impacted her thinking about incorporating women into her curriculum: She focused on female figures who made narrative-worthy strides, taking time to emphasize their singular impact in their cultural and historical moments. Elena believed this emphasis on the stories of significant women would create a two-fold accomplishment: First, it provided young women in her classes with historical figures like them so they might connect to the subject and find political agency; and second, it offered young men in her class an alternative to the traditionally-gendered view of women. In the following scene, Elena attempted to frame the Joan of Arc narrative as one of gender transgression and open a discussion about gender roles, past and present.

Elena shows a slide with an image of Joan of Arc and asks, "Ahh...who is this beautiful person?"

The students in the class call out, "Joan of Arc!" A male student adds, "She's a saint!"

Elena pointedly responds, "She's a female—who was she?" And a female student replies, "A peasant."

Elena launches into her Joan of Arc story. "She's thirteen years old, ripe and ready to go..." A male student snickers; Elena ignores him and continues with her story: "...minding her own business, and she gets a message from God..."

The snickering turns to laughter. Elena gives the student a "look." The boy responds, "You said 'ripe and ready to go!' I thought that was funny!" She ignores the young man's comment and looks around the classroom. Another male student redirects the conversation: "I bet no one took her serious. I wouldn't."

Elena asks, "Why not? What were women supposed to be doing during this time?"

The male students pepper her with responses: "Washing dishes, doing cooking." "Housewife things."

Elena follows up, "Is that how it is today?"

A male student in the front replies, "My mom stays at home and takes care of all that." Another boy says, "Nowadays [sic], we have housekeepers." Continuing along that vein, another young man responds: "If she has a rich lawyer for a husband, she doesn't have to do that kind of thing."

Elena brings the conversation back to the topic at hand: "Let's focus again on Joan. The things we're talking about: cooking, cleaning, sewing, are domestic duties—they take place around the home. But she gets a message from God and goes to find the king."

Elena is interrupted by a male student, "She dies." Elena responds in a mock-frustrated fashion, "I'm trying to tell a story! Let me tell the story!" A female student turns to the interrupter and jokes, "Thanks for ruining it." The male student replies, "We all know—she's a saint!"

Elena returns to her story: "Joan finds the King." She kneels as a supplicant in front of a male student's desk and, as Joan, cries out, "'Let me lead an army! I know we're in trouble, and I can do it!'" She stands and looks over the whole class. "And what does Charles say?" A female student responds. "Yes—because he's desperate."

Elena turns to a male student who had spoken earlier. "Andrew, what did you say about how you would respond to Joan?"

"I asked if men would take her seriously, because back then, I wouldn't. Women didn't go to war."

A female student speaks over Andrew. "But she was a soldier!"

Elena follows up. "Do we look at her as a woman or a soldier?"

The female student responds matter-of-factly. "Soldier." Andrew hedges. "Both."

Elena restarts her story. "Joan disguises herself as a man so as not to attract attention..."

A male student interrupts. "There are certain things you can't hide..." Elena gives the student a sideways glance and retorts, "Armor." Another boy adds, "Kinda like Mulan." Elena agrees, "Yes, kind of like Mulan."

In this scene, Elena's thinking about history as a narrative and her desire to generate interest in the subject was demonstrated in her storytelling technique. She wanted to engage her students in the *story* of history.

Students quickly identified Joan of Arc's challenges to patriarchal gender norms. One male student noted it would be difficult for men to take an adolescent girl seriously in the middle of a war, acknowledging if he were there, "I wouldn't." Elena utilized the young man's comment to elicit discussion from the students about gender roles in the past and attempted to contextualize them with the present. The male students commandeered the conversation, listing stereotypical private sphere roles performed by women. When prompted to consider how society had changed, the young men responded that roles had not changed.

The young men attempted to sexualize Joan of Arc as a way to challenge her appropriation of the traditional male role. When confronted with Joan's cross-dressing, a young man definitively stated, "[t]here are certain things you can't hide." When Elena opens her story by describing Joan as thirteen and "ripe and ready to go," another male student laughed, marking the phrase as an innuendo referring to Joan's sexual availability.

After class, Elena struggled with the balance between sharing her own opinions versus letting the students share their beliefs and values about women. She was conflicted about her male students' responses:

I really had to hold back, especially with my kid at the front, when he was talking about today, and his mom, and his experiences of moms and females and their responsibilities and what they should be doing.

Elena's decision to hold back her opinion about women's roles seemed to stem from her belief that her role was as a facilitator of discussion and also her desire to better understand her students' values and beliefs:

I don't want to stand in front of the room and tell them what they should be thinking, what they should be believing because, [and here she sighs in frustration] I don't know. I think it's helpful [for me] to get the perspective of different people, especially students of their age, so I can understand what they think, what they're experiencing today right now, not just in the classroom, but at home, like that kid did.

However, she noted the difficulties her female students had fully engaging in discussions. They were mostly silent while the boys controlled the class discussion:

But the thing is I, again, did not get a lot response from the girls in that class. So, I did not get *their* perspective on what they think women are doing today. And I could have probably singled a girl out, but the girls in that class are a little...They don't want to speak out unless...I don't know. The boys dominate that class.

Ultimately, she was surprised (and perhaps disappointed) by the boys' traditional views on gender. But she still held out hope her emphasis on female figures had the potential to change these boys' points-of-view when it comes to gender roles:

I don't think the kid up here meant to be aggressive in the way he was talking about it, I think that's just his view. That's what he knows, that's what he's used to. And so, I think by learning about Joan of Arc and other important figures in history, regardless of what time period we're in, I can try to move them out of this notion of society still expect[ing] women to do these things that we've seen in the past.

A Diffracted Curriculum

How students respond to the enacted curriculum can be considered a "diffracted curriculum." I turn to Haraway's (1992) notion of diffraction to think about this interaction between student and curriculum: "Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction. A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the effects of difference appear" (p. 300). Learning is not a one-way discursive process, and students are not passive vehicles for curricular content (Apple, 1990; Hall, 1973). Dewey, too, acknowledged student agency regarding the learning experience: "It is not the question of *how* to teach geography...but *what* geography is for the child" (cited in Tanner, 2017, p. 43). When grappling with the question of how to teach about gender in the social studies curriculum, I encountered the question of *what gender is* for these students. Student responses to the enacted curriculum provide an opportunity to examine how their values and beliefs may "interfere" with a teacher's intended and enacted curriculum, and we may "map" the effects of this diffraction. In this case, "gender" tended toward a heteronormative binary; any attempt at releasing gender from the binary cast the gender role as unintelligible (Butler, 2006).

Regarding norms surrounding gender and sexuality, Loutzenheiser (2010) argued resistant responses occur because teachers mistakenly believe if students simply "know enough" or "know right," they will alter their thinking. However, when students are forced to comply with nonnormative ideas without an honest, relational discussion with teachers, they will dig in their heels and, thus, the potential for an educative, transformational experience is weakened: "[T]he very act of trying to have white and/or straight preservice teachers [or students] [...] get it 'right' will only engender a resistance that will impede the possibility of even momentary reflection and empathy" (p. 70).

Diffraction of enacted curriculum. In this study, issues surrounding appropriate social and sexual gender norms were raised as students grappled with challenges to the gender binary. There were times when student responses to curriculum about gender or women's experiences diffracted the enacted curriculum by reifying the traditional gender binary despite teachers' intentions to foster the opposite. At times, students resisted material challenging the gender binary. In Sonya's Sociology class, a young woman joked after the discussion about transgender identity, "'Excuse me Ma'am' [Deep voice.] 'I'm not a ma'am' [Back to her regular voice]. We can't even call people a boy or a girl anymore." Using the dichotomy between what male and female voices "should" sound like in a traditionally-gendered world and then criticizing our

inability to use binary sex-gender labels, the young woman provided a point of interference with Sonya's enacted curriculum. Out of the teacher's earshot, this interference can be seen as student resistance to nonnormative definitions of gender.

Students also resisted the idea that women could take on non-traditional gender roles. In Elena's World History class, students were prompted to consider how women's roles had changed since the medieval period. Young men in the class contended gender roles had not changed: "My mom stays home and takes care of all that." While they noted a service industry existed so economically advantaged women did not have the responsibilities of traditional housework, husbands remained the economic provider: "If she has a rich lawyer for a husband, she doesn't have to do that kind of thing." Male students diffracted Elena's enacted curriculum of Joan of Arc as a transgressor of gender roles by referencing their personal understandings of how society operates, reifying the boundary between the public, a masculine space of economic provision, and the private, a feminine space of caretaking (Kimmel, 1997).

Diffraction as entanglement. The diffracted curriculum is also an entanglement of student-to-student responses. This, in turn, has the potential to entangle with teacher reflection on their intentionality. When Elena reflected on her Joan of Arc class discussion, she recognized the silence of her female students: "They don't want to speak out unless...I don't know. The boys dominate that class." The young women diffracted the male students' "dominating" behavior by not participating, leading to Elena's frustration with her students' responses and her own lack of action.

DISCUSSION

Harnessing Discussion as a Pedagogical Tool

Gatekeeping and the complementary curriculum explain much of how and why teachers make decisions about what to include (and exclude) in their lessons. In this study, both teachers believed the integration of women's experiences was important for their students' education, and thus, emphasized the topic in the subjects they taught. Both teachers incorporated discussion as a pedagogical tool to varying degrees of success.

It became clear during observations that efficacy with discussion techniques fostered more open conversations about gender, even if resistant diffraction remained. At Cypress Glen, both the English and Social Science departments utilized structured discussions, such as Socratic seminars throughout the grades. Student engagement in Sonya's class discussion was quite high even in less structured discussions. Perhaps this is because students developed and internalized the appropriate listening and response skills after several years of experience.

Research has demonstrated female students participate in class less as they progress through school (Sadker, et al., 2009; Sanders, 2002) and male students are more aggressive and dominant in classroom discussions (Segall, et al., 2018), a finding reinforced by Elena's class discussion about Joan of Arc. Segall, et al. (2018) argue Socratic seminars have the potential to

invite more female students into participation due to its deliberative, rather than divisive, nature. Sonya's classroom, which, as mentioned, utilized Socratic seminars regularly, seemed to have an even split in male-female participation.

Deploying Discussion to Respond to the Diffracted Curriculum

As noted earlier, this diffracted curriculum has the potential to impact student experiences of the enacted curriculum. It also seems to affect how teachers view their efficacy. This was observed in Elena's reflection of her experience during her Joan of Arc class discussion. Rather than challenge the male students' perspectives, Elena believed her role was to facilitate discussion by eliciting opinions rather than offering alternatives to what the students presented. However, she acknowledged she did not hear all her students' perspectives and was frustrated by the ways the students played out gendered behaviors in her classroom.

However, experience with discussion-based pedagogy seemed to moderate the impact of the diffracted curriculum. Sonya also encountered diffraction when discussing the construct of gender identity. When she asked her students whether or not biological sex ("body parts") were foundational to gender identity, one of her male students implied they were certainly connected; Sonya immediately questioned the young man's assumptions by offering information challenging the student's assumption (which Elena was hesitant to do).

When comparing these two teachers' experiences with the diffracted curriculum, discussion seems to be a pedagogical space where the diffracted curriculum affects classroom experience. Elena expressed the desire for classroom discussions in which students analyzed the role of gender in historical and contemporary societies. However, she was also reticent to engage her students with her own ideas because she worried expressing her opinions may be perceived as "tell[ing] them how to think." Simultaneously, she was unwilling to call upon her female students to participate because she feared they would not engage. When the discussion was steered by male students towards traditional gender roles, she did not try to raise questions about the students' assumptions. Instead, she allowed the young men's depictions to go unchallenged. Engebretson (2018) has noted the difficulty novice teachers encounter when facing the reality of students who do not share similar views, even when they have the passion and tools to teach for equity. Elena encountered this difficulty and struggled to define a course of action with which she could be satisfied.

As with Elena, Sonya desired discussion in her classroom. To encourage it, she structured scaffolds to ensure the process. First, students would think independently, then they would discuss in small groups, and finally, the whole class discussed the topic together. When holding discussion, Sonya was as much a part of it as the students. She had no issue with throwing out ideas to "stir the pot" and challenge the students' concepts. Sonya made a point and expected her students to take up the debate. In her relationship with her students, Sonya demonstrated and modeled her belief in the importance of listening to and valuing other perspectives. One

could argue Sonya valued this relationship more than the subject matter she taught. Rather than expecting her students to “know right” or “know better,” Sonya built a “reciprocal learning relationship” where teacher and student were “resisting and embracing the mutual apprenticeship” (Loutzenheiser, 2010, p. 70).

CONCLUSION

I began this article arguing we cannot know if what we, as teacher educators, advocate for in social studies education has any ameliorative impact if we do not go into the classroom and examine what occurs there. This research illuminates student response to the enacted curriculum and how teachers react to it. In this case, this diffracted curriculum manifested most often as a resistance to teacher attempts to challenge traditional gender roles and ultimately reified heteronormativity. This diffracted curriculum had the potential to frustrate teacher expectations of their personal efficacy.

There may be other ways to interpret this data. Issues of classroom management, teacher experience, and the efficacy of direct instruction compared to student-centered learning were all exposed during my interviews and observations. Some scholars may find these (or other) issues more salient than my focus on teacher incorporation of women’s experiences and gender into the social studies curriculum and student response.

However, if we, as teacher educators, wish to ameliorate issues of gender, race, ability, and class in the social studies curriculum, we must be mindful of what goes on in the classroom, specifically how students respond to the curriculum offered. Students are not passive sieves in which teachers pour content knowledge; they actively construct their understandings of the world. If students encounter information that does not match up with their own experiences, it is not surprising that an initial response would be resistance. In an age of information silos, it is not only critical we expand content to include the excluded; it is also imperative we provide teachers with tools to breach those silos in such ways that students will listen.

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