AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF


Abstract approved: ________________
Karen Higgins

The purpose of this study was to analyze preservice teachers' talk about gender issues in education through a poststructural feminist theoretical framework. Eighteen Master of Arts in Teaching students volunteered to participate in a seminar. During the seminar the participants wrote about and discussed gender issues in teaching. Data collected from the seminar included transcripts of audio-taped conversations as well as response journals and autobiographical sketches written by the participants. Four themes, gender talk, teacher talk, confessional talk, and resistance talk, were explored in the data. The theme gender talk included the participants' observations of and discussions about the differences between females and males. Teacher talk included discussions of what it means to be a teacher and how gender, race,
and class impact the teacher's role and the educational experience of children. The data illustrated the multiple and competing discourses these preservice teachers employed when discussing gender issues. The themes confessional talk and resistance talk focused on how the participants talked about gender. These themes raised questions about teacher education practices. They served to illustrate the power relationships inherent in teacher education and how these relations of power act to authorize some discourses and suppress others. Modifications of teacher education practices were recommended by the researcher. These recommendations included helping preservice teachers deconstruct the discourses of education and the role of the teacher as well as suggesting that preservice teachers could benefit from alternate and varied educational sites in which to explore issues of teaching.
Preservice Teachers Explore Gender Issues in Education Through Talk

by

J. Camille Cammack

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APPROVED:

Redacted for Privacy
Major Professor, representing Education

Redacted for Privacy
Director of School of Education

Redacted for Privacy
Dean of Graduate School

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I have no pretensions that I have told the entire story . . . or even that there is an entire story to tell. (Elam, 1994, p. 3)

I approached the research described here as an opportunity to see differently. Dual interests in preservice teacher education and gender-fair teaching found me examining related research and asking myself if there was more, or other to be said. The result has raised more questions than answers. I find pleasure in the realization that “supplying answers is not the only task of thinking” (Elam, 1994, p. 4). In fact I found that searching for answers resulted foremost in a clearer sense of which questions might be fruitful.

Current research characterizes preservice teachers as unaware and largely ineffective at providing equitable learning experiences for girls and boys (Lather, 1981; Martin & Lock, 1991). The picture painted is often dismal and leaves me with a feeling of slogging uphill through thick mud. The research scrutinizes
preservice teachers but leaves largely untouched the culture of learning to teach in which the teachers are involved. What I ultimately came to look for was a new way to understand preservice teachers' views of gender-fair teaching. Discussing her own research, Jennifer Gore (1993) says, "Foucault's analysis of power enables me to see Scott not simply as ideologically mistaken or ignorant but, as possibly resisting the technologies imposed by the regime of truth embodied in my teacher education practices" (p. 148).

If I could see the words of preservice teachers as something other than naive, flawed, or lacking, then perhaps I could envision new ways to work in teacher education. Theorizing preservice teacher education and gender-fair teaching through a poststructural feminist lens provided me with new hope.

The following questions emerged in the process of my inquiry: How do the circumstances of learning to teach about gender equitable practices shape thinking? What do students draw upon to make sense of their efforts at gender-fair teaching? What part does subjectivity play in these efforts? And, how is teacher education implicated in the process?
I hold no illusions that my engagement with these questions produced “complete” or “best” answers or even that readers will come to similar conclusions to my own. I think, now, that I could have searched endlessly for the “right” road to travel in this inquiry only to find none existed and that several different roads lead to inspiring vistas. I agree with Britzman’s (1991) analysis that, “No doubt, other researchers, drawing upon other epistemological traditions, would differently interpret my constructions. Multiple perspectives on the same event, however, are both inevitable and desirable” (p. 16). My simple hope is that through this study, new awareness might result or that readers might be left with questions of their own to ponder.

Poststructural Feminism

I understand that I have incorporated into this analysis unlikely bedfellows. There is a tension between poststructuralism and feminism that I do not attempt to resolve. First, because I do not think it can be resolved and, second, because I think the tension between the two is a source of inspiration to be mined. I borrow an argument from Elam (1994) that there is “an interest in setting
these two ways of thinking (which do not make a pair) along side each other” (p. 1). Feminism, or more accurately feminisms because there is no one feminism (Elam, 1994; hooks, 1994; Luke & Gore, 1992), shifts the political ground and is centered in the lived experiences of women. Feminism offers me grounding and purpose. Poststructuralism, often criticized for its inaccessibility to anyone besides academics and, when taken to its extreme, an abysmal view of Kantian despair, offers me a change in perspective from the foundational truth of “the” scientific method. These “double displacements undo the map of intellectual and social space inherited from the Enlightenment” (Elam, 1994, p. 2). Feminism and poststructuralism act as interruptions of each other and, so, keep the system in play (Lather, 1991). Feminism and poststructuralism do have some points of intersection. They share subjectivity (Weedon, 1987), a concept central to this analysis. They also “share a refusal to privilege the answer over the question in thinking” (Elam, 1994, p. 3).

I recognize that throughout my analysis I argue simultaneously for rigor and subjectivism and leave to the reader the task of untangling the discordance produced. I seek for rigor in tracking the
path of my analysis and even invite critique from the reader. At the same time, I employ secondary discussions of the philosophy of poststructuralism, as explored by educational feminists, because they speak strongly to me, and not because I have thoroughly studied the works of Foucault, Lacan, or Derrida.

I want to make it clear that I am not looking for clarity. The search for clarity can, by reducing the complex to simplistic, be the very thing that obscures our view. I also realize that complexity is new to me. While I search for new ways of looking, I continually stumble over myself in the process. Our histories “...tend to turn into behaviors that run around behind us and tell stories for all the world to hear” (Wink, 1997, p. 132).

Definitions

I have chosen not to include definitions of key terms here although definitions do emerge in the reading of the text as they seem necessary. The terms used in definitions do not mean, in any simple way, one thing. To foreground the definitions in the introduction would act as a sort of closure and suggest that there is
agreement on their meaning. I do include Weedon's (1987) summary of feminist poststructuralism here as a point of departure:

Feminist poststructuralism, then, is a mode of knowledge production which uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change. Through the concept of discourse, which is seen as a structuring principle of society, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity, feminist poststructuralism is able, in detailed historically specific analysis, to explain the working of power on behalf of specific interests and to analyze the opportunities for resistance to it. (p. 41)

Collaboration

The research reported here was conducted in collaboration with my research partner, Donna Phillips. Donna is a fellow doctoral student whose research interests intersected with my own. Knowledge creation within poststructural feminism is defined as a social act. It seemed appropriate that the design and collection of the data for this research take place in the context of a social interaction between researchers. Many of the ideas expressed in this report reflect our collaborative thinking. Our extended interactions and discussions also worked as a type of reflexivity, a poststructural concept of validity described in the methodology.
Finally, I include here a short outline of what follows in the text. Chapter Two is a more detailed description of the theory which frames the inquiry and an analysis of the literature on preservice teachers and gender-fair teaching viewed through theory. Chapter Three describes the study. Procedures and methods of data analysis are delineated. Chapter Four integrates the reporting and the analysis of the data with discussion. Chapter Five concludes the research with a reflection on the research process and the implications, of this study, for teacher educators. Recommendations are made for future research.
CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter includes a detailed description of the theory of poststructural feminism which frames this study. The ontology, epistemology and methodology of the theory are addressed. Following the theoretical framework is a review of literature. Three bodies of literature related to teaching and gender are considered. The studies reviewed here were selected because they provide background about gender issues in schools, focus directly on preservice teachers and gender, and set an historical context for the research topic. The historical context is an important element within poststructural feminist theory. Like the theory, the literature frames the data and the analysis of the study.

Theoretical Framework

Reinharz (1991) said, "Since interest free knowledge is logically impossible we should feel free to substitute explicit interests for implicit ones" (in Lather, 1991, p. 50). I have a strong conviction that the pathway to truth claims must be mapped. I am in
consort with Haraway's (1988) argument "for situated and embodied knowledges and an argument against various forms of unlocatable, and so irresponsible, knowledge claims. Irresponsible means unable to be called into account" (p. 583). Within the research community, the challenge to objectivity has, for some, resulted in the dismal taking up of subjective stances which by their very nature resist critique. Some worry that the increased attention to the politics of knowledge will mean that "the ship of science will run aground on the shoals of relativism" (Lather, 1992a, p. 90). My purpose in delineating the theory which frames my research is to make clear for the reader the stance from which I viewed and analyzed the data and, in so doing, open up the research for meaningful critique. I seek for "strong objectivity," defined by Harding (1993), as "objectivity that can take the subject as well as the object of knowledge to be a necessary object of critical, causal--scientific--social explanations" (p. 71). I will include both the theory of poststructural feminism, as I understand it, developed primarily in the writings of Deborah Britzman, Jennifer Gore, Patti Lather, Erica McWilliam, and Chris Weedon and a description of my own process of coming to embrace this theory.
I name my own perspective as white, female, middle-class, and feminist. As a feminist, I adopt the view that all knowing is political in nature. Gender serves as a primary social construct which shapes our understanding and view of the world (Lather, 1992a). My background is educational practice. I spent over ten years working as a teacher in public schools. I returned to graduate studies the year I turned forty. Frankly, I was tired of working in the trenches. I was tired of lunch count and bus duty. I was weary of fund raising paperwork and what seemed like endless demands on my time that had little to do with educating children. I was disturbed by overcrowded classrooms of willful eight-year-olds with needs so diverse that I struggled to understand them let alone meet them. I was frustrated by the constant news accounts of the failure of my chosen profession to live up to its mission and I was saddened by my own willingness to agree with the public at large that our nation's schools were in a state of disarray. I took this, however, to have a different meaning than was communicated on the six o'clock news and in the editorial pages of the newspaper. I tried, at least, to see the failures of schools more as the result of the overburdening of the institution of education with impossible
demands than as an indicator of my personal failure. Although I toyed with the idea of leaving the profession entirely, I was aware of the deep investment I had in education. I hoped I would find teaching at the college level less burdened with the politics of public education and also more focused on the act of teaching.

In the early stages of my studies, as perhaps is typical of new graduate students, I went through philosophical orientations with voracity. I took in theories in great gulps and was constantly in need of more. I traveled with head spinning speed through the traditional educational theories of Dewey and Piaget to feminists such as Belenky and Gilligan. I took up critical theory, as described by Freire, Shor, Giroux, and McLaren with the zeal of a new recruit only to let it go as rapidly as I had embraced it. In the context of a feminist research course, I stumbled on Jennifer Gore’s book, The Struggle for Pedagogies. This book helped me place in a broader context the theories I had been studying, and introduced me to current feminist educational theorists whose work has a distinctly postmodern flavor.

I am embarrassed by what seems a self indulgent exercise of recounting my personal experience. However, what seems important
is that I came to graduate school looking for a way to see differently. What the theories of Britzman, Gore, Lather, McWilliam, and Weedon offered me was a comfortable place where I could rest and look at the field of education through a new hopeful lens.

I chose to employ a simple structure suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1994) for delineating the theory I call poststructural feminism. I equate theory with Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) term “inquiry paradigm.” They say, “Inquiry paradigms define for inquirers what it is they are about, and what falls within and outside of the limits of legitimate inquiry” (p. 108). To define an inquiry paradigm, or theory, three questions, related to ontology, epistemology, and methodology must be answered.

1. The ontological question. What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it? . . .

2. The epistemological question. What is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known? . . .

3. The methodological question. How can the inquirer (would be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known? (p. 108)

Each question is addressed in turn. Again, I call primarily upon the works of Britzman, Gore, Lather, McWilliam, and Weedon to formulate answers to these questions.
The Ontological Question

The social construction of knowledge. Facts, like theories and values, are social constructions (Lather, 1991). Central to poststructural theory is the shift in focus from the “found worlds” of positivism to the “constructed worlds” of postpositivism (Lather, 1992a). Poststructuralists reject scientific claims to objective “truth” (Weedon, 1987). Knowledge exists only within the historical and social context in which it is created. It has no a priori presence absent engagement by the human mind. Because knowledge is confined within its context, it is always “provisional, open-ended and relational” (Luke & Gore, 1992, p. 7).

Within poststructuralism worlds are constructed through language. “Language is theorized as constitutive rather than representational” (Lather, 1991, p. 105). This means that language can never be innocent of the meanings we assign to it. We both constitute and are constituted by the language we use.

Neither social reality nor the “natural” world has fixed intrinsic meanings which language reflects or expresses. Different language and different discourses within the same language divide up the world and give it meaning in different ways which cannot be reduced to one another
through translation or by appeal to universally shared concepts reflecting a fixed reality. (Weedon, 1987, p. 22)

The limits language imposes on our thoughts was illustrated for me in a discussion I had with a Native American friend of mine. Learning Anishinaabe, Tim became aware of a distinct difference between English and his Native American tongue. English, he said, is comprised primarily of nouns. The noun “blueberry pie” quickly conjures up an image in our minds. However, the Native American language he was learning was comprised primarily of verbs. To say “blueberry pie” would require a complex telling of the steps necessary to make the pie. As I thought about this example, I was struck by a realization of how our views of the world might differ because of these variable noun/verb ratios in our languages.

Language acts to delineate and shape our thoughts. It determines both what can and cannot be said (Britzman, 1991; Lather, 1991). “Language can mask and illuminate, and also affirm and challenge how we understand our social conditions. It has the potential either to reproduce given realities as immutable and ubiquitous, or produce critiques that have the potential to construct new realities” (Britzman, 1991, p. 12).
Language is also a sight of political struggle (Weedon, 1987). Language that is powerful is referred to in poststructural theory as discourse. Ideas, talk, silences, and behavior are evidence of the discourses within any social field (Johannesson, 1998). These acts, referred to as discursive practices (Johannesson, 1998), are shaped by and shape discourse. The relationship between discourses and discursive practices might be seen as symbiotic—each contributing to the growth and well-being of the other. Discourses, then, dictate what can and cannot be said and what is judged as truth within a particular social and historical context. Power in language acts to normalize some ideas and practices so that they become taken for granted or seen as simply “the way things are.” Discourses are what is assumed. Discourses “parade as ‘essential’ truths” (Thompson & Gitlin, 1995, p. 131). They are the rules by which “any speaker must operate in order to be heard as meaningful” (McWilliam, 1994, p. 36). “Which accounts count depends upon whose voice is valued in the larger culture” (Britzman, 1991, p. 18). For example, Weedon (1987) said, “Dominant discourses of female sexuality, which define it as naturally passive, together with dominant social definitions of women’s place as first and foremost in the home, can be found in
social policy, medicine, education, the media and the church and elsewhere” (p. 36).

Intimately tied to the poststructural view of knowledge and discourse is power. Power is not viewed as possessed by individuals or groups but as circulating, never owned, and localized (Ellsworth, 1992). Authoritative discourses are powerful discourses.

A typical objective of poststructural theory in research is to explore and problematize discourses (Fendler, 1998). The discourses surrounding gender issues and preservice teacher education, and the relationship of these discourses to preservice teachers’ thinking, form an important part of this study.

Subjectivity. Within poststructural theory the nature of the self, like the nature or truth, is fluid (Britzman, 1991; Lather, 1991; McWilliam, 1994). “Subjectivity’ is used to refer to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her way of understanding her relation to the world” (Weedon, 1987, 32). The concept of subjectivity breaks with the humanist view of the essential self. Rather than understanding the
self as unified and rational, the self is understood as a sight of contradiction and conflict (McWilliam, 1994).

Conventional notions of dialogue and democracy assume rationalized, individualized subjects capable of agreeing on universalizable “fundamental moral principles” and “quality of human life” that become self-evident when subjects cease to be self-interested and particularistic about group rights. Yet social agents are not capable of being fully rational and disinterested; and they are subjects split between conscious and unconscious and among multiple social positionings [italics added]. (Ellsworth, 1992, p. 108)

The subjective self is linked to the various social environments in which we live. Subjectivity recognizes the power of the environment, the temporality of knowledge, and the existence of multiple-selves behaving in consonance with the rules of various subcultures (Brooks, J. & Brooks, M. 1993). “Culture is where identities, desires, and investments are mobilized, constructed, and reworked. It is the site where antagonistic meanings push and pull at our sensibilities, deep investments, and relationships with others” (Britzman, 1991, p. 57).

This view of the self has important implications for the way the participants in the study were viewed and how their words were understood and interpreted. No attempt was made to uncover an
essential "truth" of who they were. Rather the focus was to understand them in the multiple and often contradictory subject positions they assumed and to search for explanations of these subject positions within the various cultures to which they belonged.

**The Epistemological Question**

In the research process I have felt like a scientist, peering intently through a microscope at a petri dish only to realize that I, myself, am living in the same petri dish which I attempted to view from a privileged stance. Wittgenstein (as cited in Linn, 1996) describes the relationship between the knower and the known when, as knowers, we are inescapably restrained within our own histories and viewpoints as follows:

> Since we're all flies trapped inside a fly-bottle, our problems stem from the nature of our fly-bottles, i.e. from the descriptions of the world that we think in and live under. And if this is the case, what we need to worry about isn't whether the descriptions are true, which, since we can never break out of the fly-bottle, we can never know anyway, but rather what the descriptions are like, how they influence our thought and behavior, and how they should be changed to solve our problems. (p. 27)
Within poststructural feminism, what can be known always resides within the perspective of the knower. "All knowings are partial . . . there are fundamental things each of us cannot know" (Ellsworth, 1992, p. 101). Within this framework the challenge becomes not to stand apart, as disinterested spectators, but to explore as fully as possible the point on which we stand.

Epistemology is grounded in the specific (Luke & Gore, 1992) with a recognition that there are multiple truths, multiple perspectives, and multiple interpretations (Lather, 1991). "Central to poststructuralism and postmodernism is an anti-foundational epistemology. This epistemology rejects foundational truths located in disciplinary knowledges and rejects the unitary rationalist subject as foundation of all knowledge" (Luke & Gore, 1992, p. 5). The knower and the known are intimately bound together, each responsible for the other.

In summary, what can be known is specific to the context of knower. All tellings are partial and implicate both the knower and the known in the process. The ontology and epistemology described so far foreshadow the methodology. In poststructural feminism
there is a tentative and fresh approach to methodology. Some possible methodological practices will be described next.

The Methodological Question

Lather (1991) suggests that postmodern research acts to disrupt the clear, “authorial voice” and avoids linearity and closure (Lather, 1991, p. 8). Poststructural feminism suggests several methodological possibilities that work to undo traditional ways of doing research and suggest alternative avenues. The following sections look at deconstruction, reflexivity, and praxis as possible methodological practices.

Deconstruction. “Deconstruction under the poststructural banner is most commonly referred to as archaeology of knowledge” (Luke & Gore, 1992, p. 5). To deconstruct means to look at a text, idea, or “truth” in a way that uncovers its cultural creation and denaturalizes it. Deconstruction also foregrounds what is not said in our texts to reveal the unnoticed or concealed (Lather, 1991). The researcher's deconstructive task is “to disrupt, to keep the system in play, to set up procedures to continuously demystify the realities we create . . .” (Lather, 1992b, p. 120). It is to look critically at
taken for granted ideas or practices, which appear or are understood to be "normal" or "natural," in order to rethink them—and then rethink our rethinking.

Lather (1991) said, “Instead of commenting on a text or practice in ways that define it, a deconstructive approach links our ‘reading’ to ourselves as socially situated spectators” (p. 145). For example, in a research analysis, Deborah Britzman (1994) includes only four short excerpts from interviews with Jamie Owl, the student teacher who is the informant in her case study. Rather than using lengthy quotes to fix Jamie’s identity, Britzman’s analysis shows how the normative views of the teaching identity, as stable, create a point of tension for Jamie Owl. She concludes that Jamie is limited in her ability to critically think about herself as a teacher because she is confined within the normative discourse of what it means to learn to teach.

Reflexivity. Reflexivity is the process of continually looking back on our research. Paired with deconstruction, reflexivity requires us to constantly ask ourselves how our research might be dangerous and whether or not the research itself acts as a new
disciplinary technique or becomes a new "regime of truth" (Gore, 1993). Lather (1986) defines reflexivity as a measure of validity. Valid postpositivist research must include reflexivity, or, some documentation of how the researcher's assumptions affected the data. Reflexivity is a way of remembering that as researchers, we too are inside the fly bottle.

Reflexivity is more, however, than just a cursory look at ourselves and the process of our research. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) identify three criteria of reflexivity:

First, its primary target is not the individual analyst but the social and intellectual unconscious embedded in analytic tools and operations; second, it must be a collective enterprise rather than the burden of the loan academic; and, third, is seeks not to assault but to buttress the epistemological security of sociology. (p. 36: emphasis is original)

Praxis. “When teachers are the direct objects of our research, we run the risk of wronging them as persons” (Noddings, 1986, p. 506). Within poststructural feminism ethical questions of the relationship between the researcher and the researched are raised. Poststructural feminism works to disrupt traditional power relationships which place the researcher as "expert" and final
arbiter of the informants words. Lather (1991) suggests a move “from universalizing spokes persons to cultural workers who do what they can to lift the barriers which prevent people from speaking for themselves” (p. 47). Thompson and Gitlin (1994) urge us to, “create spaces in which relationships among the pedagogical participants are realized, [thereby] shifting the balance of power and authority” (p. 132).

Poststructural feminism also suggests an element of praxis, or reciprocity, in the research. It is not enough to add, in some objective way, to a theory or body of knowledge. The impact of the research on the participants also needs consideration. This includes efforts to design the research so that it might have personal value for the participants and to ask ourselves how our research can support power for rather than power over our informants.

Special care must be taken to honor the words of the participants. Noddings (1986) suggests a collegial relationship between researcher and participants as co-creators of data. She says that “colleagues, like friends, do not simply report or tell on each other’s errors” (p. 508). Britzman (1991) describes the importance of situating the interpretation of the participants’
words. "Indeed, it is for researchers to narrate and interpret the words of others and render explicit their own process [italics added] of understanding . . ." (p. 51). The concept of reflexivity comes back into play as we strive to make the participants neither kings or pawns in the research process (McWilliam, 1994).

Poststructural feminism, as an "inquiry paradigm," delineates the parameters of what can and cannot be known and how one can go about knowing what there is to be known. Poststructural feminism also suggests a fresh look at the literature on preservice teachers and gender issues as illustrated next.

Review of Literature

The standard structure and function of a literature review serves to state, for the purpose of providing background and legitimacy for the research, what is known by the academic community about the topic or field of study. However, within this general format, the deep investments of those producing the research disappear in general statements of fact, or are ignored. Discrete bits of information, or "truths," from diverse contexts are brought together to produce a supposed picture of what is already
known and what remains to be uncovered. "We talk about our findings, implying somehow that we discover the world rather than construe it (McWilliam, 1994, p. 49).

Poststructural feminist theory, as a challenge to assessable, context free truth, makes such a review of literature problematic. Although a review of the literature on preservice teachers and gender equity issues is presented here, a different purpose is assigned to this review. Rather than presenting general conclusions to illuminate what is known, I have searched for themes in the research as a way to mine the educational discourses surrounding preservice teachers and gender equity. The studies are reviewed not for what they conclude about preservice teachers on gender equity issues, but for what they reveal about what is and is not said about equity issues within our current culture of teaching.

Three groups of studies are discussed here. I begin with a brief look at the research on the differing educational experiences of females and males in schools. Secondly, I present research which looks historically at gender and the teaching profession. Finally, a more detailed look at current research on preservice teachers and gender issues is discussed. I also want to note here the discursive
relationship between the literature and the data collected for my study. The literature illuminated the data and the data suggested further themes to search out in the literature. For example, as the preservice teachers in the present study talked, their familiarity with educational strategies for achieving gender equity in schools became clear as did their perspectives on the impact of the women's movement of the 1970s. The literature review shaped and was shaped by the data.

**Gender Related Educational Experience**

A significant amount of educational research concerning the differential treatment of females and males in schools has been conducted over the last two and one-half decades. Three recent influential pieces include Myra and David Sadkers' (1995) work, *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls*, a book length report that summarizes over twenty years of research on gender equity issues in schools; a report commissioned by the American Association of University Women (1995), *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, a study of major research findings on girls in education; and Herbert and Suzanne Grossmans' (1994) research
based book for teachers, *Gender Issues in Education*. The Sadker's book and the AAUW report have been readily available to the general public. *Failing at Fairness* was used as the basis for an episode of Dateline NBC. Because of their wide audience, these pieces impact the national debate on gender issues in education. Each of these studies looks at the systemic oppression of females in the culture of United States schools. Findings include disparity in the amount and quality of teacher attention awarded girls and boys, differences for girls and boys in their exposure to gender appropriate role models in curriculum content and materials, and issues of sexual harassment. These issues, along with related consequences for girls as they mature to adulthood and enter the work force, are open for discussion in educational and public circles.

**An Historical Account of the Teaching Profession**

Historically, women and minorities in the United States have had to earn the right to learn and the right to teach (Lerner, 1977). While education for men was viewed as a necessity and a priority, education for women was viewed as a luxury or even a danger. What
follows is a historical summary of how women entered education and became the nation’s teachers.

With the growth of common schools in the early 1800s, school teaching emerged as a female occupation (Lerner, 1977). As work moved from the farm to the factory, the country's enthusiasm for an educated work force increased (Griffin, 1997). A plethora of job opportunities were available for young men who chose not to work on farms. With these new opportunities many abandoned teaching as a means of support. The need for more educated workers in addition to a large immigrant population put teachers in high demand (Grumet, 1988). However, the accompanying rise in the need for teachers was not met with an equal rise in the taxpayers’ willingness to pay for them. Education, in the primary schools at least, became a female occupation out of economic necessity. Women were viewed as good at working with children, but perhaps more importantly, they were willing to work for one-third of mens' pay. Often poorly prepared, women entered teaching in huge numbers. During the antebellum period it is estimated that one out of every five women in Massachusetts had done school teaching at some point in their lives (Grumet, 1988).
It is informative to compare women's and men's salaries in teaching beginning with the advent of the Dame school and the school marm. Lerner (1977) reports the 1840 wages for men and women in three states. In Vermont, men were paid $12.00 per month while women earned $4.75. In New York, men earned $14.96 and women earned $6.69. In Massachusetts, the pay for men was $24.51 a month while women received $9.07. By 1888, 63% of all teachers were women. Women made up 90% of the teachers in cities (Lerner, 1977). Women continue to dominate the teaching occupation today. In 1953, 93% of all primary school teachers were female. Women still make up 72% of all elementary teachers (Griffin, 1997). As women's work, teaching became a low paid occupation. In a society that assigns relative value to work based on salary, the profession of teaching, particularly of the young, is held in low regard.

Nearly 150 years ago, Susan B. Anthony recognized the problems associated with the low status of teaching as a profession. She attended the 1853 annual education convention being held in Rochester. After having listened to the hours of discussion about the lack of respect afforded the teaching profession, she requested the opportunity to speak. A half hour debate ensued about whether
she should be heard. Finally, the men present voted on her request and she was granted permission. Part of her speech included the following:

> It seems to me, gentlemen, that none of you quite comprehend the cause of the disrespect of which you complain. Do you not see that so long as society says a woman is incompetent to be a lawyer, minister, or doctor, but has ample ability to be a teacher, that every man of you who chooses this profession tacitly acknowledges that he has no more brains than a woman? And this, too, is the reason that teaching is a less lucrative profession, as here men must compete with the cheap labor of women. Would you exalt your profession, exalt those who labor with you? Would you make it more lucrative, increase the salaries of the women engaged in the noble work of educating our future Presidents, Senators, and Congressmen? (Lerner, 1977, p. 235)

Anthony’s speech received mixed reaction. One woman commented, “I felt so mortified I really wished the floor would open and swallow me up. Who can that creature be? She must be a dreadful woman to get up that way and speak in public” (Lerner, 1977, p. 235). The President of the Association, Mr. Hazeltine said, “As much as I am compelled to admire your rhetoric and logic, the matter and manner of your address and its delivery, I would rather follow a daughter of mine to her grave, than to have her deliver such an address before such an assembly” (Lerner, 1977, pp. 235-36).
The problem identified by Susan B. Anthony in the 1853 convention has not been solved. Women and men in the teaching profession do not share the same level of respect afforded other professions in our society. In addition, within the profession itself, women's and men's experiences continue to be different. While more women are teachers, men represent the majority in the teaching-related occupations with higher salaries and prestige. For example, most school principals and 95% of all school superintendents are men (Griffin, 1997). These male dominated positions are the positions of power and decision making. The result is a paradoxical relationship of teaching as "women's work" but women's work that is largely defined and controlled by men.

Women's contributions are notably lacking in the teaching profession today (Lather, 1981). Lather (1981) charts the recent history of women's studies courses as an indicator of emphasis on women's contributions. Education lags behind other fields in the inclusion of such courses.

Some feminists, especially those associated with women's studies, view patriarchy as the educational paradigm (Gore, 1993). As such, the field of education has often been ignored by feminist
scholars and consequently has not been included as a site of feminist reform. The profession as a whole has been viewed as a place where women have been marginalized and silenced (Grumet, 1988).

These historical accounts illuminate discourses surrounding the teaching profession. These discourses act on teachers as they learn to teach and as they enact their roles within the institution of education.

Preservice Teachers and Gender Issues

As I reviewed the research on teacher education and gender-fair teaching, two things became clear. First, there is a very limited amount of empirical research that addresses teacher education and gender-fair teaching directly. Second, the theory the researchers used to frame their research is important to understanding their findings. I have divided the available research into three types: a) the level of inclusion of gender issues in preservice teacher education programs, b) attitudes preservice teachers have towards gender issues, and c) preservice teachers' behaviors relative to gender issues. I have also included an analysis
of how the theory, explicitly or implicitly employed by the researchers, is reflected in the findings.

Inclusion of gender issues in preservice teacher education. An ERIC database search (1978-1981) conducted by David and Myra Sadker in 1985 found 22,425 matches with teacher education as a descriptor. Of these, only 88 included sex equity, discrimination, or race equity as an additional descriptor. My own ERIC database search for the years 1992 to 1996 found 9,474 matches with teacher education as a descriptor. Of these, only 67 also included sex bias as an additional descriptor. The Sadkers (1985) concluded, "It is likely that approximately 175,000 preservice teachers certified each year have only limited knowledge of sex bias in education and are taught few if any skills to remedy this problem" (p. 153). My search of the most recent educational resources adds support to their conclusion. Theorizing from a poststructural lens we might conclude that the discourse continues to place issues of equity on the periphery of educational importance.

Campbell and Sanders' (1997) descriptive survey studied the extent to which preservice methods courses in mathematics,
science, and technology address gender equity. The researchers found that gender equity was felt to be important but should not dominate. They found that most professors had positive attitudes towards gender equity but teacher education does not include sufficient attention to gender equity. This conclusion is based on the lack of attention by teacher education to Title IX and the paucity of attention given gender equity in teacher education when compared with other areas. Limited time to address all necessary knowledge and skills for adequate teacher preparation is suggested as a possible barrier to more focus on gender. Campbell and Sanders also report on possible alternatives for improving equity instruction. These alternatives were generated from an open-ended question included in the survey. They include such things as teaching specific equity teaching strategies and incorporating equity issues into field experiences. The researchers' conclusion is best summarized in their title “Uninformed but Interested.”

In a similar study, Mader and King (1995) examined the extent to which gender issues are incorporated into teacher education programs. In a survey of program administrators and faculty from Michigan’s teacher education programs, they found gender
instruction lacking. The results of this study are questionable, however, because of serious flaws in the validity of the instruments. Questions were leading and when the results were reported, the responses seemed to be grouped together in a way that showed what the researchers had hypothesized.

The research done by Campbell and Sanders and by Mader and King use positivist research methodologies to support the idea that gender issues receive limited attention in teacher education programs. The researchers' analysis is confined within the positivist framework they adopt. While they raise the issue of limited time, they do not theorize about how time is allocated within teacher education and what and how topics compete for space on the teacher education agenda. They do not look at the underlying assumptions suggested by what is included and what is excluded in teacher education curriculum and the historical antecedents to this curriculum. Lack of time is seen as a sufficient explanation in and of itself and a call to change sufficient to bring about renewed efforts towards including equity issues in the curriculum.
Preservice teachers' attitudes about gender issues. Avery and Walker (1993) did an exploratory study designed to understand how preservice teachers account for differences in academic achievement by gender and ethnicity. Their focus was on the nature of preservice teachers rather than preservice education programs.

The researchers found that 82% of elementary preservice teachers and 94% of secondary preservice teachers attribute differences between the genders to society. They also report that 69% of elementary teachers and 73% of secondary teachers attribute the differences to school; 23% and 31% to family; and 21% and 20% to genetics. Avery and Walker concluded that most preservice teachers attribute gender achievement differences to social influences. They appeal to teacher education to provide preservice teachers with "the opportunity to develop their awareness, knowledge, and skills at working with diverse populations" (p. 28). However, their discussion section attempts to disrupt a normative reading of their text. They include a thorough critique of their own methodology. They also tie their findings directly back to theory. The authors suggest that an understanding of prospective teachers perceptions must include exploration of the complex interactive
factors that influence the teaching and learning process. They use their research findings as an initial glimpse into the complex nature of the student as a way to guide teacher education. Rather than reducing gender and racial inequities to lack of skill on the part of new teachers, they search for more complex explanations and engage in theorizing about the ways in “which the society shapes the beliefs our students bring to the classroom” (p. 36). They encourage a multi-layered understanding of the data. In this way they point towards alternative avenues of thought in both the research and the practice of teacher education.

Pohan’s (1996) study focused on beliefs and diversity. In her descriptive survey study, she compared personal and professional beliefs and multicultural knowledge and course work. Pohan found a strong relationship between personal and professional beliefs. Limited experience in the classroom, she maintains, means personal beliefs significantly influence professional beliefs and subsequent behavior. She also found a significant relationship between personal and professional beliefs and perceived multicultural knowledge, multicultural course work, and cross-cultural experiences.
Pohan concludes that programs driven by the theory that competence in teaching is a function of knowledge and skills have failed to recognize the important role of teacher beliefs and attitudes. She recommends that preservice teachers analyze and reflect upon their beliefs in order to uncover and subsequently change inadequacies or inconsistencies.

Gillis and Griffin (1982) conducted a descriptive survey study of preservice teachers to assess their knowledge and attitudes about women. They concluded that preservice teachers are moderately knowledgeable about women and work and moderately accepting of non-traditional, sex-fair roles for women. They recommend that sex equity be a major goal of education and that teacher educators should understand the effect of the attitudes of preservice teachers on their behaviors in the classroom. A similar study by Sikes (1991) supported this recommendation.

Bloom and Ochoa (1993) and Lambert and Rohland (1983) asked prospective teachers about the value of seminars on gender issues. They explored the idea of whether or not gender issues are seen as an important part of preservice education from the point of view of the preservice teachers themselves. They advocate for a move of
equity education from the periphery to the mainstream. Content related to sex-stereotyping and specific strategies to deal with sexism in the classroom should be taught in preservice teachers' methods courses.

Each of these studies point to the importance of preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs about gender. They also suggest some limited evidence that preservice teachers view themselves as knowledgeable about gender issues and think that they receive enough gender related instruction. However, with the exception of Avery and Walker's work, these studies act to characterize the nature of preservice teachers. In so doing, they suggest a unified teaching identity. Theorizing the teaching identity as a source of conflict and turmoil is largely lacking in the research. Theorizing subjectivity in preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs offers alternative views.

Preservice teacher behaviors. Here again, research on teacher education and gender equity is very sparse. Some evidence indicates that preservice teachers do exhibit gender biased behaviors when
interacting with their pupils. There is also research to indicate that
gender-fair behaviors can be identified and agreed upon.

Martin and Lock (1991) examined the behaviors of student
teachers in preservice physical education field experience. Their
data supports the existence of differential treatment of girls and
boys by the preservice teachers studied.

Cumming, Thorne, Vail, Bendixen-Noe, Gritzмacher, Redick and
Gallup (1995) set out to identify a list of competencies that
students at different grade levels should have relative to equity-
based education. Rather than focusing on what students do they
focused on what they should be able to do. They examined students
across educational levels so the application to preservice teachers
was indirect. Their list of competencies defines gender outcomes
for students. Both these studies illustrate a significant trend in
teacher education. Outcome based programs, which work to define
the skills necessary to teach, are gaining popularity. This approach
to teacher education is consistent with the “back to basics”
movement in the educational arena at large. Defining teaching as a
set of discrete skills is resurfacing as an important authoritative
discourse in teacher education.
Summary

I maintain that the "truth" upon which education is founded and critiqued is socially situated. The research reviewed here, when viewed through a poststructural feminist lens, can illuminate the powerful discourses surrounding preservice teacher education and gender equity issues. I have gleaned the following discourses from the research:

1. Widely assessable research shows gender inequity in schools but the research should be viewed with skepticism.

2. Teaching, as a profession, is a low status occupation.

3. Gender issues receive limited attention on the teacher education agenda because there are so many things to cover in limited time.

4. Preservice teachers' performance in the classroom is a result of stable belief systems.

5. Preservice teachers lack the skills to effectively deal with gender equity issues.
A Look Towards Methodology

I want to briefly discuss four studies that influenced the purpose and structure of the literature review and the methodology for my own work. Britzman (1991); Bailey, Scantlebury, and Letts (1997); McWilliam (1994); and Miller (1997) each present their research findings in a radically different way. Rather than drawing conclusions about the nature of preservice teachers, these researchers theorize about how the words of their informants illuminate the social context in which they are learning to teach. For example, following quotes about discipline problems encountered by her informants in their classrooms, Miller (1997) theorizes,

“This may stem from a mismatch between patriarchal attitudes emphasizing hierarchy, competition, individualism, order, and control and the more feminine values of cooperation and collaboration” (p. 22). Britzman’s “cultural myths” and McWilliam’s “regimes of truth” in teacher education suggest a different purpose for educational data. McWilliam (1994) says, “The metaphor or trying to ‘pin down and probe’ preservice teachers as the objects of my inquiry must give way to metaphorical language for telling open, partial and relational stories” (p. 148). I have attempted to embrace
this alternate view of research as a partial telling that avoids fixing an interpretation.

This research seeks to view preservice teachers’ talk about gender issues through a poststructural lens. Through this view, I hope to illustrate how gender discourses work upon preservice teachers. This view of preservice teachers as subjects of varied and competing discourses, provides insight into the process of learning to teach. I hope this insight will suggest new ways to envision teacher education and new practices teacher educators might employ.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Within the framework of poststructural feminism the selection of a research design and methodology became problematic. The temptation to select from existing methodological blueprints seemed antithetical to the work Donna and I were trying to do (McWilliam, 1994).

Poststructuralism informs current educational research by its active interruption of the totalizing narratives of modernist discourses, including psychologism and structural functionalism. It replaces their assumptions of coherence, clarity, and congealment with contrary assumptions of fragmentation, ferment, and fluidity. In this way poststructuralism has added impetus to a disciplinary redefinition. (McWilliam, 1994, 30)

In the absence of educational "truths" which are merely "out there" and waiting to be revealed, what was it we sought to uncover and how best to uncover it? What culture of educational research would surface during the process of the inquiry and how would we, as researchers, negotiate it? What relationships between the researcher and the researched were suggested? Broadly, the constant question, which had to be revisited during the entire
process of the study, was “Who gets to say what about whom and why?” (McWilliam, 1994, p. 28).

From the beginning we assumed several stances that bear on the methodology and became guideposts in the process. First, we wanted to understand how the research process might provide insight into the complexity of the culture of learning to teach and in so doing open new views of our work to us, as teacher educators. Specifically I was interested in issues of gender equity in teaching. Second, we wanted to understand how we, as researchers, impacted the process of the research by the questions we posed and the use of our institutionalized power. Ultimately we came to understand the research process as a complex dance where at times we led our participants and at other times were led by them. Third, was a commitment to avoid viewing the words of the participants as simplistic by reducing them to dichotomies or rendering them evidence of essentialist character traits which denied the complexity and the subjectivity of all of us engaged in the process. Finally was our perceived responsibility to praxis in our research. We were concerned with how the process we asked the participants
to engage in could be useful to them. The research methodology, as described here, sought to actualize these stances.

Participants

The research participants were 18 volunteer preservice elementary and mid-level teachers in an initial licensure program at Oregon State University. The program lasts 12 months, beginning in the summer, and culminates in a teaching license and a Master of Arts in Teaching degree. The Oregon State University program consists of approximately equal parts of course work and field work. Students enrolling for the 1997-98 year were divided into two cohorts according to their grade-level interests. Members of each cohort took course work together.

The study took place during fall term, the second term of the program. During this term, students spent approximately two days a week in a public school classroom with a mentor teacher. Two days a week were also spent taking university methods courses, which were held on site in local schools. As part of their course work, students were required to teach five lessons every other week to small groups of children. Additionally, students were enrolled in
two seminars; one focusing on classroom management and the other on children with special needs. Both cohorts were taught together during these seminars.

Selection Criteria

In the selection of the research participants, no attempt was made to create a sample that was representative of a larger group. Donna and I approached both 1997-98 cohorts, a total of 48 students, on the first day of fall term with a letter outlining our research and the part we hoped they would play in it (Appendix A). We read the letter to them and then answered their questions. Although our original intent was to involve a maximum of 15 students, we decided to accommodate all who volunteered. Nineteen students originally signed up. Of those, 18 completed the research seminar. One participant dropped after the first session due to scheduling conflicts.

Demographics

Demographic data, including, race, age, marital status, and length of marriage, were collected for the 18 seminar participants. Sixteen of the participants were female; fourteen were White, two
were Asian and two were Latina. Fifteen of the participants were from 22 to 28 years of age; three participants ranged in age from 37 to 41. Nine participants were married; five for less than one year. When asked, "Is there anything else you think we ought to know about you that may influence how we read your words?" two participants responded that they were strong Christians. Others gave information about their families of origin and/or their own children.

Procedure

Context

Participants were asked to engage in a research seminar on gender issues in teaching. This seminar took the place of a project for the special needs seminar, a required course. The research seminar consisted of four sessions conducted on alternate Fridays during fall term and involved the participants for a total of 12 hours. Except for the initial session which lasted six hours, all sessions were held in the afternoons from one o’clock to three o’clock.
General Structure of the Research Seminar

The focus of each of the four sessions was to explore issues of gender in teaching though talk. Talk, as used here, refers to using written and spoken language to engage in conversation with others. Two main types of activities comprised the majority of the seminar time; response journals and small group discussions. Each time the seminar met, the participants wrote in response journals which were randomly divided, read, and responded to by Donna or me. The objective of a response journal, as described by McMahon (1997), was to create a sustained conversation between two or more persons. In their journals, our participants reflected on readings, discussions, and the seminar in general. The researchers included their own responses to the topics discussed as well as additional questions to the participant.

The largest part of the seminar time was spent in small group discussion. The groups formed for these discussions are described in the following section. Small group discussions were focused using observations by the participants of public school classrooms, readings on gender issues in schools, transcripts of tapes from
previous sessions of the seminar, and classroom scenarios. (See Appendix B for Seminar Session Agendas and Materials)

Other activities included autobiographical self-reflections of growing up female or male. These autobiographies were worked on briefly during the first seminar session but were not completed because of lack of time. Additionally, two short lectures on the use of deconstruction (see Appendix C) were given to all participants. They were encouraged to incorporate deconstruction as a way of thinking into their small group discussions.

The structure of each session emerged during the course of the study. The activities included in each session were chosen for their potential to stimulate discussion. We waited to plan specific activities until we had completed a preliminary review of the data from the previous session. In this way, we hoped to consider the interests and questions of the participants in selecting the activities which framed the discussions. It is important to note what we did not do. We did not set out to “change” our participants into gender-fair teachers. We wanted to learn what they had to say. We hoped the forms of talk engaged in by the participants would give them multiple avenues of expression.
Research Seminar Groups

The participants organized themselves into groups of four or five on the first day of the research seminar. The participants stayed with the same people for all of the small group discussions. When demographics were collected from the participants, they were also asked to reflect on and describe the experience of talking in small groups. This information and their female/male make-up is used here to characterize the groups.

**Group one.** This group consisted of four females and one male. They experienced conflict and described themselves as diverse. However, they also indicated the experience of working in groups was positive and said they learned a lot from each other.

**Group two.** This group consisted of five females. Three of them mentioned that they “loved” their group and that they really bonded to each other. They laughed a lot and seemed to genuinely enjoy each other’s company.

**Group three.** This group originally consisted of four females. One group member quit after the first session so this group ended up with only three members. All group members were married. They
expressed feeling comfortable with each other and felt able to "open up."

**Group four.** This group consisted of four females and one male. The description of this group by its members was mixed. While all seemed to feel the group was stimulating, some felt intimidated at times while others felt safe to express their ideas.

**The Sessions**

What follows is a chronological description of the activities included in each session of the research seminar. This explanation is included in order to frame the data for the reader. No attempt was made to "design" a seminar for use beyond this research. Rather the purpose here is to illuminate the context in which the data were collected. An agenda of each session of the seminar and copies of all supporting materials are included in Appendix B.

**Session one.** Session one lasted six hours and served to "kick off" the seminar. Prior to the session, the participants were given an observation sheet including possible gender related behaviors to watch for in their public school placements. Shortly after they arrived at the seminar, they divided into small groups and discussed
their observations. They were asked to write general statements about what the members of their small group had observed and bring these back to the full group. Following the small group discussion, Donna taught a short lesson on deconstruction as a thinking technique. We then asked the participants to “deconstruct” their group’s general statements.

Next, participants were introduced to autobiographical sketches as a way to explore the gendered self. Participants spent a short time making a “web” to help them think about events, situations, and relationships in their lives that might have contributed to their views of themselves as female or male. These were set aside and referred to later.

The third activity was designed to focus observations on gender in the community at large. Participants were given an hour to go to a local coffee shop, lounge, or place of their choice to watch for and write down anything they saw which might relate to gender. They returned to their small groups and discussed their observations.

Following lunch, provided by the researchers and eaten together, the participants selected one idea from their
autobiographical webs and wrote about it. Participants were then given an excerpt from *Failing at Fairness* (Sadker, M. & Sadker, D., 1995) which they read independently and then wrote about in response journals. After writing on their own, they met in their small groups for the last discussion of the day to talk about the reading and discuss their reactions.

Before they left, participants were asked to write a personal note to us telling us why they joined the research seminar, their responses to the day’s activities, and what they would like to do during future sessions.

**Session two.** This two hour session began with the response journals. Each participant was given her or his response journal, which included a personal reply from one of the researchers to what the participant had written during the previous session, and asked to add another entry. Many participants responded to questions posed by the researcher who had read the journal. They were also encouraged to write about anything else relative to the seminar they had thought about since we met last.

Donna and I spent a few minutes discussing with the participants the reactions we had to their words as we transcribed
the tapes (see Data Collection) from the first session. We talked about how fragmented spoken language looks when written down. We talked about the emotions the tapes elicited in us as we transcribed them and about our commitment to sharing our reactions with them. We reviewed for the participants some of the dilemmas we felt as researchers and told them about our initial resolutions.

Next we passed out excerpts from the transcripts of session one for the participants' responses. These transcripts formed the basis of a small group discussion. We chose excerpts from the transcripts we thought illustrated common themes discussed across groups. We asked the participants to look for themes, conflicts, and assumptions reflected in the transcripts. We urged them to work in their groups to "deconstruct" what they read.

Finally, we asked the participants to read an excerpt from Gender Issues in Education (Grossman, H. & Grossman, S., 1994). The excerpt includes a look at controversial and noncontroversial practices in gender-fair teaching and describes various positions teachers might adopt on gender in education. It also includes thought provoking questions which we asked the participants to
discuss in their small groups. These two small group discussions consumed the bulk of the time in session two.

Session three. Session three began with response journals. The procedure resembled the one used in session two. Two additional small group discussions took up the remainder of the time for this session. First, the participants were asked to read and discuss a selection from How Schools Shortchange Girls. This report, commissioned by the American Association of University Women (1995), is a meta-analysis of how socio-economics, race, and gender influence school success. We wanted participants to discuss how issues of ethnicity and socio-economic status interact with issues of gender.

The second small group discussion was another opportunity for the participants to review tape transcripts. We gave each small group a complete copy of their group's transcripts from session two. We asked them to reflect on the conversations they had during session two and think about general statements their group could make regarding gender. These general statements were written on overheads and presented to all participants at the end of the session that day.
**Session four.** Like the previous two sessions, the final session began with response journals. This was followed by the last small group discussion. In this discussion participants were asked to talk about several scenarios related to gender in the schools. We asked them to select a possible course of action a teacher involved in such a scenario might take and then discuss what was useful and dangerous about the course of action chosen.

During session four demographic data was collected and we gave a report to the participants on the status of the research to that point. We shared with them our preliminary findings and how we were using our poststructural feminist framework to understand their words. We also shared some additional information on gender-fair teaching and gave the participants some materials on women in history for use in their classrooms. We tried to create an atmosphere of celebration and appreciation for their involvement.

**Researchers' Roles**

The researchers organized and led the seminar. Following each session, one of us wrote a reply to each participant in her or his
response journal. We arbitrarily split the response journals; half of the journals were read by Donna and I read the other half.

We did not participate in the small group discussions. Groups were located in three different rooms and the participants assumed full control of the discussion and the audio-tape. During the small group discussions we talked to each other but we did not interact with the participants. Originally we were not involved in the small groups because we could not logistically cover them all. However, we ultimately decided it was more appropriate to give the participants the freedom to talk on their own. This process had unexpected and important outcomes that are explored later.

Data Collection

Three main types of data were collected: response journals, audio-tapes of small group discussions, and autobiographical self-reflections. The response journals, as described earlier, were a written conversation between each research participant and one of the researchers. They include four entries, one from each session of the seminar. Participants spent approximately fifteen minutes per session writing in the response journals. The participants' entries
varied in length from a few sentences to two or more pages. The researchers' responses included personal reactions to what the participants had written and follow-up questions to consider. Researcher entries were typically less than half a page. The content of the response journals was often referred to by the participants in the small group discussions. Some participants wrote in their response journals about ideas that had surfaced during the small group discussions. In this way the two types of data had an interactive characteristic.

Transcripts of the audio-tapes of the small group discussions comprised the bulk of the data. Each of the four small groups taped eight different discussions ranging in length from 15 to 40 minutes. All audio-tapes were transcribed by the researchers. This yielded a total of nearly 300 pages of typed transcriptions.

The autobiographical self-reflections were designed to allow participants to reflect on their personal histories. These were worked on for about 45 minutes during the first session of the seminar. The initial intent was to continue this activity over the course of the seminar. However, due to time constraints the
participants did not work on the self-reflections after the first session.

Other sources of data included written summaries from two small group activities prepared by the participants, researcher field notes, and demographic information. Researcher field notes included general descriptions of the research process, impressions, and notes from informal conversations with the participants. The participants were also asked to reflect on the seminar twice, once after the first session and once at the end of the last session. These written reflections became part of the data used for this study.

Data Analysis

Several features of the data analysis are described here. First, issues of validity are discussed. Attention to validity is provided here so the reader might judge the appropriateness of the analysis within the poststructural feminist framework and the success of the analysis in adhering to the theory employed. Next, preliminary and primary analysis are described. Finally, other important considerations, including relationships of power and praxis, are addressed.
Validity

Within the context of poststructural theory, established rules of validity are called into question. Qualitative criterion, such as triangulation and member checks, are built upon the premise that research authority derives from the subjects and that the "real" can be accessed through them (Cherryholms, 1988). Within the poststructural framework the focus is on the constitutive nature of language and discourse within an historical and cultural context. There is no search for the a priori "real." The definition of rigor within the poststructural framework is, at best, tentative and slippery. Cherryholms (1988) said:

The failure to find a definitive arbiter or criterion is known to philosophers as the failure to find a metanarrative, where a metanarrative is a global, overarching, encompassing set of rules that tell us, in the case of construct validity, the necessary and sufficient conditions for the constructs and measurements we use and how to use them. (p. 117)

Poststructural theory seeks to disturb the notion of metanarrative. To use global or overarching criterion to evaluate the rigor of poststructural research is to borrow the discourse of positivism to critique postpositivist research. In light of this
paradox, to what elements of rigor might we appeal in poststructural research? A search to create a text which supports the tenants of the theory is suggested (Cherryholms, 1988; Lather 1991, 1994).

Lather (1994), in an article entitled *Fertile Obsession*, discusses poststructural validity as she coins the term “transgressive validity.” Transgressive validity seeks to answer the question, “how do I use disruptive devices in the text to unsettle conventional notions of the real?” (p. 59). She provides examples and possibilities of answers to this question, at the same time resisting a final conclusion. Elements such as the following might be evidenced in the text of poststructural research:

- “searches for the oppositional in our daily practice, the territory we already occupy” (p. 51),
- “anticipates a politics that desires both justice and the unknown, but refuses any grand transformations” (p. 51),
- “constructs authority via practices of engagement and self-reflexivity” (p. 52),
- “creates a questioning text that is bounded and unbounded, closed and opened” (p. 52).
Validity measures, as suggested by Lather, were woven into the methodology and the text of the analysis. The themes in the data focused on our daily practices, or the spaces we already occupy. An effort was made to analyze each theme in a way that challenged, or set as oppositional, traditional analysis of gender issues in education. Questions were posed at the beginning of each section of the data analysis to frame the reading of the text and prepare the reader for alternate views of the participants' words.

Donna and I considered both our own desires for justice through gender-fair teaching and the desires of our participants to be good teachers. However, we looked for new ideas without searching for consensus or grand transformations. We did not set out to change our participants nor offer "best" solutions for gender-fair teaching. We tried to look at each situation with an eye toward deconstruction and worked toward a continual process of thinking and rethinking our ideas.

The authority of the text was constructed through engagement of the participants in the research process and through extensive dialogue and collaboration between the research partners. Further, researcher journaling was used as a tool for self-reflection.
The manuscript was written in a way that posed, but did not always answer, questions. This was done to lend a more open style to the text. Conclusions and recommendations were set in the context of this particular study with no attempt to universalize ideas.

**Preliminary Data Analysis**

A preliminary data analysis of the response journals and the audio-tapes took place while the seminar was in progress. The most important part of the analysis centered around the audio-tapes. Audio-tapes of each session were transcribed by the researchers prior to the next session. Camille transcribed all tapes for groups one and two; Donna for groups three and four. This proved to be an intense and emotional experience. As the tapes were transcribed, impressions of the data were recorded. As Donna and I discussed our impressions of the data, various themes guided our thinking. Attention was given to how language was used by the participants and how discourses surrounding gender-fair teaching were evidenced in the participants' conversations. We returned to the literature to see if these discourses were present. Examples of subjectivity
were prevalent in the data and were noted in the initial analysis and explored in further depth later on.

The process of discussion between the researchers was an important aspect of the analysis and continued throughout the entire study. This discussion, as well as our research journals, was used to incorporate reflexivity (see Chapter Two) into the data analysis. It was our desire that reflexivity and participant engagement would be utilized in the construction of authority in the analysis and the text and therefore lend validity to the research.

**Participant Engagement in the Data Analysis**

During the preliminary data analysis, the participants worked with the data twice. During session two of the seminar, all participants were given excerpts from the transcripts of session one. These excerpts were chosen by the researchers because they illustrated common themes discussed across groups such as doubt of research, nature versus nurture, and “the cure is worse than the problem.” The participants then discussed the selections in their small groups and named the themes they saw in the excerpts. This discussion became part of the data.
During session three of the seminar, participants were again provided with transcripts. This time they were given complete copies of the transcripts from their own small group discussion during session two. They were asked to compile general statements about gender issues they thought characterized their group's conversations and then scan the transcripts to find quotes to support those general statements. As a group, they made a presentation of their findings to the researchers and all research participants.

By providing the participants with the transcripts we were able to consider their views of what the data illustrated. This strengthened validity in the analysis.

**Primary Data Analysis**

The primary data analysis began following the conclusion of the seminar. This analysis used the transcripts as its focal point. Four themes were explored in the data. The specific themes will be discussed in the next chapter; included here is a discussion of how the themes were selected.
Some themes identified in the preliminary analysis were used. In addition, an effort was made to select themes that would actualize the validity measures discussed earlier. These included themes that would show "the oppositional in our daily practice" and attend to the "politics of desire." In the selection and analysis of the themes, a poststructural lens was used to filter the data. It should be noted that this lens, like the stain on a microscope slide, or a filter on a camera lens, illuminated some aspects of the data at the expense of others. Specifically, themes were selected for their illustrative power. They were chosen for their ability to exemplify the push and pull of subjectivity, to illustrate the discourses surrounding gender embedded in the culture, and to create points of departure for theorizing about gender issues in the context of preservice teacher education.

As a theme was selected, examples and non-examples of the theme were located in the transcripts. The transcripts were read group by group and excerpts relevant to the theme were noted. Some themes were evidenced more strongly by some groups than others. Sometimes excerpts on a particular theme came from only one group; other times two or more groups were used in the exploration of a
particular theme. After relevant excerpts were identified, they were compiled into a running narration and intervening excerpts were removed. Compiling the data by themes helped illuminate sub-themes and showed relative attention given each of the sub-themes by the participants.

Other data sources provided supporting material. The attention given a theme by the participants in the transcripts was compared with the attention given the same theme in the response journals. Noticeable differences were described. The themes were coupled with theory and a discussion of how the words of the participants could be interpreted through the principles of poststructural feminist theory was developed. This discussion was used to provide insight into the process of learning to teach and teacher education.

A strong researcher bias also affected the data and was incorporated into the analysis. I decided early on that all participant talk would be recognized as “a legitimate response to the relations of power/knowledge available to them as subjects of academic and policy discourse” (McWilliam, 1994, p. 148). I have included here a lengthy quote from my research journal to illustrate
this point. I should note that this bias was shared with the participants at the beginning of the second session of the seminar so that it may have influenced not only the way I interpreted the data but also what the participants chose to say in subsequent sessions.

Listening to the transcripts brought to the front of my mind a problem that has been worrying me. What happens if what I see in the transcripts puts the participants in a bad light? I was trying to imagine how I would feel if the tables were turned and someone was transcribing my words. What would I want them to say about me? The more I worked the more strongly I felt that I would have to be completely honest with the participants about my interpretations and that my analysis of the data must reflect positively on them. A very interesting thing happened in the process of thinking about this issue. I think what I began to believe is that even though what they say evokes strong emotion for me it does not reflect negatively on them. I genuinely do not see them as naive, immature in their response, unaware, resistant, unwilling to engage or any other descriptions of preservice teachers I have read in the research. They struggle with ideas and they adopt conflicting points of view. They encourage conversation and they close conversation down. But they have one thing in common—they want to be good teachers. They want desperately to do the right thing. At the same time, some of them seem to struggle with what that means for them personally as it relates to gender issues. Once I realized that I do view them positively it felt like a great burden was lifted from me. I felt like I could be completely honest with them. It even seemed fair that they might interpret what I was saying about them as a criticism and choose to be silent, but that also seemed okay. (Journal Entry 10/18/97)
I had decided, like Noddings (1986), that "Colleagues, like friends do not simply report or tell on each other's errors" (p. 508). I viewed the participants as colleagues and did not want to represent the data in any way that might make them look foolish. This bias must be considered when reading the analysis.

I tried to view the themes as, "useful categorical schemes [and] as provisional constructions rather than as systematic formulations" (Lather, 1991, p. 125). I want to reiterate that I was not looking at the data as a way to characterize our participants views on gender issues and teaching or to "fix" an interpretation. Rather I sought to incorporate the principles of poststructural feminism as a way to revision preservice teachers and me. As with Britzman (1991), I wanted the research to raise "thorny questions about contradictory realities" (p. 2). We were looking for a way to "see differently" issues of learning to teach previously viewed through other lenses.

**Relationships of Power**

As part of the data analysis, it is important that we foreground our institutionalized power as researchers. We made a
conscious and sometimes unconscious effort to down play our power to the participants. We represented ourselves to them as fellow students, hoping to graduate with them the following spring. We dressed casually for the research seminar and tried to interact with them in an open manner. Initially the participants were skeptical about our intentions. They wondered what the "real" research agenda was. As the seminar progressed, they seemed to feel safer. They talked more freely and were more relaxed. However, it would be erroneous to think that the process and definitions of research did not impact what the participants had to say. Indeed, an important part of the context of the study was that it was research and the participants were aware that we were looking for something.

We tried to use our institutionalized power to create an environment where issues could be explored. However, there are limits to such power, as there should be. We tried to honor the participants and what they gave to us. We tried to be honest with them and honest with ourselves.

Our hope was that the small group discussions would be a useful forum because the participants would be unencumbered by
outside "experts" and therefore able to express a wide range of views. We assumed the tape recording had an impact on what was said. Discussion under different circumstances would no doubt lead to different data.

As discussed earlier, there was a noticeable difference between the content of the response journals and the content of the discussion transcripts within the same theme. This difference may be due to who was talking to whom in these different formats. The response journals were a conversation between a researcher and a participant while the small group discussions were conversations which included only participants.

Praxis

We tried to take into consideration the interests of the participants as we selected readings and other activities that formed the basis of the small group discussions. We sought their feedback at the conclusion of each research session and tried to structure the seminar so it would be a valuable experience for them. We decided early on that we were committed to sharing with them all interpretations we made of the data. We used copies of the
transcripts twice as a catalyst for discussion. We were open about the initial impressions we had during transcription of the tapes. In the concluding seminar, we shared with the participants the themes we had discovered to that point.

Donna and I understood that what our participants said in this study may have been radically different from what they might have said in another context. Britzman (1991) describes the stance we took toward the data: "[It] can only signify the life of one unrepeatable public moment among the many more private, elusive, chaotic, and unaccounted moments that constitute the rhythms of life" (p. 61). This narration should be read as a partial retelling that is "radically contingent" (Britzman, 1991, p. 13) and shifts the focus from "prediction and prescription to disclosure and deconstruction" (McWilliam, 1994, p. 29).
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The participants words have inspired something in me.
(Journal Entry 11/1/97)

This chapter includes the presentation and discussion of the data. The "spirit of poststructural feminism" was sought in this analysis. I want to reiterate that the data selected for display in this chapter are intended to illustrate rather than to prove. "In that space of conventional writing of science, empirical work is concerned with portraying findings as factual and well founded in ways that are often in Van Maanen's characterization, 'as if to satisfy some fetish of documentation and legitimation'" (Lather, 1991, p. 124). The results reported in this section are not to be understood as facts. They are intended to raise relevant issues.

The themes I have chosen to explore include Gender Talk, Teacher Talk, Confessional Talk, and Resistance Talk. These themes are tentative and were chosen because they are provocative and seemed to vivify the principles of poststructuralism as outlined in Chapter Two. They are not the only themes present in the data and
may not be, when viewed by another researcher, or from another theoretical framework, the “best” or the “most important” themes.

Traditionally the findings and discussion sections have comprised different chapters in dissertations. This practice produces a dichotomy suggesting the findings presented are “facts” unencumbered by the interpretation of the researcher. This stance is inappropriate in poststructural feminist analysis which recognizes the politics of all “facts.” The findings and discussion are presented in this study in tandem as a way to foreground the relationship between the researcher and the data.

Gender Talk

Several activities in the research seminar asked participants to make observations about the differences between females and males. Observations were made in the public schools, in the community, and in the participants’ own lives. When reporting these observations, the participants characterized females and males, identified ways females and males interacted with each other, and offered explanations for differences between females and males. Participants also struggled with what these perceived differences
meant to them as teachers and how they should deal with gender in the classroom.

As you read this section, notice that the gender issues identified, discussed, and experienced by the participants in the study closely mirrored the gender issues raised by current researchers such as David and Myra Sadker (1995) and the American Association of University Women (1995). The participants talked about the differences in the behaviors of girls and boys. They discussed differential treatment of girls and boys by teachers. They recounted stories of sexual harassment in the schools.

From the beginning of the seminar, the use of educational discourses on gender were evidenced in the participants' words. The participants raised many of the gender issues presented in this section in the first session of the research seminar. They raised these issues prior to us, as researchers, providing them with the readings and activities related to gender. It is as if they came to us already well versed in the language of gender.

The words of the participants were reminiscent of Bakhtin's borrowed language. "All words have the ‘taste’ of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a
generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions..." (as cited in Britzman, 1991, p. 22). The participants seemed to speak society’s language of gender and to understand its connotations and nuances.

Realizing the participants' familiarity with discourses of gender, the questions became, “How did these discourses work upon them? How did the discourses act to help the participants explain the differences they saw in the classroom and in their own experience? What responsibility did they feel to the issues as teachers? What other discourses might be working on them to influence how they negotiate gender differences in schools?” It is important to keep these questions in mind as you read the participants’ words related to gender talk.

**Girls Are . . . /Boys Are . . .**

Girls are “talkative,” “fragile,” “sneaky,” “coy,” “organized,” “affectionate,” and “quiet.” Boys are “aggressive,” “physical,” “loud,” and they “forget the rules” and “hurry through their work.” The participants also noted differences in what girls and boys do.
When describing kindergarten play, one participant said, "The girls play house and do the dishes and cooking usually; and the boys go camping. The boys love packing the babies around but they always go camping or they are playing football or they are doing 'boy activities' in the home living corner."

Group Four participants said girls are more concerned about how they look than boys. The participants speculated that this concern is modeled and supported at home.

I think that also comes from the girls' parents, that the mom is more concerned about how the girls look than the dad, I mean, that's my stereotype, but I think that the moms want to dress up their little girls and curl their hair and stuff, but you know with the boys you've got to wear clothes that you can get messy in and you can get dirty in and play in.

Several participants said that more of the misbehavior in schools can be attributed to males than to females. Participants pointed out the differences in the ways girls and boys in the classroom respond to getting in trouble.

I've noticed, and maybe this is just our class, that when the boys get in trouble for what they do they'll say, "Oh yeah, I was totally doing that, I was wrong." But girls try to find some sort of a way to explain why it wasn't totally their fault, "Well, she was da-da, da-da." And it came to my mind that I notice more of the girls trying to
explain their way out of it, but a lot of the boys will just say, "Oh yeah, I was hitting Tommy."

A participant from another group corroborated the preceding story.

[The] thing that I noticed with the girls is that they try to act really coy about things. When you try to address an issue with them, they'll just kind of look up at you with their eyes and kind of have a blank stare. And you know that they are comprehending and that they know they are doing something wrong but they try to act really innocent. And that's almost more aggravating to me than some of the boys that just get mad when you tell them they are doing something wrong. . . .

The participants noticed that teachers punish the misbehavior of girls differently than the misbehavior of boys. Girls are treated with more leniency and given more warnings. When a boy misbehaves the teacher wants to "nip it in the bud," but when a girl misbehaves he acts differently because "he doesn't want to hurt the girl's feelings." Some female participants shared stories of their own schooling suggesting they could get away with misbehavior, particularly with male teachers.

Participants noticed a difference in the way girls and boys interact with them in the classroom. One participant said, "I've noticed that . . . first graders are very physical, they need a lot of physical attention. And the boys do hug me at times, too. I always
like that because it is not a sissy thing, but girls usually get my 
attention, they always stroke my arm or hug my leg and boys will hit 
me or pound on my back.”

**Girls and Boys Interacting**

The participants noted ways girls and boys interacted with each other. Several participants said that girls take care of boys. When describing the relationship between two ESL students, one participant explained, “I think she kind of likes to be a crutch to the boy.” Other participants noticed that girls are often seated next to disruptive boys to help control their behavior. “Well, and see the thing is, he doesn’t stay on task. He’ll stay on task for a few moments, and then he’ll be off task, out of his seat, and there are three girls at his table and they are on him, ‘Get in your seat!’”

Many participants said girls and boys frequently separated themselves by gender during unstructured times such as lunch and recess. However, they also discussed “the love-thing going on.” There were numerous references to girls and boys chasing each other on the playground and passing “love notes” to each other in class. The participants observed that this type of interaction between
girls and boys was engaged in by children beginning as early as first grade.

There were two discussions in the transcripts of boys "harassing" girls in schools. One discussion centered around boys harassing girls on the way to class in a junior high. The other discussion focused on a boy making references to breasts. "And the other thing he does, . . . him and a bunch of other ones, they lift up their shirts and put their hands under their shirts and they are like, 'Oh, give me a bra and give me a bra. . .'."

I'm Not a Girl!

Another powerful gender discourse, evidenced in the transcripts, suggests it is embarrassing and painful for a boy to be mistaken for a girl and for a girl to be mistaken for a boy. The participants noticed that if a boy chooses to sit with a group of girls or if a boy accidently associates himself with girls he runs the risk of being ridiculed by his peers. One participant recounted the painful experience of being mistaken as a child for a girl. "I remember moving to Oregon when I was in high school and this was a
super sensitive issue for me because people would sometimes call me a girl, like up until high school. I hated that so much.”

Situations where boys behaved like girls or girls behaved like boys were also discussed. When talking about a scenario where an upset father complained about his little boy playing in the housekeeping area at school, the participants acknowledged that they knew people who would see that as potentially damaging for a boy. “I know that is what [my brother] would think. You have him playing with dolls, and dishes and all this stuff. He is going to turn out gay.”

A female participant also said she was “really offended” when she was mistaken for a boy. One group discussed an incident concerning a “tomboy” who did not like to wear a dress. The child’s teacher made a point to tell her she “look[ed] really beautiful in a dress.”

While there were no circumstances discussed where it was desirable for a boy to be mistaken for a girl, the women in the research seminar talked about times they had purposefully tried to be mistaken for men. “There are times when it’s dark and I want to go running and I’ll think, and this is terrible, but I would want to
make myself look more like a male than like a female. Hide the hair, you know, whatever, wear baggy clothes, to feel more safe.” While the participant recognized that being mistaken for a man under these circumstances might protect her she still felt she had to acknowledge that to deliberately do so “is terrible.”

Further discussion of gender issues in their own lives raised difficult issues. Particularly problematic was their discussion of adult roles. These discussions often focused on the participants’ own lives and they were tentative in what they said. At times these discussions seemed frightening and even threatening to the participants.

**Women’s and Men’s Roles**

The participants discussed the roles they played in their own relationships and offered various explanations of how they had negotiated these roles. Several participants said they believed adult men and women occupy different places in society. They stated that they believe women’s and men’s roles are equal but different. “My personal beliefs are that males and females do have roles. They are equal, but they are not the same.” This participant felt it was a risk
to admit this view. There was recognition that this perception might not be acceptable to some of the other participants. "I'm not trying to, uh, walk on glass, I don't feel like I am walking on glass or eggs or anything by talking about it, but I just don't want to be offensive and I want to be careful what I say because I might say something that I don't really believe, you know? Because I am still reflecting on it as well."

This openness, however, led another participant to reveal that she felt the same way.

Well, I, maybe I feel a little more safe. I think I am coming from sort of the same perspective, being a woman, which is probably on the more conservative side of the feminine perspective. I probably consider myself more, more traditional in the sense that I do believe that men and women have different roles. I agree that they are equal yet different. Equal but different.

She continued on relating a story of how a friend and her husband were able to make an important decision, that might have been divisive in their marriage, because they hold the belief that if they cannot come to agreement together it is the husband's responsibility to make the final decision.

They couldn't decide where to live. She needed to finish the University of Oregon and he needed to go to Portland State to do his education. They bounced back and forth,
week after week after week. It was causing huge problems. So finally she said, “you make the final decision.” And so he said, “we are staying. I am going to sacrifice for you so you can go and get your schooling done.”

During the telling the participant stopped twice to try to legitimize her story to another member of her group. “I want you to listen to this story, because it might make a little different edge on it,” she explained. At the end of the discussion she reiterated again that it was difficult for her to reveal this about herself and that she made herself vulnerable in doing so. “I notice my heart racing, even just sharing what my view of a family is and I just realize that, um, we can have different views, yet it’s hard. I think I even took a step for me to even admit where I am coming from.”

While the participants explored their beliefs about adult roles, they stopped short of discussing the relationship these beliefs might have to their behaviors as teachers. They made few attempts to reconcile the conflicts between the roles they enacted and the rhetoric on gender they employed. One participant who described herself as a strong feminist offers this explanation. “I am not even saying it is bad to want to do the dishes and serve your husband,
because I do that too, it's just understanding why I am doing it, because I love him, and not because it's my tradition in life.”

Some of the women in the study noted that they placed expectations on themselves. They also worried about what their families thought of them when they ventured into nontraditional roles. Especially troublesome were the feared perceptions of their mothers-in-law. Participants discussed the changing roles of women and how these changes created points of tension for them.

I was talking to my grandma about it and she said, “I feel sorry for you. At least I knew where my place was. People respected me for it.” And now, there’s so many places where I feel like the men stayed right here, doing the same thing and women are changing all over the place. And their role is like here and here, and here and here.

Some things were surprisingly unchanged, however. This story related by one of the participants reflected her concern about the messages her daughter was internalizing about men and women.

Yeah, but listen to this, this really got me. We were hunting. And my daughter, she says, “When I grow up I’m gonna marry... My husband’s gonna have a red pick-up.” And she got to talking about how her husband was going to have this red pick-up... And it was like she said, “I need a husband to go hunting, I need a pick-up to go hunting, and I can’t have a pick-up, but I want to go hunting, so I have to get married, get a husband, so he can get a pick-up, so I can go hunting.” That’s when I
thought, “What’s with that?” I mean why does she think already that she has to have a husband to do some of the things she does?

The conditional acceptance of this story by another participant was further evidence of the difficulty the participants had in reconciling competing discourses of gender roles. “I like it when these issues are brought up. When people just say, ‘Well what about this,’ or ‘isn’t that kind of interesting.’ Then I can understand where they are trying to come from. But when they say, ‘We are being ripped off because of something,’ then that makes me automatically think, ‘Well, I don’t feel ripped off.’”

Other responses to unsettling or complicated discussions of gender provided further insight into the complexities of this issue for them. When discussing the scenario about an angry father who was upset because his young son was playing in the house keeping area at school, one group of participants struggled to find an acceptable way for the teacher to deal with this situation. Initially they could only think of two possible ways to handle the problem. They decided they could either try to explain the activity to the parent or they could go along with the parent’s wishes. They discussed how they could explain the value of the activity to the
father but they wanted to do this cautiously. They decided that "the way to approach it [is] that it is not a gender thing." They concluded that it might be more palatable to the parent if they sold the activity as a way to develop fine motor coordination. "What we are learning over here is how to button." They seemed satisfied with a solution that avoided the sticky issue of gender altogether.

Another discussion dealt with teachers seating disruptive and cooperative children together in hopes that the cooperative children would help control the disruptive ones. They noticed that this frequently meant cooperative girls were sitting with disruptive boys. One participant said this was the case with her own daughter and as a parent she was bothered by it. Another participant concluded that "It's a catch 22." This comment, however, signaled the end of the conversation. In this case it is interesting to note what is not said by the participants. It was as if they recognized that they had no language with which to negotiate these complex issues. Having identified the situation as difficult or problematic they "just quit" and moved onto something else.

What discourses did the participants use to negotiate gender issues? In some cases they did offer explanations to and solutions
for the issues raised. It is informative to consider the nature of the conclusions they employ.

Summary and Discussion

Discourses of simplicity. The participants in the study called on several simple explanations for gender differences. On several occasions the participants discussed "natural" differences between males and females. They wondered if it was more "natural for girls to want to write down schedules and organize." One participant noted that "competition between the sexes seems natural." Another explanation used a different meaning of the word natural. "Let them do their natural thing." Here the participants suggested that gender issues could be solved by allowing the "natural essence" of the individual to be expressed. The societal discourse that gender differences are natural is powerful. To accept something as "natural," and consequently outside the realm of control, allows the discourse to dismiss its importance or, at the very least, any responsibility to it.

In Avery and Walker's (1993) research, twenty percent of the preservice teachers studied attributed differences in academic
achievement to genetics. Identifying differences as "natural," as the participants in this study did, is a similar explanation to "genetics." The use of "natural" explanations was widespread among the participants in this study. Differences between the studies in the strength of this explanation may be due to the way the data were collected. Participants may employ different explanations of similar phenomena depending on the audience of their response. This difference further illustrates the nature of authoritative discourse. Preservice teachers call upon and utilize discourses that are powerful in the specific context in which they are engaged. Rather than subscribing to one explanation, preservice teachers employ multiple and changing explanations which most closely mirror the authoritative discourse of the current social and historical context.

Along with simple explanations, the participants often called upon simple solutions to the gender issues they identified. They referred many times to strategies they had devised to call on girls and boys equally in the classroom. They suggested that teachers simply needed better ways to keep track of and ensure equal opportunities for girls and boys to respond. This included calling on
children in a boy/girl boy/girl pattern, or randomly drawing a Popsicle stick from a can containing sticks with children's names—one stick for each child in the class.

These simple explanations and solutions did not always serve them well, however. During the seminar, one participant said she realized what she was doing in her classroom was benefiting some children at the expense of others. She noted that these children were male. She asked her group, “So how do I change it?” Her group was supportive. They reminded her that she was “helping [the children]. It just happened they were all male.” Later the same participant again posed a question to her group, “So what should we do? I mean, I want to pose that to someone else.” Again her group was sympathetic. They pointed out to her that, “we’ve all done it.” However, they seemed stymied as to where to go from there.

During a later session the participant who was concerned about her behavior with the male children returned to the discussion to clarify for her group members how she felt after having thought about her behavior.

Yes, I did feel that way. But now, I mean, I don’t feel that way at all because I was trying to help kids that needed help. And to me, now I’m going back to what’s the
purpose of me? Who am I and what's my purpose? My purpose is to help children. And so if I was helping those students who were lower than other students, oh well. So, I'm kind of, I don't know this gender thing is getting to me.

Towards a discourse of complexity. The participants showed evidence that they could employ the discourses of gender-fair teaching. However, they seemed to have difficulty moving beyond simple, reductionist solutions to problems to embrace the complexity of the issues involved. This difficulty was further troubled by other persuasive discourses on gender that competed for their allegiance.

The findings here are consistent with Britzman's (1991) findings. In her case study of Jamie Owl, Britzman found that Jamie was unable to work against strong dominant discourses of teacher education that were not serving her well.

Perhaps as teacher educators we must ask ourselves how our own practices might act to silence the voice of complexity in learning to teach. Maybe we have approached the issue of gender-fair teaching in a simplistic fashion ourselves. Have we reduced our teaching about this issue to a "rent a feminist" model where we
espouse the virtues of confronting difficult social issues but avoided sharing with our students our own struggles as we deal with these same complex problems in our practice? Further how have we defined “the teacher” for them?

Teacher education models are primarily production models aimed at preparing skilled, knowledgeable, experts (Britzman, 1991; Phillips, 1998). The role of expert seems difficult to enact while standing on the uneven ground of complexity. The role of expert suggests a “right” way to behave and places the burden of knowing the “right” way on the teacher. Maybe there are no “right” ways to approach gender issues but many ways. Perhaps teachers, parents, and children all share responsibility for negotiating these complicated issues in a diverse society. For example, consider again the conversation related earlier about the irate father whose son was playing in the housekeeping area at school. As the participants looked at this situation, they viewed the responsibility for its resolution as theirs alone. In the role of teacher as “expert,” the participants could only imagine two possible responses; explain the value of the activity or go along with the wishes of the parent. How might this conversation have been different if the participants had
been able to employ other discourses of teacher besides that of “expert?” Perhaps a discourse of complexity might have helped them open up the conversation. Perhaps the teacher and parent could express their fears, commitments, and conflicts surrounding this and other issues where various discourses and desires clash.

Britzman says, “The teacher's task should be to denaturalize various discourses rather than to endlessly validate them” (p. 43). If we want preservice teachers to do more than parrot our rhetoric on gender-fair teaching; if we want them to reflect on their beliefs and practices, we have to be willing to risk that they will not come to the same conclusions we do. Further, perhaps we must attend to other discourses on gender working upon them which may compete with our own. Finally, perhaps we owe them empathy and support as we ask them to consider possibilities that might disturb their sense of self and move them towards a discourse of complexity.

McWilliam (1994) summarizes as follows:

[The] compelling issue for teacher educators is how possibilities are either opened up or shut down by our own discursive practices framed by our social relations. This will be more fruitful than the application of labels that cannot account for the complexity of student language or the range of experiences students bring to their professional work. (p. 147)
Teacher Talk

During the seminar, the participants explored at length what it meant to be a teacher. They told their own teaching stories and the stories of other teachers they had encountered. They shared their opinions and debated issues. Two themes of teacher talk were illustrated in the data and are described in this section. The first theme centered around gender and teaching. The second theme looked at teacher talk about issues of race and socio-economic status.

A view of this data through the theoretical framework employed by this study raised some interesting questions. What discourses of teaching were present in the participants' words? How did the participants employ discourses as they selected and retold stories of teaching? What was the relationship between the discourses of the gendered teacher and the discourses of race and socio-economic status? And, what implications do these discourses have for teacher educators?
The Gendered Teacher

The talk discussed here centers around what it means to be a female or a male teacher in the classroom. Some of the participants' words addressed issues of gender directly. Other talk contained implicit messages about the relationship between teaching and gender. The participants discussed how they came to be teachers, how their gendered selves influenced parental responses to them, and how children reacted to them as female and male teachers.

Teaching as "women's work." There were notable similarities between some of the participants' stories and the historical account of the teaching profession presented in Chapter Two. The history of teaching reflects the development of societal discourses. Teaching, particularly of young children, belongs to women. As such, it is low paid, low status work. Some participants shared stories of how they came to be teachers. These stories reflected the discourse of teaching as an appropriate career path for women. This discourse was embodied in expectations placed on one participant as she told how teaching became her career. "My ideas, my thoughts were never
explored. It was always, 'Oh, Emily, you want to be a teacher.' And I
do want to be a teacher, I am not saying that I don’t. But it was
never, ‘you have other options.’”

Two participants related stories about starting out in other
careers and later changing to teaching. In both these stories the
participants referred to an inborn quality they possessed that suited
them for the profession. Their gendered selves were evident in their
words. The discourse represented here identified teaching as a
“calling” of women generally and for these participants specifically.

From sixth grade up until I graduated from high school I
was going to be lawyer. Because I wanted to go, I wanted
to have a career, because my mom stayed at home with
me and both my sisters were teachers—were going to
stay home, everybody stayed home. That's what we all
did. And I was like, I'm not going to do that, I don’t want
to be a teacher, I don’t want, you know, to stay home
with kids, I don’t want to do anything. I want to go have
a career. And, you know, because I was rebelling against
what my family did and what I’m good at. And I, you
know, now I look back and I’m like, you know, that was
stupid because that’s not me. I have to do what is me.
And just because that is the same as what the rest of my
family is I don’t know if that’s because that’s how I was
raised. But, personally, I think it’s something that’s
inside. I mean it’s innate. Because, I am good with little
children. And some people aren’t and some are. And
teaching’s the same way. Some people are good at it and
some aren’t.
It is interesting to note that in this story, the participant referred to law as a career path but teaching as a category synonymous with staying home with children. For her, teaching was an extension of the role of mother.

Another participant told how she started out as a chemistry major, moved to peace studies, to education, then to law, and eventually back to education. She reported a lengthy process of coming to education, then leaving it for a time to try law because she felt she “couldn’t do enough just be[ing] a plain ol’ [sic] classroom teacher.” She said she “could not stand” law, however, because it was a “dog-eat-dog environment,” so she returned to education. She concluded her story with “education is the place for me--it’s in my blood.” What discourses about women and teaching might this story reflect? The participant knew that education was not a “respected” career and struggled with this idea. She made peace with selecting education by incorporating the discourse that teaching was something she was “born to do.”

The discourse that teaching is a calling and as such should be engaged in altruistically was further illustrated in another selection from this same participant's words. She wondered about
teachers in Chicago who made an "amazing" amount of money. "Like in Chicago, which allegedly has some of the worst schools, or close to it, teachers get paid a lot of money. But maybe those teachers who are getting paid a lot of money aren't the best teachers because they are not doing it for the right reason."

While teaching was widely accepted as a profession appropriate for women, the participants described it as a "non-traditional" for men. The following conversation illustrates how the women and men in this study employed this discourse.

Female #1: But the non-traditional, females as lawyers and doctors and stuff like that and the males as teachers and nurses and secretaries or you know, just...  

Male: Elementary male teacher, that's very non-traditional... is it non-traditional?  

Female #1: Yeah...  

Male: Maybe it's not if...  

Female #1: It depends on if your goals are to move up to principal.  

Female #2: Yeah, it's your goal. I think the majority of teachers are females and the majority of administrators are male.
Following this conversation, the women teased the man. They suggested that it was indeed his goal to become an administrator. He responded with “I haven’t decided.”

The participants knew teaching as a female profession. They also knew it as a low-paid and low status job. “Teachers [and] nurses get paid less--what can I do? What? Not teach? That won’t happen. In so many ways I feel trapped.”

During the final session of the seminar, Donna and I told the participants that there was evidence in their discussions that they knew the discourse of teaching as a low status profession. Our analysis generated a strong response by the participants. One participant agreed. She indicated she felt “embarrassed” to tell people she was studying education. She reported that she felt more credible if she told them she was going to teach math. She thought a math teacher was more acceptable than just an elementary teacher. Some participants agreed with her feelings while others were offended by them and spoke passionately about being “proud” to be a teacher.

What does it mean to associate oneself with a profession marginalized by society? For some of our participants it meant
adopting teaching as a calling as illustrated in the previous stories. In this way they could endure the injustices of low pay and low status. They further illustrated this discourse as they told stories of how they extended themselves beyond the limits of the job. One participant told of an interaction she had with one of her "lower students."

I asked him, 'is there someone at home to help you with this?... Then I said, 'well you know, I'm here if you need help... I'm here all day long. I'm here before school and after school.'... I was thinking about how I know as teachers we have power to help students whether or not it's at lunch time or before school or after school.

Other participants also talked about working with children during breaks and lunch and they spoke of getting special permission to work with students before and after school.

While some embraced teaching as their calling, other participants held it at arms length. They spoke in ways that disassociated themselves from the profession. "It scares me sometimes when I think about some people that are teachers or are going to be teachers." They set themselves apart as more aware and better trained than their counterparts already in the field. They were anxious to reform a faltering profession. One participant said,
“I feel that I got a pathetic public education.” She talked about her dream to start schools that would do a better job of educating children. She expanded on this goal. “Not only a school but a new educational system that can be duplicated across the country (and the world) like a successful franchise.” For some it was as if while becoming teachers they wanted to avoid getting the stench of the profession on their clothing. They accomplished this by not getting too close or identifying too fully with others in the teaching career.

The participants’ words also showed them submitting to the disciplinary power of education. They recognized this power as belonging to men. “When you look at like the structure of schools, most schools, at least when I was in school, the principal was a man, so the power, so the real power source, was a man.”

Prior to the third session of the seminar, a recruiter from a local school district met with the participants. Group one had a lengthy discussion about what the recruiter had said. Apparently the recruiter had specifically mentioned an interest in male teachers. The participants expressed fear over what this might mean to them as women. Two notable discourses were evidenced in this discussion. First, was the discourse that men entering teaching will
add an important element that they, as women, can not supply. Men can provide necessary male role models for children. One participant said, “I see that it’s important to have male figures out there in the field.” The other members of her group agreed. Another participant added, “It makes you wonder as a white woman, you know, ‘Are my contributions as meaningful because I am not a man?’ I mean, right away it makes you feel defensive I think.” Second, the participants trusted those doing the hiring. They assumed they would try to be “neutral” when selecting future teachers. They trusted those hiring to act in benevolent ways and do what was best for children. One participant said, “they want the best candidate.”

Female and male teachers. The participants in the study compared the experience of female and male teachers. They told stories of parents preferring male teachers over female teachers because men could “handle” children better.

My mentor teacher didn’t really talk that much to me about gender issues for the students, but she was concerned about it for herself. Because we have a couple of classes that have 40 kids in them. And she got tons of phone calls from parents, “How come my kid’s in this class?” and she started to feel like the parents didn’t think that she could handle it. And she knew that last year, the previous teacher, who was male, had a couple of
classes with 40 kids in and didn’t get a single phone call about it. And so she was starting to think, you know, by golly, I will prove to them that I can do this even though I’m a woman. And I think that we, that for the teaching profession we have some real gender issues to talk about too.

Another participant shared how she listened in on a parent conference where a mother expressed a preference for a male teacher.

[At] conferences yesterday, this mother came in. She made the specific comment that she was glad that her son had a male teacher this year because the women teachers weren’t getting anywhere with him and his behavior. And she kind of looked at me like no offense to you. And I was just sitting there. She’s a really nice lady and I think that she had a valuable thing to say but it just came out so totally wrong and it just offended me deeply because she just implied that women teachers were getting no where with the son and he needed this stronger authority figure. And like the women were not providing that.

One participant encountered a teacher who shared the same opinion expressed by this parent. She reported on a conversation she heard between two teachers in her school who had worked with a particular student. “[The teacher] said, ‘well he’ll probably respond better with your male authority this year then to my female authority last year.’ But I thought that was really interesting that an educator would make that statement about themselves, and you
know, as a teacher.” Interestingly, other members of her group voiced no response to this story.

Another comparison concerned a male participant. He worried that his physical contact with a child, such as a hug, might be interpreted differently than the same physical contact with a child from a female teacher. One participant revealed a way her gender impacted her interaction with a parent. When speaking about a father she said, “he calls me Sweetie.”

These stories point out that teachers’ experiences with parents differ according to the gender of the teacher. Some of the participants’ stories focused on how children react to women and men teachers differently. “I have a male [mentor] teacher by the way, and I haven’t really spoken with anyone else in the cohort who has a male/female set-up so I’ve picked up on a lot of gender issues just because I’m faced with that because the students react differently to me than to the teacher.”

The participants indicated that, as women, they did not always have the respect of young boys in the classroom. When telling about a lesson she had presented one participant said, “every time I would
ask them to please follow directions. . . they would continue
[disrupting] and even talk back.”

One participant related this story about being a female teacher
of a Muslim boy:

We have a little boy who is Muslim and you can tell that
he has a totally different outlook on women. He has a
really difficult time with the teacher telling him what
to do. And he has a twin brother and last year, when they
were in kindergarten, they ganged up on the teacher and
attacked her. They like gave her bruises and stuff, and
they were pretty brutal I guess, like punching her.

The participant went on to explain how she struggled to deal with
his behavior. She reiterated the view that Muslim males do not
respect women and this makes it difficult for teachers.

The experiences of the participants in this study mirror the
experiences of the participants in Miller’s (1997) study on gender
issues in student teaching. Both studies illustrate the role
patriarchy in schools can play when women teachers are learning to
teach. Miller (1997) concludes, “some male students feel entitled to
exert power in a school context and demean and dehumanize women
student teachers through objectification” (p. 27). The stories
related by the participants in this study further illustrate Miller’s
findings.
As illustrated in the previous example, issues of race were discussed as the participants talked about being teachers. Socio-economic status was addressed as well.

**Teacher Talk about Race and Class**

During the third session of the seminar, the participants were asked to read and discuss a selection from the American Association of University Women’s (1995) report, *How Schools Shortchange Girls*. This selection is an analysis of the interaction between race, gender, and socio-economic status and academic achievement. The AAUW analysis used data from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey of eighth-graders for 1988 and from High School and Beyond for 1980. The conclusions state “socio-economic status is the best predictor of both grades and test scores, but there are important sex and racial/ethnic differences” (p. 56).

The transcripts from the participants’ discussions of this selection comprised the bulk of the data for this analysis of teacher talk about race and socio-economic status. However, other comments and observations about race and socio-economic status
from the response journals and full transcripts were included as well.

The participants' response to this selection reflected various discourses about the underlying causes of racial and social class differences in school achievement. These included attributing such differences to parental factors, individual nature, and lack of choices or role models for children. Also included in the participants' responses was a strong skepticism towards the AAUW research. The participants' words raised interesting questions. What purpose do the causal discourses employed by the participants serve? How do these discourses interact with the gendered teacher discourses described earlier? What are the similarities and differences between the discourses the participants employed surrounding race and socio-economic status and the discourses surrounding gender? What implications do these discourses have for teacher educators?

More than any other factor, the participants attributed differences in academic achievement between the classes and the races to parental factors. "There you have it! I think it's not socio-economic status, it's more parental stuff." The participants
maintained that low socio-economic parents have less time to spend with their children and fewer resources to support their education.

They want their kids to succeed like anyone else, but they don't have the resources, and I think that's where the challenge comes in. And there's obviously many, many exceptions to the rule, but that's what I think might explain it other than just that they are bad parents and they don't care. I don't think that's true.

Parents of low achievers don't always know how to support their children in school. One participant theorized from her personal story to illustrate this point.

My parents didn't know how to be supporting parents, you know? My mom only went to so many years of high school and I think that I was pretty fortunate. And thinking about how I was. And my mom's from El Salvador and my dad's from here and knowing that I didn't have the support. And the ones who come from no educational background, they don't know how to support at all. They don't know anything to do. They think as long as they put their kid in school that's what they have to do. And if they tell their kid, 'stay in school,' they think that's what being a good parent and educating their kids is about.

In addition to parental support, strength of character was offered as an explanation for the success of some low socio-economic status children.

I think children that come from low socio-economic status and become successful, I'm sure that they probably had a person or a teacher that made a difference
in their life. But I also think that they have a strong personal strength, like integrity, that helps them make it through the situations that they’ve been in in their life.

These explanations called on factors outside the teachers control.

One participant summarized this way. “So are we saying the reason why some of these kids are successful isn’t because of school curriculum or the school staff as much as where they are coming from?”

Another discourse the participants employed was that of individual nature. The use of this discourse was similar to the use of the individual nature discourse in the gender talk section. The participants suggested that perhaps the differences noted in the AAUW report didn’t have to do with racial or class inequities. Maybe they were simply due to individual differences. “We can try to figure out things. Whether it’s socio-economic status or if it’s cultural but it could be just an individual thing.”

It is interesting to note that neither parental behaviors nor individual character traits were factors discussed in the AAUW report. The AAUW report offered explanations for the differential achievement they describe but these explanations focused on the
school environment. The AAUW report suggested three possible explanations.

First, racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to attend poor schools with fewer resources. . . . Second, teachers' expectations of and interactions with minority girls and boys affect outcomes. . . . Third, according to researcher John Ogbu, children who feel that they will be consigned to low-caste jobs because of their race or caste system have little motivation to excel in school. (p. 60)

The AAUW explanations were also present in the participant words. They suggested that disadvantaged children may not have "hope." One participant pointed out that low socio-economic status children my perceive fewer choices in their lives. "That's the difference, it seems to me, between low economic and high economic is high economic sees more choices in their lives. Sees more possibilities." There was also some disagreement about the validity of these explanations.

I remember growing up in Portland and seeing such a huge difference between West Hills schools. And there still is, between neighborhoods, between neighborhoods less advantaged than mine. And, um, and I don't know why, but since a lot of the minorities did tend to live in the poorer neighborhoods, I don't want to give an explanation of why, that I don't know, but that was the general tendency, they didn't have money to support these special programs, teacher pay was lower.
It was interesting that this participant was unwilling to speculate on why minorities tend to live in poorer neighborhoods. Perhaps she simply could not think of a way to explain this that would not implicate minorities in the process.

Another participant agreed that there might be differences in schools. However, she went on to say she thought the inequity of disadvantaged schools was a “myth.” Good parents and good caring teachers could make a difference. She also expressed an additional doubt about research. “Like in Portland you know, they are always going to be sniffing around trying to find some kind of data that supports the negative for whatever reason, but I don’t think that it is all bad. I mean, what it is cracked up to be.”

Teachers’ expectations were mentioned by one of the participants. However, although the example related supported the findings of the AAUW research, the participant did not frame it that way. Instead, this reference was actually framed as a challenge to the findings of the AAUW research. This Asian American participant related her experience as a child.

I totally agree that low income kids can succeed because we were dirt poor and we were all three in TAG. And my mom was never home. She worked five jobs. We never
saw her. But I still think that I could have, I could have slipped through a lot, and I know that stereotypically teachers expected me to do well, but um, I could have had more at home with my mom had she been there. I could have gone even higher, done more, been more challenged.

While this participant was familiar with the research that says teachers expect more from Asian American students she actively rejected this finding. Rather than look at how higher teacher expectations may have contributed to her success in school she refocused the discussion back to parental influence. Her story was followed by further rejection of the research findings by another participant.

I see your point, because I have the same situation, and I think that part of it, my mom did not want me to be a statistic. So she was like, sure she had to work but she had these expectations and [I succeeded]. I just think this study is ridiculous. . . there is probably a better way to chart who are the lower students. Maybe by how much parental support there is.

Even though this participant focused again on the role of parents and spoke angrily about the research, later in the seminar she tells her experience in a way that lends support to the ideas presented by AAUW.

I'm half Spanish and it would be very easy, I didn't want to go to college, really, I was a little rascal, you know. And I got in trouble and all of this stuff. And I think that
many of may teachers could have said, “You know what? She’s a product of her culture and a product of her society.” And so they had these programs which are targeted for minority students, pull outs for African-American, and Asian-American and Spanish-American to go participate, girls, in math and science, this is very specific, girls, minorities, math and science, at the university. And it intrigued me, it was exciting, it was interesting and it made me want to go to college.

What made the information presented in the AAUW report so problematic for the participants? Why did they doubt the research and at the same time tell stories that supported its findings? Perhaps the findings of the research implicated them as teachers in a way they are not prepared to negotiate. The words of another participant provided some additional insight.

I can see how it is frustrating and how we wouldn’t want to believe this, you know, because we have kids with low socio-economic status in our class and if we believe this, we’re going to say, “Chances are they are going to fail. They aren’t going to do as good. So why should we try as hard with them.” So I can see why we wouldn’t want to take this to heart.

Perhaps the discourse of teaching implicated them as individual teachers rather than allowing them to examine the discourses and structure of the educational system as a whole.
Summary and Discussion

It is interesting that the participants in the study described but also seemed to accept the impact of their own gender on them as teachers. While discussing gender, race, and class they employed extensively the discourse of the "power of the individual." This discourse, well established in our culture as "The American Dream," suggests that individuals control their destiny though persistence and hard work. Both for them as teachers, and for the children they teach, individual nature and character seemed to rise above the social structures of society as explanations for differences. Britzman's (1991) explanation seems appropriate here. "This was because the dominant discourse excludes from its account how the unequal distribution of knowledge and wealth affects educational inequality and the lives of persons and instead emphasizes the individual's power to break away from such constraints of the culpability of the individual who cannot" (p. 234).

Perhaps it is this discourse, so well seated in the culture in which we teach, that most impacts the way we negotiate issues of social forces. "It behooves those learning to teach and those already teaching to rethink how social forces and dominant categories of
meaning intervene in and organize their own lives and the lives of their students" (Britzman, 1991, p. 233).

Another powerful discourse employed by the participants to explain differences in educational experiences was the importance of the family. Avery and Walker (1993) also found some preservice teachers attributed differences in achievement to family factors. In contrast to Avery and Walker's study, however, the participants in this study gave strong emphasis to the importance of family. As previously described, the difference between the studies might be attributed to differences in the way the attitudes of the participants were solicited. Perhaps a comparison between the Avery and Walker study and this study further illustrates the options preservice teachers exercise in selecting discourses as explanations for behavior. Rather than operating from a fixed position on issues of teaching, preservice teachers take up different authoritative discourses under different power structures. While responding to Avery and Walker's questions on differences in academic achievement their preservice teachers employed different discourses than were used by our participants when discussing with their peers their own educational experiences.
The preceding sections have focused on categories of gender talk. The participants’ general observations about gender and how the issues of gender, race, and class influence their roles as teachers have been described and discussed. The next two sections focus on the type of language the participants used to describe their views of gender. Rather than focusing on what they discussed, these sections focus on how they discussed. Perhaps these further examinations of how we constitute and are constituted by the language we employ will provide additional insight into our own roles as teacher educators.

Confessional Talk

"Okay, I admit it, I’m a sexist."

Research suggests that preservice teachers need to examine their biographies and histories in order to come to an understanding of themselves in relationship to social issues (Avery & Walker, 1993; Britzman, 1991; Freire, 1970; Gore, 1993; Pohan, 1996; Shor, 1992). As a result, teacher education often includes encouraging students to analyze their own backgrounds and biases. The gender issues seminar, which formed the basis for this research, asked the
participants to reflect on their backgrounds and biases. The participants were asked to record reflections in their response journals and share them in their small group discussions.

Scattered throughout the transcripts and the response journals were examples of what might be termed confessional language. Phrases such as, “I’m really disappointed in myself,” “I was stunned because I was unaware,” and “well I’ve done it, we’ve all done it,” ring of admission of guilt. Although a minor aspect of the talk on gender generated by this study, this confessional language raised interesting questions about the relationship between teacher educators and preservice teachers and the power inherent in our practice. What does the confessional language present in this study on gender issues signify? What purpose does it serve? How does it act upon preservice teachers’ views? What aspects of the culture of teacher education support or discourage confession on the part of preservice teachers?

Jennifer Gore (1993) discusses the historical roots and meaning of confessional language as elaborated by Foucault. She contrasts confessing oneself with constituting oneself. This distinction has implications for the ways we ask preservice
teacher's to examine their attitudes and behaviors. Confession, according to Gore (1993), "epitomiz[es] disciplinary power whereby the individual participates in her or his own subjectification [subjecting oneself to a powerful other] through a form of rationality that emphasizes the need to disclose oneself" (p. 150). Confession, with its roots in such practices as seventeenth-century Puritan confessional diaries, is a way to purify (Gore, 1993). Confessions are made to someone in power who then "appreciates, judges, consoles or understands" the confessor (Gore, 1993, p. 130). Confession acts to transfer responsibility away from oneself.

Confessing oneself contrasts with constituting oneself. In the constitution of oneself the emphasis is on collecting and re-assembling what has already been said. Rather than revealing the hidden, it re-assembles what is known. Constituting oneself is not done to appeal to a disciplinary power but rather as a way of developing the relationship with oneself (Gore, 1993). It might be understood as a form of remembering in which old stories are recalled and retold in new languages (McLaren & Tadeu da Silva, 1993). It is an attempt "not to understand the past better but to understand it differently" (McLaren & Tadeu da Silva, 1993, p. 75).
Within the context of learning to teach, it is "an historical tracing of what it means to be a teacher in specific contexts" (Gore, 1993, p. 151).

The Words of the Participants--Confessing or Constituting?

For some participants the seminar seemed to be a forum in which they could trace gender issues in their own lives and thereby rethink teaching practices. For one participant this freed her up to act in new ways. She told her group the following:

My paper [referring to what she had written in the response journal] was kind of a little confession that I am one of those girls that lost her voice. I can remember when it happened too. But I never raise my hand and I never speak out. In this little group here this is the most I've talked in school for years. I just don't. And part of it is I used to get in trouble all the time when I was in first, second and third grade for talking. And I spent half my time in the corner, you know, because I was in trouble. So I just learned to not talk. And to be good. And to just keep my mouth shut. There are so many times when I just sit there and I want to raise my hand and I have so much to say, but I just, it's like someone is holding me back, I just can't do it and so I think it's a definite phenomenon that happens to girls. And I don't know how or what you can do about it. But because I have experienced that I think that I'm much more aware of what might be going on in the heads of the girls in my class that don't really want to speak out and I think that there are ways that you can guide class discussions to encourage participation that's less you have to have your hand raised and this and that. And there's ways that you
can make people feel like they are participating and can share without it being so eyes on this person type of a thing. I don’t know, but I think it’s something that is very valid.

This participant was actively involved throughout the seminar. She raised other issues that concerned her and solicited help from her group in rethinking these issues and formulating solutions. Even though she began with, “My paper was kind of a little confession,” she seemed to be examining what she had done in the past to reconstitute herself in a way that was useful to her rather than confessing to one more powerful as a way to assuage her guilt.

When reflecting on a selection by David and Myra Sadker (1995) from Failing at Fairness, some participants connected the reading to their own experience. Excerpts from reflections recorded in their response journals illustrate how the stories in the reading prompted similar stories from the participants’ past.

I saw my own school experiences in some of the stories told in this chapter. I knew the answer to the majority of questions asked when I was in school, but I almost never raised my hand in class. I remember one time asking an economics teacher in high school a question about a chapter I had just read and he said, “Read the book--the answer is in the book.” I always felt like maybe he didn’t know the answer himself. But maybe he just said that to me because I am a female. I reread the chapter and I still had the same question. I didn’t ask
anyone about it though. I just figured that maybe it didn’t matter. I became complacent.

I can identify with this because it has been built up for so long. Even in my own classes as a child this occurred. I took the role as the quiet girl afraid to say anything out loud. I am this way still today. Although awareness of this problem is growing, it is going to take a lot to change what is being done.

In both cases, participants considered what it meant to them to be female in the classroom. They later raised questions about the implications these experiences have for teachers.

Many other participants, including both of the male participants, also raised questions about what the study suggested to them about their teaching practices. However, the male participants’ responses to the study did not include a personal reaction, or connection to their own experience in school, as illustrated in the two previous examples from female participants.

Other confessional language of the participants appeared more a reaction to disciplinary power. The participants admitted guilt and even suggested ways to make reparation for their behavior. Again these excerpts come from the response journals. For some, reflecting on the selection from Failing at Fairness led them to concede their culpability. “The whole time while reading I kept
thinking of small ways that I had not made the special effort to
include women.” “It made me reflect on myself, I’m really
disappointed in myself, because I thought of an example already in
the classroom in my homeroom, where I think I’ve been unfair.” The
participants suggested ways the educational system might act to
keep them in check and make sure they did not behave in sexist ways
again.

We are beginning to change but I would like to be
reminded of these practices at least once a year. I would
not mind being reviewed for gender bias if I knew my job
was not at stake. . . . I think I would grow every time I was
reviewed. I would also be reminded to review my own
practices every time I do a lesson when I’m teaching.

I would like to be angered at myself. I think that it
would, I mean, if it’s a problem that I have, which sounds
pretty probable from what we’ve been reading, I would
like to know about it. And I would like to know how they
study it so that I can video tape myself later and analyze
myself to save my, I mean, I think it is that important of
an issue that it’s something that I want to choose to get
cleaned out right at the beginning.

It is interesting to note where the participants’ confessional
language occurs most frequently. While there is confessional
language in the transcripts, most of the confessional language
originates in the response journals and is only later related by the
participants to their small groups. The confessional language was
most prevalent after the students read the selection by David and
Myra Sadker (1995) during session one. This article is an emotional
treatment of the issues of sexism in the classroom that focuses on
the biased behaviors of teachers. The article appeared to stimulate
feelings of guilt and the response journals seemed to be the place to
confess this guilt. Gore (1993) points out that confessional or
therapy talk might be present in preservice teachers' journals. The
following response journal entry contains confessional language:

Failing at Fairness makes me think even harder about
gender bias in my practicum placement. I feel like I've
always known what's right and wrong, but just like the
teacher on Dateline, I may be unaware of the wrongs I am
doing. One thing causing guilt on my mind right now is
that I have been supportive and giving very positive
feedback on writing to some boys in the class. . . . I
honestly (sadly) can't think of a time when I have done
that for some girls in my room. I really need to pay
attention to what I am doing.

For some it was as if they knew what we expected of them as
participants in our research and they indulged us by admitting that
they, too, exhibited sexist behaviors. In this way they helped
validate the importance of the seminar for use as researchers. They
obliged us by telling us what we wanted to hear.
Summary and Discussion

The confession quoted at the beginning of this section was later regretted by the participant. When rethinking the situation, she decided that perhaps she was not a sexist after all. She said, "this gender thing is getting to me."

We must recognize that the participants in the study wanted to say what we wanted to hear. Within the context of teacher education it is also likely that our preservice teachers are anxious to please us and say what they think will be most acceptable to us (Gore, 1993). McLaren and Tadeu da Silva (1993) say, "there exists a great deal of pressure on us as individuals to sustain our status and this means that we must express ourselves in ways approved by others" (p. 63). In teacher education we must critically examine the effects of our power on our students. The press for the reflective educator may be short circuited because of the double bind our students find themselves in. On the one hand, they are asked to critically reflect on their own practice. At the same time, we may unintentionally expect them to reflect in ways that will please us as their professors and evaluators. We must ask ourselves, "Does our practice allow preservice teachers space to think for themselves?"
Do our practices encourage confessing or constituting on their part? Are we subjecting them to our disciplinary power as part of the culture of teacher education? Perhaps an examination of these questions will help us recognize the problematic nature of our positions of power.

Resistance Talk

I'm kind of up in the air as to whether I really think there's an issue or not. It was like, I know there's an issue, but one part of me wants to say, "Is there really an issue or are we creating an issue?"

Failure to take up a critical stance by those learning to teach has sometimes been used to characterize preservice teachers as resistant to ideologically advanced ideas (Lather, 1981; Shor, 1993). However, critical and feminist theories have themselves been characterized as discourses of resistance (Lather, 1991; McWilliam 1994). They stand as a challenge to the dominant, white, male, view of the Enlightenment (Lather, 1992a). How might we look at resistance as more or other than a characterization of individual nature? Insight may be gained by looking at resistance as illustrating the push and pull of competing discourses in a press for change.
Kathy Kea, a graduate student involved in Lather’s (1991) research, defined resistance this way:

A word for the fear, dislike, hesitance most people have about turning their entire lives upside down and watching everything they have ever learned disintegrate into lies. “Empowerment” may be liberating, but it is also a lot of hard work and new responsibility to sort through one’s life and rebuild according to one’s own values and choices. (Kathy Kea, Feminist Scholarship class, October, 1985 p. 76)

How was the push and pull of resistance to gender issues evidenced by our research participants? The transcripts formed the basis of this analysis of resistance talk. It should be noted that the resistance talk found in the data was located almost exclusively in the transcripts. With one exception, the response journals were virtually free of resistance talk. Perhaps the participants were hesitant to express their resistance to the researchers directly.

Several types of resistance talk evidenced in the transcripts are examined first. These included attributing bias to factors other than gender, viewing a focus on gender as the problem rather than a solution, and placing themselves outside the issue. This is followed by an examination of other themes, also present in the participants’
words, that challenge the notion that preservice teachers are simply resistant.

**That's Just the Way I Am**

Individual differences, parental influence, time constraints, and chance were all used by the participants as alternative explanations to gender biased behaviors. The use of these explanations were illustrated in various conversations recorded in the transcripts.

Both in accounting for their own actions and for the actions of children they worked with, participants attributed differences to a "basic nature." It was as if they viewed themselves as non-gendered individuals rather than as females or males. "All the way through school, even now, I hate being called on, I hate giving my answer, I always, I'm just... I hate it. And I don't feel like it's a gender issue. It's just me. That's how I am."

In a discussion about research on gender issues, one participant explained her stance. Again she pointed out the importance of individual nature.

It's hard though, because this is like documented, they spent years researching, and so I am like just a little
MAT student at OSU and I am saying, ‘I don’t buy it.’ But the thing is, these situations, did they look at it, not just in terms of gender, but in terms of people? Like [as] individuals? In this situation was this really because it was a boy-girl issue?

When discussing jobs males or females might do, another participant suggested that there is some nature, more fundamental than gender, that leads to career choice. “We shouldn’t have to force boys and girls to do something that is against them.”

The importance of parents and society at large in influencing children was used to explain gendered behavior in the classroom. “But I really feel a lot of it can’t just be the teacher, you know. It’s parents and their environment. Their culture has to support them in their academic endeavors and their goals that they are setting.” This focus on parents helped the participants resist exploring the role the teacher may play in the existence of gender differences in the classroom.

“And I don’t know if it was because I was a girl or just because there are so many people. You can’t call on everybody every single time. . . And I’m not sure it’s so much a gender issue as just a matter of time.” Lack of time to call on everyone or to allow all children to expand on their ideas was one explanation given for
teachers' differential treatment of girls and boys. When trying to explain why some children were asked to expand on ideas and others only expected to give cursory answers, the issues of time and chance were raised again. "Perhaps it's not because Johnny is a boy he's being questioned, but usually once you get two or three wrong answers that's when you get the point, okay let's explain... and it could have happened to be that the last child that was picked was a male."

The Cure is Worse Than the Disease

Much of the resistance talk concerned the problem of focusing on gender and how the focus itself may be responsible for gender bias. Quotes like the following were scattered through the transcripts.

"We start looking for [gender bias] and it magnifies the whole thing. And then it's insidious, you know, the next year maybe there would be differences."

"Maybe we're trying too hard to get rid of the gender bias by changing it so much..."
"I had a lot of problems with [the observations others were making] because everything, a lot of things they were saying I was like, well, no I don’t think that has anything to do with gender unless you want it to. . . . if I just looked at everything as related to gender then I would start labeling and stereotyping things."

“In the past it was probably true that we gave males more attention than females. And consciously we need to correct that. But sometimes I’m afraid that we’ll blow this way out of proportion and do all this extra stuff.”

“I think it’s possible but I don’t recall anything in my past. And that right there starts bringing up the issue of let’s make everything, every single problem, a gender issue by saying, ‘well let’s go back to your past.’”

Participants were concerned with focusing too heavily on gender. They feared this might actually make the situation worse. One participant, when discussing a mentor teacher's approach to gender issues, posed the question, “Do you think she may have heard too many studies [on gender bias] and started to react and go the other way?” Later the same participant said, “If we are making these elaborate seating charts [in school] where the boys and the
girls are mixed do they notice that and think, 'well that must be unnatural because [the teachers] had to go to all the trouble. And so whenever we have the chance, we're going to sit separated.' The cure is worse than the problem.”

It Doesn't Apply to Us

One group engaged in a lengthy discussion of the biased behaviors of a public school teacher one of them had observed. One participant asked, “And his age? It might have something to do with that maybe?” Factors such as age of the teacher and how “current” the teacher was were used as explanations for teachers’ biased behaviors. “Where as for some teachers they have this mind set and everything. And I think they need these guidelines to make sure that they choose good textbooks that have this and that. But for us coming into the field, and having been raised, I think, in a time... we don't really need these rules in some aspects.” These explanations tended to focus on characteristics of the observed teacher that the participants did not share. In this way they set themselves apart from teachers who were engaging in biased teaching behaviors.
Summary and Discussion

As part of their resistance talk, the same participants in our study were anxious to speak the “truth” of educational theory on gender issues. Their resistance talk was coupled with talk that indicated an openness and willingness to change. They testified to the importance of gender issues and expressed concern over their own behavior:

I’d like to have somebody that professionally studies this [gender in schools] come in and observe me. I would really like to have that done for myself. I would like to be angered at myself. . . . I want to learn it right from the first. I am annoyed that we don’t have somebody, like the person who wrote this, [an excerpt from Sadker and Sadker, 1995] being one of our professors in this program. I think we take a lot of useless classes, why don’t we take something like this, I mean, if it is that big of an issue, which I think it is, we need to be dealing with it hard headed and not just read articles [in an] optional [seminar].

At the same time they evidenced a fear of looking too hard at these issues. It was as if they peered cautiously at something that was potentially dangerous to them. One participant wrote in her response journal, “[the seminar] has opened my eyes a bit wider. Seeing more clearly brings clearer responsibilities with it. Sometimes I wonder about my courage.”
Britzman (1991) discusses the push and pull of what she terms "authoritative" discourses and "internally persuasive" discourses. Authoritative discourses are institutionally sanctioned and demand allegiance. They result in what are understood as "normative" categories. In this study, the authoritative discourses available to the participants, regarding gender issues in teaching, were the discourses presented in the seminar. They included the readings and activities engaged in by the participants. Internally persuasive discourses pull one away from authoritative discourses. They are formed by history and biography. They compete with authoritative discourse. They have no institutionalized privilege. They are evidenced in the study as resistance talk when participants struggled with the issues presented in the seminar, issues that conflicted with their own sense of gender fairness.

The authoritative discourses of gender issues in teaching, as represented to our participants by the seminar, interacted with their own biographies to create multiple views of the same subject. At once questioning the limits of gender issues, and even suggesting that undue attention to them might work to amplify the problem,
and, at the same time, calling for renewed attention to an important issue.

Maybe we should ask ourselves, as teacher educators, “Does our own discourse of preservice teachers as resistant limit their choices in understanding the issues we ask them to consider?” Perhaps asking students to take up our discourse of gender issues in teaching is akin to asking them to replace one authoritative discourse with another (McLaren & Leonard, 1993; Orner, 1992; Shor, 1992). Further, what is the discourse on gender issues that we as teacher educators use? Do we reduce gender issues to the acquisition of technocratic skills thus simplifying a complex issue? Rather than viewing the participants’ resistance as evidence of preservice teachers staking a claim on an ideologically conservative landscape, we might view it as a positive source of tension. Instead of formulating the inability of the preservice teachers to fix their stance on gender issues as a problem with them, perhaps it can be understood as a powerful way to “denaturalize” the discussion and a move towards change (Orner, 1992). McWilliam (1994) says, “It is otherwise too tempting to force-feed them on social justice through an evangelical language of critique” (p. 110).
Resistance in this view is not characterized as something to be overcome but rather as a place where taken for granted ideas on gender and teaching can be made problematic. Within this context the complexities of gender issues are allowed free range with less attempt to corral them into “simple behaviors” new teachers must adopt.

In this study, a further look at the resistance talk illustrates how participants defined their own understanding as deeper and more complex as the seminar advanced. “So it’s possible that sometimes we think, well, ‘that’s not a gender issue.’ But we just haven’t really thought about it in that context before. I think a lot of these things we are going to decide it’s not a gender issue at the end. But those two or three things that we need to change in our own practice, in our own lives, I think it’s going to be really key.”

Overall Summary

In summary, the words of the participants used in this analysis illustrated four themes. The first theme, gender talk, included observations and discussions about the differences between females and males. The participants characterized girls and boys.
They noticed differences in the activities engaged in by females and males and differences in teacher responses to females and males. They discussed different ways girls and boys interact with each other and they talked about male/female adult roles. The participants' explanations for differences included gender differences as "natural." The participants discussed solutions to gender inequities. Their explanations, however, were simplistic. Although they seemed to understand the complexity of gender issues they lacked language to confront it in any deep way. An explanation of how teacher education practices might act to reinforce simplistic solutions to this complex issue was presented.

The theme teacher talk, included discussions of what it means to be a teacher and how gender, race, and class impact the teacher's role and the educational experience of children. The participants' talk included discourses of teaching as "women's work" and discussions of the differential experiences of female and male teachers. The participants explained their own involvement in the profession of education as something they were "meant" to do. The participants also talked about racial and class differences in education. They attributed these educational differences to parental
factors, individual nature, and lack of role models. The strength of
the discourse of "The American Dream" was offered as a possible
explanation for the way the participants negotiated issues of
gender, race, and class.

The themes confessional talk and resistance talk focused on
how the participants talked about gender. These types of talk, as
evidenced in the study, raised questions about the power
relationships between preservice teachers and teacher educators.
The problematic nature of these power relationships was discussed.

Using the theory of poststructural feminism illuminated the
words of the participants as illustrations of discourses on gender
and learning to teach. This view raised questions about teacher
education practices and suggested alternative ways of working with
preservice teachers.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The notion that these stories are not “pure” but contain internal contradictions and struggles, articulated as they are through a plurality of competing ways of talking about teaching and learning; is more useful to the contemporary researcher than attitudinal labels would be. (McWilliam, 1994, p. 150)

This study was situated as an inquiry into the complexity of learning gender-fair teaching in contemporary culture. Within the framework of poststructural feminism, this study focused on the preservice classroom as a social-historical site in which discourses act to enable and constrain discursive practices of teaching.

It is important in the conclusion of this work to reflect on the process of the study itself. How did the poststructural feminist framework impact the study? What was useful and what was dangerous about this perspective? This conclusion offers a deconstruction of the framework. It includes the implications of the study for me, as a teacher educator. It considers what else might have been examined in the data that this study did not address, and it suggests some future directions for research.
Deconstruction of the Framework

The poststructural feminist framework provided an avenue to analyze the words of the participants in a non-judgmental way. This stance was useful because it offered an element of respect to the participants. It allowed their words to be viewed not as a reflection of underlying character traits but as an illustration of the multiple subject positions, such as teacher, spouse, parent, and champion of the individual, they enacted. This view recognizes that learning to teach is not just learning the professional discourse of the academy but a complex process grounded in contradictory realities. When learning about gender issues in education, preservice teachers confront not only the context of university course work but also societal discourses on gender. These discourses are further complicated by the preservice teacher’s personal beliefs and views on gender issues. The poststructural feminist framework focuses on understanding the relationship between these multiple discourses, social institutions, and power. An understanding of these relationships opens possible sites of change.

What is dangerous about, or perhaps obscured by, this perspective? This poststructural feminist framework may make
less clear some of the roles of teacher educators, particularly as they work with preservice teachers who may need corrective interventions. This stance muddies the role of gatekeeper and perhaps complicates the ability of teacher educators to take a stand on issues they themselves deem important. For example, as a teacher educator I may find myself working with a preservice teacher who I believe is not good for children. While the poststructural feminist framework may give me insight into the discourses which frame this student’s thinking and behavior, it also makes less clear my role as a safety net for the profession. Insight into underlying causes may not always be sufficient for finding workable solutions to real problems.

Another question we must ask ourselves is, “How successful can we really be in examining and challenging the discourses which shape our practice?” While poststructural feminism asks us to stand outside the positivist bias, which has historically framed our work as teachers and researchers, can we, in fact, do this? Perhaps rather than confronting the positivist bias, this stance acts to mask its influence on our work. For example, as I review the research report presented here I am struck by the strong structural nature of
the text. I find it very difficult to write outside the bias of positivism. I recognize that while I sought to trouble the idea of the master narrative, a charge of poststructural feminism, I may have presented poststructural feminism as the "new" or "modern" answer. Poststructuralism has been characterized as the grand narrative to end grand narratives (Lather, 1991). This would suggest the use of positivist approaches to derail positivism. This, in itself, is problematic. Perhaps we should ask ourselves, like Audre Lorde (1995), if we can use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house? Further, much of what I have written uses the "language of certainty." The use of this language interferes with the idea of an open, questioning text.

I want to reiterate that no stance, including that of poststructural feminism, is innocent. All stances implicate ideological interests and relations of power (McLaren & Leonard, 1993). I tried to make clear to the reader the ideological interests that biased this research. However, to step outside one's bias to reflect upon it is always met with limited success. No bias is more obscure and difficult to locate than one's own.
Implications for Teacher Education

In this study, the words of the participants illustrated aspects of the theory of poststructural feminism by evidencing discourses and subjectivity. This analysis of the participants' words suggests possible directions for preservice teachers and for teacher educators.

Deconstruct the Discourses of Education

Key in poststructural feminism, and thoroughly evidenced in the data, is the influence of discourses on those learning to teach. The data illustrated how the languages of education and of gender-fair teaching constituted the participants' views and beliefs. An understanding of the constitutive nature of language (or how we define and are defined by language) suggests that preservice teachers and teacher educators might gain insight into their practice by examining the implications of these languages and how they perpetuate them.

An analysis of the history of education and the meanings this history imposes upon our work may allow preservice teachers to confront taken for granted notions of education. This analysis of the
cultural and historical site of the educational experience may open up new ways of telling the experiences of education. For example, as preservice teachers deconstruct the discourse of "education as women's work" perhaps they can create new stories that define education in other ways. This "new telling" might act to denaturalize taken for granted ideas about education and open new avenues for working in the complex and diverse society of our present educational system.

Recognize the Limits of Our Practice

Also illustrated in the data of this study was subjectivity. Central to poststructural feminism, subjectivity recognizes the multiple and dynamic subject positions preservice teachers take up as they learn and work in the field of education. The multiple positions the participants assumed with regards to gender issues were richly illustrated. Subjectivity allows us, as teacher educators, to move beyond essentialist characterizations of preservice teachers toward a view of them as socially constructed subjects who are constantly changing. An essentialist view characterizes preservice teachers as static and teacher education as
a set of discrete skills. Subjectivity recognizes the multiple subject positions which constitute the preservice teacher and defines being a teacher as a complex and ongoing process.

Subjectivity suggests self-reflection, or reassembling what we know about education. It suggests the importance of learning more and other languages with which to describe our experiences. It challenges the idea that experience is a given rather than a construct defined through language. It helps us recognize the limits of our own practice as teacher educators by illustrating that our own discourse is only one on a landscape of many conflicting and competing discourses which influence preservice teachers. Poststructural feminism provides insight into how we reinscribe relations of power through our own pedagogy. It helps us understand that while preservice teachers may learn to speak the language of teacher education, this language does not always bear sway in informing their practice on a daily basis. Nor does this language necessarily reflect their own biases and beliefs.
Rethink the Role of the Teacher

Poststructural feminist theory challenges the role of teacher as "expert." A broader understanding of the teacher as part of a large network of individuals contributing to the educational agenda may allow preservice teachers alternate explanations and solutions to educational problems. Freed from the burden of having to know "the" answers, preservice teachers might explore how parents, students, and members of the community share in constructing the educational environment. Additionally, such understanding may lead preservice teachers to consider more fully the impact of our social structures on education.

Provide Alternative Educational Sites

An understanding of the power relationships inherent in teacher education practice suggests the value of providing alternate and varied educational sites in which preservice teachers might examine the discourses that shape their practice. Cooperative group work and peer interactions, not directly supervised by teacher educators, may provide opportunities for the preservice teacher to explore discourses with more freedom. Further, we should recognize
that all group relationships include power structures that support the speaking of some discourses and silence others. A wide variety of diverse educational experiences within the teacher education program itself may provide more opportunities for preservice teachers to view and consider the multiple discourses of education.

And what ultimately is the meaning of this study to me? First, it locates my practice as teacher educator in the particular. It moves me to attend to an understanding of the individuals I encounter in my work as our paths intersect in one unrepeatable space of place and time. Perhaps it makes my work as teacher educator less grand but more hopeful. I no longer look for "universal" or "best" solutions. I need not endlessly concern myself with finding right answers to educational issues. It makes me less certain that I know what's best to do in any one situation but more secure in the idea that this responsibility does not lie with me alone.

I feel myself surrounded by discourses. I use the discourses of education in my teaching and I hear them repeated by my students. I have come to recognize how discourses work upon us and how we use the languages of discourses to constitute our practice. Societal
discourses constantly swirl around me and I find myself attending to their implications in ways that were unknown to me prior to this study. The principles which frame this work have pushed their way into my life and color all that I see. I hear the words of the participants as they talk, laugh, challenge, and wonder. Much of what they said and the insight they shared belongs to me alone. No writing could adequately convey the impact of their words upon my work.

Further Study

Not all aspects of the data were explored in this study. The small group dynamics were not considered. However, as researchers we were aware that the composition of the small groups in the research seminar impacted the subject positions the participants assumed. It would be interesting to compare the groups and to look at the type of language the participants used as they supported and challenged each other’s positions. Some participants mentioned that the male-female composition of the groups impacted what they said. They also mentioned that at times the tape recorder was turned off while members of the group worked through conflicts they did not
want recorded. The data may suggest further implications of and uses for small groups as a pedagogical tool in teacher education.

In addition, other ways of looking at the data may provide interesting contrasts and different insights into preservice teachers and gender. For example, my research partner analyzed the data using a case study approach. This analysis focused on the words of one participant at a time. This analysis provides a different and intriguing view of the same data that more fully develops the concept of subjectivity (see Phillips, 1998). An analysis of the data through alternative theoretical frameworks would provide other views of preservice teacher education and gender which might be useful and informative.

The theory of poststructural feminism promises a wealth of new ideas and practices for teacher educators. The application of this theory to teacher education is just beginning. Poststructural feminism provides a space where issues of complexity and diversity in teaching can be addressed and new solutions explored.

This study touched on only one small aspect of teacher education. Further research into the discourses of education which constitute our practice is suggested by the theory. In addition,
research into the pedagogical practices which may work to
denaturalize discourses and challenge relationships of power would
be provocative and useful. Poststructural feminism has been, and
promises to be, a source of hope as we continue to work individually
and collectively to advocate for and educate preservice teachers.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

INVITATION LETTER
Dear MAT students,

This is an invitation - an invitation for you to join a discussion group this term as part of a research project and to fulfill an assignment for your Special Needs class. We'd like you to take a minute to read through this description and see what you think. If you have questions, we will be glad to answer them.

To begin with, let us tell you a little bit about ourselves. Before we arrived at graduate school last fall, we were both classroom teachers. Camille taught elementary; Donna taught middle and high school. Once we arrived here at OSU, we found we had quite a bit in common. We both care deeply about education. We think similarly about the “way school ought to be.” We have some common questions and interests. For example, we think girls and boys ought to have “equal opportunity” in school, but we think that’s a lot easier said than done. And since we don’t know exactly how it is done, this is also a question for us. We think, that in part, it has a lot to do with who we are as teachers. “Who we are” is revealed in the way we use language and we think our language is “borrowed” from a lot of different sources - sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously. We also think we learn by talking. It is just that in education there isn’t time to do the kind of talking where you reflect, argue, and construct different ideas very often.

Having taken all those ideas and talked about them a great deal, we came up with a research project for our dissertation. The questions guiding
our project are as follows: How do preservice teachers talk about gender issues? How does their talk inform us as teacher educators? Does their talk lead them to 'deconstruct' their knowledge and beliefs of gender fair teaching? And, what is the deconstruction process? You need to know that unlike traditional research, we don’t have any preconceived ideas about “answers” or “outcomes.” We really don’t know what will happen at all, which is a bit frightening, but also exciting.

Anyway, now you know why you are needed. We can’t study “talk” without preservice teachers who are willing to join us in discussion. Here’s how it would work if you find this interesting and choose to collaborate with us. The discussion group will meet on October 10 for an all day in-service (8:30-2:00, lunch will be provided) and every other Friday after that. By participating in the discussion group, you will be fulfilling the project requirement for your Special Needs class. On these Fridays, you will meet in small groups where you’ll do activities, readings, or share stories. We will also be writing autobiographies using the writing process. This, too, will be done in class. We will also ask you to write dialogue journals - a kind of note-passing activity - between yourself and either other students or one or both of us. We will tape record the discussions in the class and have these recordings transcribed so we can study them further. We won’t be using “real names” on these transcriptions. In fact, you can even come up with

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1 By “deconstruct,” we mean the process of looking critically at taken for granted ideas or practices which appear or are understood to be “normal” or “natural,” in order to rethink them.
your own pseudonym if you’d like! At least twice, we hope to give the transcriptions back to you and let you analyze them and tell us what you find interesting. If at anytime, you wish you could “take back” something said, you can. We’ll take that particular “chunk” out of the transcripts. There’s a chance that we may want to interview some of you later on, but you can make that choice as it becomes an option.

There will be very little outside work. (How’s that for being enticing?) We will ask you to observe for gender issues in the public school classrooms where you are completing practicums, but mostly, everything will be done during the block of time on Fridays. The only requirement is that you come every Friday. We need you to be there in order to have a discussion! If you find you can’t keep this schedule, you could always choose to do another project for your Special Needs class. We are not going to “grade” your participation. You will give yourself a grade for the project.

So, it is pretty obvious what we get out of this deal: a better understanding of how to be teacher educators, a dissertation, and, hopefully, a Ph.D.! But why would you want to be involved? What’s in it for you? We think there are several possibilities. Having a better understanding of yourself may be the first step in being a great teacher. You’ll be learning about setting up group discussions, talking to learn, and dynamics that affect group work. You may learn ways to be more gender-fair in your classroom, but we won’t promise you’ll “arrive,” since we know we haven’t either! We think you’ll gain a new perspective about the language that swirls
all around you in education. This could be helpful in a number of ways, including understanding your administrator, parents, and your students. By being a part of a research project, you may learn something about the process yourself. And finally, you’ll satisfy the project requirement for your Special Needs class by just coming to class and talking with your colleagues. Now that’s a deal 😊

If you choose to join this group, you will need to sign an “Informed Consent” form. This is required by OSU and it is the legal document that says you understand what the project is about and what your role is in it. You will be asked to sign this form on our first meeting date, October 10. (If you’d like to look at one ahead of time, please ask!) Also, before our first meeting, we have some ideas of things you could observe for in your public school classroom(s). Your observations will be the basis for our first discussion so please pick-up a copy of this sheet if you plan to participate.

Because we think discussions work best with smaller numbers of participants, we can only have a maximum of 15 people in the group, so if you are interested, please sign up soon! We look forward to learning with you during this project. Thank you in advance for joining us!

Sincerely,

Camille & Donna
APPENDIX B

SEMINAR SESSION AGENDAS AND MATERIALS
Gender Issues

Please use the items below to focus your observations while working in your field placement site. Be prepared to share these observations during our October 10th in-service.

1. How do girls and boys interact with each other during unstructured times? Do girls and boys occupy different spaces? What types of activities do girls and boys engage in during social interactions?

2. Are students in the classroom separated according to sex (i.e. lining up, seating arrangements)? If so, is this separation structured by the teacher or self-selected by the students?

3. Do you notice any differences in the behaviors of girls and boys in the classroom? Do they interact differently with the teacher? Do you notice differences in the way they ask and respond to questions? Do girls or boys participate more? Who gets left out? Do girls or boys get into trouble more?

4. What types of self-selected activities do girls and boys engage in while in the classroom? Are they individual or group activities?

Please jot down notes about your observations and have them read for our October 10th in-service day. Make sure you do not use students “real” names when you are recording data.
Agenda--Gender Issues Research Seminar
October 10, 1997

8:30  Welcome, Informed consent, Discuss the research

8:45  Divide into groups--discuss "Gender Observations"
     Discuss as a group and write general statements about
     what your group observed
     TAPE THIS DISCUSSION

9:30  Deconstruction mini lesson--Donna (see attached)
     Deconstruct statements written earlier in groups
     Identify assumptions/useful/dangerous/questions

10:00 Autobiographical webs demonstration--stories (events,
     situations, relationships) about your gendered self
     Participants construct webs

10:30 Coffee break observation (see attached)

11:30 Talk about observations
     TAPE THIS DISCUSSION

12:00 LUNCH

12:30 Select an idea from your autobiographical web and think
     of a story about it. Write your story.

1:00  Read on your own Sadker, D., & Sadker, M. (1995). Failing
     at fairness: How America's schools cheat girls. Pages
     1-14.

1:30  Write your response

1:40  Discuss your response with your group
     TAPE THIS DISCUSSION

2:00  Conclusion
Deconstruction Mini Lesson

Break Observation

The following was printed on an envelope containing $1.50.

One envelope was given to each participant.

Go somewhere--a coffee shop, a restaurant, a fraternity or sorority lounge, a dorm lounge, use your imagination--and sit for at least 15 minutes and observe. Write down anything you see that might relate to gender. How do males and females behave in the setting you chose? Bring your notes back with you. BE BACK BY 11:30. The money in the envelope is for you to buy yourself a cup of coffee, a soda, a cookie--what ever helps keep you going. Have Fun!
Agenda--Gender Issues Research Seminar
October 24, 1997

1:00 Response Journals--read and respond

1:15 Discuss our reaction to transcribing the tapes from session one. Include how speech looks when written and the emotions the tapes evoked.
Questions

1:30 Pass out excerpts chosen from transcripts. Explain why they were chosen. Follow these instructions:
• Read the transcript individually
• Look for themes, conflicts, and assumptions
• Discuss these with your group--you do not need to come to agreement
• Deconstruct these themes, conflicts, and assumptions (refer back to mini lesson on deconstruction from October 10.)
• Discuss what you discovered in your groups
TAPE THIS DISCUSSION

• Read this selection aloud together
• Discuss the questions in the text
• Deconstruct (assumptions, dangerous, useful, ramifications) the positions described in the text
TAPE THIS DISCUSSION
## Agenda--Gender Issues Research Seminar

### November 7, 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:00</td>
<td>Response Journals--read and respond and Soda Pop</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:45</td>
<td>Stretch Break!</td>
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| 1:50   | Check the “secret” envelope for instructions. (The secret envelope contained copies of the groups transcript from the discussion held on October 24. It also included the following instructions:  

- Individually reflect on the conversations your group has had about gender. What general statements about gender issues do yo think characterizes those conversations? Jot them down.  

- With your group, talk about your ideas. Compile a group list of your general statements and write them on the overheads provided. Don’t worry if your statements seem contradictory.  

- Scan the transcripts from your group and see if you can find quotes that support these general statements.  

- Be prepared to present your statements to the whole group at 2:40. |
| 2:45   | Group Presentations in Room 107                                                             |
Agenda--Gender Issues Research Seminar
November 7, 1997

1:00  Response Journals--read and respond

1:15  Deconstructing School Scenarios (see attached)
     Small Group Discussion
     TAPE THIS DISCUSSION

2:00  Demographics--fill our demographics sheet while
     enjoying a snack

2:20  Report on research--Donna, what we think we have
     learned to this point

2:40  Classroom information on gender--Camille, some
     practical information and ideas

3:00  Dismiss
Deconstructing School Scenarios

Instructions:

- Select one scenario to discuss.
- Choose a course of action the teacher in the scenario might take.
- Deconstruct this course of action by discussing:
  - What's useful about the course of action.
  - What's dangerous about the course of action.
  - What are the assumptions underlying.
- If you have time, select another scenario.
- PLEASE TAPE THIS SESSION!

1. One of a teacher's best math students, an eighth grade Hispanic American female, informs the teacher that she is not going to enroll in algebra the following year because she is not planning to go to college. When the teacher asks why, she replies that she doesn't need college. She says her plans are to finish high school, work at a job for a while, get married and then stay home.

2. A father of a preschool student comes to school irate because his son told him that he has been playing in the housekeeping/doll house area. He tells the teacher he does not want his son to play with "girl things."

3. A fourth grade student suggests that the class should have a spelling bee with the boys against the girls, like some other fourth grade classes.

4. A group of second grade boys does not want some of the girls to join in their game on the schoolyard.

5. Four girls in a sixth grade science class always sit together in the back of the room. They don't participate and frequently disrupt the class with talking and laughing.

APPENDIX C

DECONSTRUCTION
Deconstruction Lecture

The definition of deconstruction provided to the participants was; "Deconstruction is the process of looking critically at taken for granted ideas or practices, which appear or are understood to be 'normal' or 'natural' in order to rethink them." We instructed the participants to ask themselves the following questions when "deconstructing" an idea: What assumptions are present? What is useful? What is dangerous? What questions do I need to ask?