
(Re)Imagining Elementary Social Studies: A Controversial Issues Reader

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(Re)Imagining Elementary Social Studies: A Controversial Issues Reader

Edited by

**Sarah B. Shear
Christina M. Tschida
Elizabeth Bellows
Lisa Brown Buchanan
Elizabeth E. Saylor**



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*For young learners, who deserve a better world
For elementary educators, who bravely nurture students to find their voices and
passions that will bring change*

Thank you to our chapter authors for their bravery, their honesty, their passion, and their heartfelt dedication to what elementary social studies could one day be(come).

—Sarah, Christina, Elizabeth, Lisa, and Elizabeth

Thank you to my co-editors-sisters-friends-colleagues in arms... You are such a blessing to my life. Thank you to my parents whose love formed a foundation where I could find my voice and bravely speak truth to power. To my nephews, whose compassion for humanity is a light in dark hours, thank you for teaching me how to be a better ally to our world's youth.

—Sarah

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—Christina

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—*Elizabeth*

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—*Lisa*

Thank you to my fellow co-editors who are so much more than co-editors. You have all been an incredible source of support and have always served as inspiration in my life. I am unbelievably proud of what we have accomplished together. I want to thank my parents, Rodney and Donna, for their constant support, love, and for emphasizing the profound value of education throughout my life. I learned how to be compassionate, to do what is right-not what is easy, and the importance of perseverance from you both. Finally, I thank my students for their love of children, their enthusiasm in the fight for social justice, and their courage to enter such a challenging profession. You give me hope.

—*Liz*

FOREWORD

Jeannette Driscoll Alarcón

*For young learners, who deserve a better world
For elementary educators, who bravely nurture students to find their voices and
passions that will bring change*

In the introductory Letter, the editors of this volume articulate the need to share current critical work in the field of social studies education in general and specifically in support of meaningful elementary social studies education. I will not use the Foreword for a repetitive message however, I will reiterate and build upon one of the central goals mentioned: the need to reimagine elementary social studies in order to “more adeptly handle the complexities of our diversifying world.” As the editors mention, the elementary teaching force has remained mainly static in terms of the demographic drawn to the profession for over 100 years. Simultaneously, the White middle-class student population attending public schools continues to dwindle. In previous decades, pre-service teachers were taught to embody a color-blind approach that acted as a pedagogical mechanism to help them avoid the classroom controversy produced by the cultural disconnect between teacher and students. We have moved away from reproducing this ideology in many, if not most, elementary teaching programs. However, we continue to fall short with

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helping elementary pre-service teachers understand how to use controversial topics in elementary settings as meaningful teaching and learning moments.

I took the editors' prompt to think about what social studies education means to me as the starting point for this Foreword. I strive to facilitate social studies teaching and learning that leads to both elementary students and educators seeing themselves as learners, teachers, truth-sayers, and problem solvers. My experiences have shaped the elementary social studies educator I have become. As I read the brave and bracing contributions made to this edited volume, several reflective moments came to mind. I thought about spaces where this book could have been useful and those where it will be useful. When I taught elementary social studies, almost twenty years ago, our schedule included a dedicated time for social studies as a content area. Over the last decade or more, the time allotted for direct social studies teaching has all but disappeared. In too many cases this time has been repurposed for implementing intrusive, low-level functional literacy programs that are a far cry from the culturally relevant teaching we know works best for engaging students in learning. Stating this fact is not meant to imply that I nostalgically harken to days gone by when elementary teachers were engaged in relevant, authentic and critical social studies teaching. On the contrary, most were still teaching the standard content with little thought about whether there were better approaches that could actually create a space where students learn about society from contemporary and historical perspectives. We had a long way to go then, as we do now. The following examples provide ideas for spaces where this edited volume will be useful.

The last year that I taught fifth grade something final stirred in me as I looked out at the glazed over expressions on my students' faces as we cracked open our "We the People" books for the last time. What had I been doing? Why weren't we talking about the things that were important to my students within context of the social studies? After all, I had a never-ending cache of topics supplied daily during our class meeting time. The same year, the World Trade Center was struck by two planes. We received a note in our mailboxes stating that we were not to talk about it with our classes. In that moment, I made a commitment to shift my teaching to include spaces for helping students to make sense of the social issues they were living with each day. I wanted to create an educative space for questioning injustice, confronting fear by seeking to understand new things, and knowing that each of us holds the potential to make positive social change. In short, that year I became an elementary social studies educator with purpose. Perhaps, having this text would have opened my mind earlier.

A few years after leaving the elementary school setting, I began my journey into pre-service teacher education. My goal remains facilitating pre-service elementary teachers' learning about how to integrate social studies content daily; to embody active and engaged citizenship traits and redefine citizenship to include all members of the community; and to enact culturally relevant and critical pedagogy as a pathway for teaching students to care about themselves and their

communities. The social studies have become the vehicle that moves me toward these goals. In this iteration of my teaching I have grappled with the best ways to engage pre-service teachers with important topics and issues that they will encounter in school settings. This work can be emotionally taxing but also hopeful as the pre-service teachers' engage with topics that are important to them, thereby providing a model of the possibility for meaningful elementary social studies teaching. I have come to understand the usefulness of including controversial topics as course content and guiding students to think about how to implement the instructional practices we use in their future classrooms. Reading this book both validates the work we have done and provides an additional resource to draw from as we advance the work of social justice education.

In my role as education researcher, I am engaged in a Participatory Action Research project with a small group of first year elementary teachers. All of the teacher participants (including myself) expressed a commitment to teaching social studies daily in their classrooms. We have worked collectively to address controversial topics as they arise during instruction and class meetings with the goal of modeling how to advocate for themselves and understand others' perspectives. We have shared an amazing journey this year. The teachers and students have engaged in brave conversations, worked through disagreement, and built a meaningful learning community. Unfortunately, the teachers have also experienced peer resistance to their professional choices. Within this context, I feel this book will be useful for supporting teachers' decision making and engaging in conversations with grade-level teammates.

As I read the contributions included, I was impressed by the variety of topics in which my colleagues are engaging with students and teachers. This led me to think about the greater significance of this book in the current historical moment. We are hinged on a critical moment; we are literally fighting for the right to a relevant education for students at all educational levels (PK through terminal degree). To that end, I feel this book takes on the daunting and important task of promoting meaningful and critical educative experiences.

The chapter authors are committed to updating historical narratives, making socio-historical teaching more inclusive of groups who have been marginalized and silenced. This is important because it shows children how their stories fit within the complex, highly racialized social system in the United States. Further, by expanding the historical narrative to include multiple histories, we create an opportunity to reshape the current social foundation from one based upon notions of White supremacy and hetero-normativity, to one that acknowledges the value and contributions of all. Including the histories in person of African-Americans, Indigenous groups, the Latinx population and many other heritage, ethnic and social groups offers a step toward replacing the ideology of individualistic exceptionalism to teaching about communal and cultural traits that promote social betterment for all.

Moving from history to contemporary issues, several contributions draw much needed attention to the fact that despite elementary teachers' predisposition toward avoidance of difficult topics, controversy enters our classrooms on a daily basis. We are urged by several authors to seize these moments and guide students in learning to work toward solving disagreements and learning about those who are different from themselves in respectful ways. Engaging with uncomfortable learning moments is necessary in social justice education. However, we must remain mindful that each moment of crisis in leaning must be followed by moments of hope. Guiding students at all levels in working through controversial topics helps to promote agency and participation that could result in social betterment.

In this contemporary moment, it is essential for young learners to understand that they have a voice in community decision-making and valid ideas for solving problems. We must counter disempowering messages with the tools that students and teachers need to fight for justice and change. I cannot emphasize enough what this volume means to me. I appreciate the work that you all do each day with and for elementary teachers and students.

Jeannette Driscoll Alarcón
The University of North Carolina, Greensboro

ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES AS SITES OF RESISTANCE

A Letter From the Editors

“Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.”

—Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000)

Dear Readers,

As women, mothers, teachers, scholars, activists, it is not easy to think about what kind of elementary social studies we should teach without first asking ourselves about precisely what elementary social studies means to us. Specifically, how do we see elementary social studies as possible sites of resistance in the aims of societal transformation and justice? When we think about elementary social studies as sites of resistance, we think first and foremost about hope—hope as the root of all that could be made possible in social studies classrooms dedicated to justice. In his *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), Paulo Freire reflected, “Without a mini-

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mum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle” (p. 9). The journey toward justice must be founded on hope or else why even begin?

We are all witnesses to the doing and undoing of justice as people in various positions of power make public decisions to listen to or silence the masses. Our children our watching. More than ever, our youngest learners, *our children*, require our vigilance in the promotion and support of anti-oppressive regimes, public spaces, school districts, and classrooms. The discounting of social studies during the age of standardization has soured society’s efforts to discuss, deliberate, and communicate with those different from ourselves. We believe more than ever, we struggle to find common ground and listen to those with differing opinions than our own. Our children are listening. It is no longer good enough to only teach social studies a few minutes a week, or to accept commonplace, diluted social studies masked with ineffective and trite content integration (Alleman & Brophy, 2010). Our collective, intersectional vision for elementary social studies today is overt, deliberate, and explicit, and it positions teachers and children as powerful citizens who can think critically about the historical and current manifestations of oppression, take action both locally and globally, and consider others before self.

Preparing for Our Journey: Reflecting on the Field and the Potential for Justice-Centered Social Studies

At the heart of this book project is our work to reimagine elementary social studies education in order to more adeptly handle the complexities of our diversifying world. The reimagining of social studies, however, must first begin with a reimagining of the elementary social studies teacher—becoming comfortable with the uncomfortable in order to create spaces for students and teachers to critically engage controversy in the early grades. This action is warranted because as many point out, the elementary teaching demographic has remained largely static over the last several decades while our student demographics have shifted radically (Cross, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This pre-existing issue is compounded by the fact that elementary teachers, including those who are committed to teaching social studies (Anderson, 2014) and preservice teachers appear to remain resistant to openly addressing controversial issues with children (see for example, Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010; James, 2008; Picower, 2009). As today’s students possess a much wider array of socio-cultural understanding than their teachers might, schooling brings them into a space where their own community cultures come into question (Landsman & Lewis, 2011; Nieto, 2000; Yosso, 2005). But more importantly, we feel the call to struggle in hope toward justice calls for greater inclusion of controversial issues in the younger grades. As hooks (2010) reflected,

When we teach our students that there is safety in learning to cope with conflict, with differences of thought and opinion, we prepare their minds for radical openness. We teach them that it is possible to learn in diverse teaching settings. And in

the long run, by teaching students to value dissent and to treasure critical exchange, we prepare them to face reality. (p. 88)

It is in these delicate spaces that the work of social studies education is needed.

Research also reveals school faculty play a critical role in determining whether or not controversial issues are taught; however, at the elementary level, critical conversations are simply *not* taking place. Wegwert (2011) found the skills needed for democratic citizenship stood in sharp contrast to what teachers actually taught and emphasized in their social studies instruction. Teachers and teacher educators interested in advancing ideas about democratic citizenship that respect human diversity (Crocco, 2000; Parker, 1996; Smith, 2000) find such school cultures challenging (Crocco, 2002). Hess (2009) noted, too, that “research shows that young children can deal successfully with ideas that are developmentally appropriate and highly scaffolded. Consequently, I think it is a mistake for schools to wait until students are older to introduce these discussions” (p. 168). As we consider the literature and our own hope for the potential of social studies to take on justice-centered pedagogy, consider hooks (2010) who aptly penned,

Since there has not been a radical transformation of education at its roots, education as the practice of freedom is still a pedagogy accepted only by individuals who elect to concentrate their efforts in this direction. Understanding that liberation is an ongoing process, we must pursue all opportunities to decolonize our minds and the minds of our students. (pp. 27–28)

Controversiality of taboo topics in social studies education at large (Evans, Avery, & Pederson, 1999) works against the aims of justice and against the liberation hooks challenges us to work toward in alliance with our students.

As emerging scholars and former social studies teachers, we positioned our book’s aims to address the dearth of elementary voices in our larger field of social studies education. The field of elementary social studies is a specific space that has historically been granted unequal value in the larger arena of social studies education and research. This marginalization is further compounded as historically, some of the most revered social studies research focused texts on the matter and largest research collaboratives (e.g., College and University Faculty Assembly, AERA Research in Social Studies Education SIG) have not dedicated adequate space for discussions of teaching and learning controversial issues at the elementary level. Additionally, there is a noticeable gap in the availability of scholarship about classroom practices in elementary social studies. While small gains towards advancing elementary social studies research have been recently documented in our field’s research journals, we recognize there is work to be done to elevate such work as necessary alongside the research of our middle grade and secondary colleagues. Even our field’s flagship elementary social studies journal, *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, does not frequently publish scholarship dedicated to classroom work with controversial topics. Therefore this reader stands out as a

collection of approaches aimed specifically at teaching controversial issues within elementary social studies.

In relation to our context as elementary teacher educators, we recognize the opportunity for identifying and problematizing topics considered controversial among elementary preservice and inservice teachers. While there have been strides to address silences towards controversial issues like race(ism) and colonialism (see for example, Chandler, 2015 and Crowe & Cuenca, 2016), these texts remain heavily focused on teaching and learning at the secondary level. Recent literature that reports on “exemplary elementary social studies” (Libresco, Alleman, Field, & Passe, 2014) aims to empower us to “return social studies to its rightful place in the curriculum” by highlighting seven case studies; yet we still notice a lack of issues-centered teaching within these cases. As is typical in our field, elementary social studies perceived as *exemplary* tends to focus on service learning, documents-based history instruction, good citizenship, and integration with English Language Arts. We do appreciate these methods as valuable and effective, and this reader is an effort to build upon this important work. However, we also recognize that implementation of *exemplary social studies* without a thoughtful inclusion of controversial issues, or acknowledging our youngest citizens can and desire to discuss controversial topics, could dissuade teachers and teacher educators from committing to social studies that focuses its curricular aims on anti-oppressive practices.

As white teacher educators, we have all committed to calling out the privilege we hold, challenging the forces that continue to uphold systems of oppression, and infusing controversial issues into our elementary social studies methods courses and social studies scholarship (e.g., Bellows & Bodle, 2016; Bellows, Bauml, & Field, 2012; Buchanan & Hilburn, 2016; Tschida & Buchanan, 2015). We also realize that just asking teachers to “talk about race,” calling out white supremacy and settler colonialism, and other *taboo* topics could result in nominal or even dangerous pedagogical practices, and that much development is needed for both preservice and inservice teachers, as well as in elementary methods instructors. Fear of naming and embracing controversy is seen in preservice teachers who push back, become indecisive and sometimes argumentative (e.g. Buchanan, 2015). As such, social studies must revolutionize its practices, find the courage to change, and embrace difficult dialogues with all learners, from preschool to university. In her reflections of Freire’s work, Antonia Darder (2009) wrote, “The more that we were willing to struggle for an emancipatory dream, the more apt we were to know intimately the experience of fear, how to control and educate our fear, and finally, how to transform that fear into courage” (p. 569). We contribute this book as an attempt to lead the charge in encouraging the discussion and consideration of controversial issues in elementary settings.

On the Road: Our Vision for Collaborations and Resistance

On a hot, sunny afternoon in July 2015 we gathered in Boone, North Carolina for the first of many retreats that would crisscross the state over the next two years. Our hopeful journey began, however, years before when our paths crossed, as fate would have it, at North Carolina social studies events, College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA) annual conferences and retreats, and over lunch at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual conference in Chicago. As we formed friendships, we realized there were many intersectionalities among us, and to be frank, we delighted in hearing about each other's personal lives, teaching experiences, and research interests. We also found solidarity in our frustrations as untenured faculty and women in academia. Through conversation, emails, text messages, and Google Hangouts, we came to see our journey as a shared one albeit from divergent research and teaching paths. Initially, we worked on research projects in small groups or pairs and supported one another through reviewing article submissions and revisions, as well as thinking out loud about potential research projects. Through these interactions, we saw strong connections between our aims in social studies education, and decided to formally join our teaching and research and submit a symposium proposal to CUFA's 2015 annual conference. Our proposal, despite receiving high scores and positive comments, was rejected.

During that hot afternoon, we gathered around Elizabeth's kitchen table, lamenting what we saw as a problematic pattern in our field's dismissal of critical elementary work. Our collective suggested that the field of social studies has been slow to take explicit steps for opening spaces to elementary-focused critical scholars. But we also knew as emerging scholars that there were others, like us, who were committed to this type of resistance work in elementary social studies. That weekend, from the kitchen table, to a local vineyard, to the winding roads of the Appalachian Mountains, we brainstormed a book—the very book you are reading right now.

If you don't see the book you want on the shelf, write it.

—Beverly Cleary

If there is a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.

—Toni Morrison

Our editor retreats mirrored our lived realities. As women in academia, our collaborative adventures did not epitomize the “balancing” of life and work, rather, we see our work as inevitably interwoven with our lives. Since the inception of this project, we became mothers, partners, moved, accepted tenure track faculty positions, got married, breastfed, co-slept, rocked babies, pumped, went on walks, parented teens, shared wine while swapping stories, cooked meals, were tested for

thyroid cancer, planned a national conference, marched on Washington, resisted (and continue to resist) the Trump Administration, submitted tenure applications, served in offices, won teaching awards, wrote, edited, reviewed, talked, cried, laughed, and played. In short, we lived and we worked as women in academia do.

As women in academia we experience both privilege and struggle, and so we wanted this book to push back against the establishment and raise the voices of an emerging generation of justice-oriented elementary educators. In order to make this space, we agreed, the call for chapter proposals had to resist the traditions of academia. Our call for work from *untenured scholars* was deliberate. We sought to engage colleagues who were working to (re)imagine critical engagement of controversial issues for elementary social studies education. Only proposals from classroom teachers, graduate students, independent scholars, and junior faculty would be considered. As early career scholars ourselves (all pre-tenure at the start of the project), we felt it important to emphasize voices committed to problematizing neoliberalism and the marginalization of elementary work in our larger field.

The call for proposals explained that we were especially interested in chapters that utilized critical race, feminist, queer, postcolonial, settler colonial, and post-structural theories, and emerging quantitative and qualitative research methods. Although we were steadfastly hopeful, nothing could have prepared us for the number of proposals we received. The chapters, which will be introduced momentarily, and their authors became a family to us. We may have our names on the cover, but this journey of hope and resistance is a collective one. This book could not have been written without these voices. Our writing family further challenged the traditions of academia by refusing the “blind” model of review. We instead, during a summer book retreat in Raleigh, created reading groups. Each reading group consisted of three to five chapters and an “assigned” editor. The reading groups’ members worked collaboratively to read, comment, encourage, and challenge, each other’s work. Each group functioned a bit differently depending on the schedules and needs of its members with “readers” utilizing email and phone to collaborate and support each other in the review process. To many, we have since learned, this open process was revolutionary. To us it was necessary—how could we possibly share this journey if we remained “unknown” to each other?

In our communication with authors, we shared what Madeleine L’Engle once penned, “The author and the reader ‘know’ each other; they meet on a bridge of words.” In their instructions as reviewers, we wrote,

As we have noted previously, chapter readers and authors will be *known* to each other—at the heart of this revisioning of controversial issues for elementary social studies is a desire to disrupt the norms of social studies publishing, which we find to be impersonal and undemocratic. We see this book as a collaborative effort—this is a book by us, for us. In this spirit, names of authors and readers will be unblinded and the form to follow will encourage discussion beyond the page. As you prepare to read, please keep the following in mind:

- Feedback should be constructive and supportive, not argumentative, patronizing, or degrading.
- Feedback should empower the author(s) of each chapter to strive to make their writing the very best it can be.
- There is no room in this community for Reviewer 2-style comments.

Building our community in this way, we believe, we can strengthen our bonds as allies in the continued struggle for social studies education and teacher education to address the critical issues we share in this book. Also, as early career scholars, we are the future of our field, and it is up to us to provide a new vision and direction for our field so we may all succeed and do what is right and just for our preservice teachers, classroom teachers, and young learners. We climb and rise together.

Our hope was for a mentoring model that could illuminate and strengthen all of our writing. Having experienced the unhelpful sting of reviewers in previous writing submissions, we sought to create spaces where all of the chapter authors, whether they were classroom teachers, graduate students, independent or untenured scholars, could set word to paper in a way that would not only contribute to the creation of this book, but inspire future writings for elementary social studies education. Our atypical review process resulted in positive feedback by authors, readers, and editors alike. We formed new friendships, found commonalities with folks we had not previously met, all the while encouraging one another to keep working towards our goal.

Our group also created a private Facebook page to share our thoughts, post updates, and provide encouragement. As editors, we believed strongly in an iterative process of shared decision making. From our initial talks about the book's focus to the writing of this introduction, we shared all of the decisions and contributed to each step of the book as it progressed from a call for proposals, to rethinking the title, to proofs from the publisher. We believe that our commitment to shared decision making, alongside our commitment to the book's focus, are two hallmarks of this contribution to the field of social studies education.

Ultimately, this entire book, from its inception to completion, formed a collective act of resistance to the status quo traditions that seek to control and define who we are allowed to be(come) as social studies educators dedicated to the struggle for justice.

We Resist Together: Towards a Collective Movement to Transform Elementary Social Studies

We have arranged the chapters into three sections to help locate the intended audiences we invite to read this book. The first section, *Pushing the Boundaries of Elementary Social Studies Methods*, is a call to disrupt and rethink how elementary social studies methods has typically looked and been taught. The chapters in this section offer reflections from social studies methods instructors on what the elementary methods course should look like when focused on anti-oppressive aims. It asks the reader to recognize the importance of this course in teacher edu-

cation as a space to begin to confront our own biases and call out injustice and inequalities.

In the opening chapter, the reader is asked to rethink the typical structure of an elementary social studies methods course in order to disrupt the power dynamics of professor and student. Focusing on one important component of the course—the class meeting—Jeannette Alarcón and Elizabeth Bellows offer a pair of vignettes about how the course design aided in centering controversy. In chapter two, Christopher Busey and Amanda Vickery share how the use of race pedagogy in their elementary social studies methods courses offers insight into the complexity and challenges of faculty of color teaching from an anti-racist position. Their constructed narrative helps the reader see how their racialized life experiences guide their pedagogical decisions in the classroom. In chapter three, Andrea Hawkman uses critical whiteness studies to examine the challenges and opportunities in building racial consciousness in elementary preservice teachers. Hawkman shows how the elementary social studies course can be structured to help prepare preservice teachers to challenge white supremacy and racism in their future classrooms. Women have long been marginalized in the teaching of history as we're reminded in chapter four, illustrating the importance of including feminism and feminist theory in elementary social studies classrooms and teacher preparation courses. Elizabeth Saylor demonstrates how sexism, misogyny, and gender inequality work to conceal information about women and their past and present contributions to society.

Several authors offer concrete methods for examining specific controversial topics with elementary preservice teachers and in the elementary social studies curriculum. These chapters build on seminal work in teacher education that positions preservice teachers to examine controversial issues (e.g., James, 2008) and challenges the documented resistance to teaching controversial issues (Garrett & Segall, 2013). Teacher educators and preservice teachers are encouraged to center controversial issues rather than avoid them in the chapters found within the second section, *Engaging Elementary Preservice Teachers with Controversial Issues*.

This section starts with the very timely but difficult topic of immigration policy. Cara Ward offers a description of her work in a social studies methods course using a history lab framework to provide a structure for examining this controversial issue using primary and secondary sources, developing critical historical thinking skills, and centering evidence versus opinion in discussions. In chapter six, Christina Tschida and Lisa Buchanan examine the tensions between preservice teachers' experiences with and beliefs about LGBT families and individuals and their intentions for including these topics in their future teaching. They describe the pedagogical work they do within their methods courses to create deliberate space for preservice teachers to recognize the importance of addressing these issues with elementary students. In chapter seven, Noreen Naseem Rodriguez exposes post-9/11 sentiments concerning those perceived-as-Muslim across

the U.S., and details how she confronts these issues in an elementary social studies methods course. She shares a number of strategies and resources for helping teacher educators and elementary teachers recognize Christian privilege and teach against Islamophobia. Chapter eight challenges the reader to utilize anticolonial orientations to interrogate citizenship education and recognize Indigenous nationhood and sovereignty. The authors, Leilani Sabzalian and Sarah Shear, show how even the C3 framework, when examined through an Indigenous studies lens, can be used to move preservice teachers beyond colonial blindness. They offer educational interventions that can be done within the methods course and provide several resources for such work.

Cory Wright-Maley leads the reader, in chapter nine, to consider issues related to the meat industry such as practices of meat-eating and how animals are treated, while identifying the challenges of such discussions at the elementary level. This chapter offers resources to help guide teaching the meat industry and ethical treatment of animals in meaningful ways. In Chapter 10, Lisa Gilbert traces the redesign of her elementary social studies methods course to present the historically controversial life of Rosa Parks and challenge the narrative her students were taught as children. Within the course, Gilbert works to help preservice teachers explore a justice-oriented framework for citizenship and open spaces for transformation. Brian Gibbs shares the transformative confrontation of his own homophobia and quest to re-examine, re-imagine, and decolonize the *straight* history he learned in school in chapter 11. His commitment to helping preservice teachers examine their own beliefs and learning is evident as he shares detailed activities that allow his students to bend the straight narrative of history and social studies.

During a time when civic ignorance and uncritical patriotism seem to permeate our society, Sohyun An's chapter challenges teacher educators to consider teaching strategies to unpack notions of patriotism with preservice teachers. She works to empower her students with the conceptual and pedagogical tools to disrupt civic illiteracy and promote critical democratic citizenship. In chapter 13, Meredith McCoy challenges preservice teachers to engage in difficult histories, memories, and the lasting impacts of Indigenous boarding schools. This chapter provides readers essential contextual knowledge of the boarding school histories as well as detailed activities and resources for teaching and learning with films and various other texts.

Building on the discussions presented in the first two sections, Section 3, *Teaching Controversial Issues in the Elementary Classroom* endeavors to show teachers how to challenge young learners to engage controversial topics. These chapters not only provide essential background knowledge and theory related to their central issues, but also provide teachers with resources for their own learning as well as their elementary students. In Chapter 14, Dina Gilio-Whitaker examines the recent events in North Dakota and the water protectors' efforts to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline. Engaging readers in a discussion of the role of current

Indigenous efforts to uphold treaty rights and environmental justice, this chapter offers readers essential tools for both teachers and students. Gender norms are regularly included in classroom conversations by children and even heavily reinforced by adults in day to day happenings and curriculum. In chapter 15, Anna Falkner and Andrea Clark share Dylan’s story. They show the power of opening spaces for student agency by co-planning a lesson with Dylan to actively engage third grade students with the topic of queer identity and practice participating in a form of citizenship where caring for one another is central.

We believe that court cases and rulings are meaningful springboards for teaching controversial issues. In a rethinking of *Mendez vs Westminster*, Maribel Santiago provides a controversial issues approach to examining this seminal federal court’s ruling in chapter 16. Next, Noreen Naseem Rodriguez and Rosalie Ip examine the sociopolitical history of the term Asian American and provide a brief history in chapter 17. Suggestions to (re)construct Asian American narratives along with vignettes from a second grade classroom help illustrate how elementary teachers can navigate such content, foster critical discussions, and disrupt stereotypes. In chapter 18, Jay Shuttleworth and Angelia Lomax address the challenges and opportunities for using children’s historical fiction to examine the portrayal of enslaved people. They discuss how elementary teachers can incorporate a critical race theory approach to analyzing these texts and the “official knowledge” around enslavement, and ultimately transform the conversation around this controversial issue. And last, but certainly not at all least, in chapter 19, Rebecca Christ utilizes her work in Rwanda to explore how the teaching of genocide as a recurring historical phenomena is a powerful strategy with young learners. She shares the debates on the “appropriateness” of teaching this topic to elementary students, warns of the consequences of *not* teaching about genocide, and provides resources for learning more.

The Journey Continues: How We Hope Readers Will Join Us in This Work

We hope readers will use this book for a variety of purposes including: a practical resource for classroom teachers seeking to broach controversial topics with young learners; course readings in elementary teacher education; as a catalyst for action research in the elementary and/or the elementary methods classroom; as a current contribution to the literature for graduate students embarking on critical elementary social studies education, as a PLC book read, and as a potential map for methods course redesign. To classroom teachers, our hope is that this reader gives you courage to take on difficult dialogues, whether based in history or in current contexts, with your students. Within these pages, you will find models for meaningful units of study. We hope you are inspired to press ever forward in your commitment to classroom teaching that engages controversial issues. For doctoral students and candidates, we want you to know teaching and research that makes a difference is not only possible, but palpable even in the early years of your

academic career. We hope that for you, this book is a collection of hope as you venture into new territory and blaze a path for your own scholarship. This book engages the work we believe in, and hope you find room in your teaching and research to bring the two together through issues-centered work. To our fellow early career faculty and independent scholars, we hope you will feel the friendship and community that soaks the pages of this reader, and that you, too, will develop a network that yields the support and encouragement you need to build and sustain a career dedicated to justice-oriented social studies education.

Our journey together as editors, as scholars, as teachers, as women, as friends does not end with the publication of this book. This is just the beginning. Please join us.

In hope, in resistance, for our children,
Sarah, Christina, Elizabeth, Lisa, and Liz

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