

How do School of Child and Youth Care Graduate Students Experience Gender
Discussions in the Classroom?

by

Tanya Druskee Pawliuk
BA, University of British Columbia, 1997

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Supervisory Committee

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Dr. Sibylle Artz, School of Child and Youth Care
Supervisor

Dr. Marie Hoskins, School of Child and Youth Care
Departmental Member

Dr. Sandrina de Finney, School of Child and Youth Care
Departmental Member

Abstract

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Supervisor

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Departmental Member

Dr. Sandrina de Finney, School of Child and Youth Care

Departmental Member

Child and youth care graduate students were asked: How do you experience gender conversations in the classroom? The participants of this study included three female and two male graduate students at the University of Victoria's School of Child and Youth Care. The study utilized a semi-structured approach, and participants were interviewed by telephone. A phenomenological approach guided the data analysis. Participants reported dissatisfaction with the current lack of gender content in the curriculum and believed more gender content would be beneficial to their understanding of the gender-based concerns of their clients as well as the gender realities of CYC practice. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the SCYC implement a variety of strategies to increase the gender content in their curriculum.

Keywords: child and youth care, gender, curriculum, experience

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Chapter 1- Introduction

The idea for this study is born out of my own graduate student experiences discussing gender in Child and Youth Care as part of the graduate curriculum. In 2005, I took a course on human change processes (CYC 546). The course focused on theory and practice, and included discussions about culture, religion, sexuality, age and gender as integral to practice. To assist with our considerations of these dynamics of practice, my classmates and I were asked to watch and discuss a film based on an historical survey of the fluidity of human relations with a focus on the issue and effects of the oppression of women through patriarchy, a system the author and narrator of the film contends is neither innate nor fixed (Dyer, 1994). We debriefed the film before the end of class, and I was surprised by the conversation that evolved. Instead of discussing gender in the context of human change, the conversation shifted to a myriad of strong emotions and reactions to the issue of the oppression of women and the role of men. The conversation eventually led to a breakdown of the discussion about the film, resulting in a discussion about feminism that continued throughout the day and into the next class. The conversation was heated and students who were not in the previous class became involved. Some students (some of them women, but not all) who perceived the film as being about “gender” or who were accepting of feminist content appeared supportive of the use of the film, and saw its relation to child and youth care, human change, and practice. They were interested in sharing their own experiences with gender and felt the need to defend first the film and then feminism to fellow students who were less appreciative of the film’s message. Students (the men and a few women) who perceived

the film as being about “feminism” and were not accepting of what they saw as its feminist content did not appreciate the use of the film and did not appear to see feminism as being related to child and youth care, human change, or practice. They seemed to be defensive about the role of men in the oppression of women, and about their own experiences with oppression. Both supporters and detractors of the film appeared to grow frustrated with the conversation as it progressed throughout the day. While students remained friendly, their differences seemed clear. Some students felt that the movie was about feminism, and any gender message seemed lost. Other students appeared to appreciate the gender message; however, they ended up in a position of defending feminism rather than evaluating gender and change. Ultimately, the focus of the discussion was not about gender in the context of human change, but about feminism and how individuals perceive it. In my experience as a student and CYC professional, this reaction to issues of male domination and oppression and how these dynamics relate to feminism and gender is not uncommon; however, in this class similar heated discussions did not develop in relation to other issues that focused on identity or social location, such as culture.

Along with my experiences in the graduate program, my experience as an Instructional Assistant for the SCYC provided me with a privileged opportunity to see how undergraduates are also wrestling with gender, its relevance to practice, and with relating feminist theories to their own experiences and the experiences of children, youth, and families. Some students reflected on their difficulties with introducing gender issues in their practicum without this seeming to be “too feminist”. Others, even when working with girls, did not appear to consider gender factors at all. Some students indicated a

dislike of feminist theory, and one student in particular declared that he would simply not respond to the required online discussions on gender and feminism because he did not like the conversation and he did not have the time. As with my graduate experience, some of the undergraduate students embraced the discussion of gender, while others demonstrated discomfort, in some cases frustration, and even withdrawal from the conversation.

Finally, when I shared my research goals with my fellow SCYC students, I experienced a great deal of support and commentary from students regarding their own feelings about gender in Child and Youth Care education. This material would be considered hearsay as the information was provided in the spirit of collegial support, and therefore was not officially recorded or verified. Some students commented on the lack of assigned materials written by women in the courses, and others shared their discomfort with an apparent focus by some on attracting men to the School of Child and Youth Care and the profession which they reported experiencing in classrooms and CYC discussion sites. Gender, they seemed to agree, is an issue that deserves attention whether through discussion in the classroom generated by faculty and students or reflected in the CYC literature focusing on both CYC practice and theory.

This research project endeavours to understand the dynamics of dealing with gender in the School of Child and Youth Care's Masters of Arts Program by using a qualitative approach to conduct an examination of the experiences of students who have experienced gender discussions in the program, the degree of interest in exploring gender issues in child and youth care practice and learning, and a review of current literature on the issue of gender and education. The question that animates this inquiry is: *How do*

CYC graduate students experience gender discussions in the classroom?

Defining Gender

Gender is a word that is used frequently throughout this paper. To establish an understanding of the meaning of this word, I have consulted the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* as well as a number of other sources. The *OED* offers a variety of definitions of gender, including “a euphemism for the sex of a human being, often intended to emphasize the social and cultural, as opposed to the biological, distinctions between the sexes” (1989, p. 428). Gender is often accompanied with discussions of difference (Ridgeway, 2009). In writing about gender and performance, Golombisky found that “studies use sex and gender synonymously without operationalizing either” (2006, p. 168), and Psychology professor Barbara Rogoff (2003) adds that gender is most often understood as either “biologically inevitable or culturally malleable”; however, she proposes that gender is a combination of both “biological and cultural heritage” (p.71).

In her book *Gender Trouble* (1999), Judith Butler examines the issue of gender and suggests that,

If gender attributes, however, are not expressive but performative, then these attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal. The distinction between expression and performativeness is crucial. If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction. That gender reality is created through sustained

social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character, and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality. (p. 180)

For Butler, gender is not a fact but instead an idea created by acts or performances of gender, and without these acts gender would not exist. In our society discrete acts of gender are what are deemed acceptable, and those who fail to conform to these gender norm expectations are punished (Butler, 1999).

Golombisky (2006) provides a valuable description of gender performance as “embodied and enacted. That is, the material body performs gender, usually languaged as ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’” (p. 169). In other words, gender is something that we do. It is active, not passive, and “an individual's identity does not exist behind the performance, but is created by the performance itself” (Lester, 2008, p. 282), and these gender performances are not isolated but instead are enacted with or for others, be they real or imagined (Golombisky, 2006). Gender as a construct is seen by many to be best understood as “fluid, relational, and situational” (Messerschmidt, 1997, p. 9) and not “static but dynamic” (Messerschmidt, 2002, p. 2), meaning our gender performances are actively created in relation to the environments and individuals with whom we are interacting, and “gender, race, and class must be viewed as *structured action*—what people do under specific social structural constraints” (Messerschmidt, 1997, p. 6). On the issue of gender and performance, Messerschmidt (1997) posits that,

Gender, race, and class grow out of social practices in specific settings and serve

to inform such practices in reciprocal relation. So, although sex, race, and class categories define social identification, *doing* gender, race, and class systematically corroborates that identification through social interaction. In effect, there is a plurality of forms in which gender, race, and class are constructed. We coordinate our activities to “do” gender, race, and class in situational ways. (p. 4)

Jaime Lester’s work on performance theory, gender, and identity supports Messerschmidt, finding that gender performances are “an expression of the social norms and gender roles within an organization and help us understand how particular performances are favored within organizations and how, in turn, individual gender identity is constructed and complicated by performances” (p. 279). These performances can be understood through performativity which highlights three aspects of doing gender, including identity: the manner in which an individual represents gender; agency: the level of acceptance and/or resistance as demonstrated by how an individual performs gender; and power: the reinforcement and replication of norms resulting in a legitimization of these norms (Lester, 2008, pp. 283-284).

An example from Lester’s article of gender performance and women faculty members provides a helpful illustration. The women studied reported feeling there was an expectation that they would fulfill mothering-type roles that included nurturing and caretaking, and assuming additional tasks in order to keep the department functioning. Contrary to this expectation, they also reported being aware from an early point in their careers that leadership roles were dependant on their ability to assume more masculine leadership traits. The expectation that they perform masculine traits for leadership

opportunities while performing traditionally feminine caring roles is contradictory, yet seemed to be typical of their experiences (Lester, 2008).

Although gender is often seen as a primary identifier, transnational feminist theorists have proposed that gender's importance is equally matched by issues of race, ethnicity, class, religion, locality, globalization, and sexuality (Lee & De Finney, 2004). Grewal and Kaplan (1994) in their article on transnational feminism practices and postmodernity also support challenging what they see as "inadequate and inaccurate binary divisions of gender" (13). Gender as a concept has been analyzed in many different ways. For instance, Hawkesworth (2006) lists for the reader some of the many ways gender has been explored by theorists:

Interdisciplinary scholars have used the concept of gender in markedly different ways. Gender has been analyzed as an attribute of individuals (Bem 1974, 1983), as an interpersonal relation (Spelman 1988), and as a mode of social organization (Firestone 1970; Eisenstein 1979). Gender has been defined in terms of status (Lopata and Thorne 1978), sex roles (Epstein 1971; Janeway 1971; Amundsen 1971), and sexual stereotypes (Friedan 1963; Anderson 1983). It has been conceived as a structure of consciousness (Rowbotham 1973), as triangulated psyche (Chodorow 1978), and as internalized ideology (Barrett 1980; Grant 1993). It has been discussed as a product of attribution (Kessler and McKenna 1978), socialization (Gilligan 1982; Ruddick 1980), disciplinary practices (Butler 1990; Singer 1993), and accustomed stance (Devor 1989). Gender has been depicted as an effect of language (Spender 1980; Daly 1978), a matter of behavioral conformity (Epstein 1971; Amundsen 1971), a structural feature of

labor, power, and cathexis (Connell 1987), and a mode of perception (Kessler and McKenna 1978; Bem 1993). Gender has been cast in terms of binary opposition, variable and varying continua, and in terms of a layering of personality. It has been characterized both as difference (Irigaray 1985a, 1985b) and as relations of power manifested in domination and subordination (McKinnon 1987; Gordon 1988). It has been constructed in the passive mode of seriality (Young 1994) and in the active mode, either as a process creating interdependence (Levi-Strauss 1969, 1971; Smith 1992) or as an instrument of segregation and exclusion (Davis 1981; Hill Collins 1990). Gender has been denounced as a prisonhouse (Cornell and Thurschwell 1986) and embraced as inherently liberating (Irigaray 1985b; Smith 1992). It has been identified as a universal phenomenon (Lerner 1986) and as an historically specific consequence of modernity's increasing sexualization of women (Laqueur 1990; Riley 1988). (p. 146)

Hawkesworth's (2006) detailed list is helpful in illuminating all of the ways people can make meaning of gender. In this research study, when participants used the term *gender* there often appeared to be an assumption of a shared understanding of the meaning of the word. In using this term, I have purposefully remained open to the ways others used it in published works or in the responses of the participants in this study. Throughout the findings section of this paper, the reader will learn how the participants have defined and made meaning of gender in their own lives.

Defining Gender Discussions

In the context of this study, when I refer to *gender discussions* I am referring to classroom instruction and/or dialogue that relates to the issue of gender and the theory

and practice of child and youth care work. For the purpose of this research I will also differentiate between an intentionally feminist gender discussion and a gender discussion that does not use a stated feminist lens. In speaking to feminist discussions, Webber (2005) posits that many faculty members teaching gender issues believe that all course-related material may be considered feminist material, and, additionally, gender and women's studies courses often require that a percentage of content and materials be written by women. Roffman (1994) supports Webber's examination of how feminism is taught when she writes, "feminism is taught through process as well as formal content. To reflect feminist value in teaching is to teach progressively, democratically, and with feeling" (p. 82). Gender discussions in the classroom may not focus on content and material that is feminist in nature, and it may not reflect the educational goals of Roffman; however, discussions about gender do still occur. Gender is important in theory classes as well as practice and research-based classes. Webber's criteria for a women's studies course and Roffman's description of her approach to teaching gender through feminism provide us with an understanding of how gender discussions might be approached in a feminist classroom. Young (2003) states that although gender discussions in classrooms may call attention to identities and may result in a polarization, they are not necessarily feminist in nature. To define a feminist gender discussion in this context, I will suggest that the discussion is based on feminist materials including a larger ratio of women writers and content deemed related to women, and a feminist theoretical perspective using an approach that combines three central ideas, including "that gender is an organizing principle of all societies, that gender is a social construction, and that gender theory necessarily involves the politics of inequality" (Riley, 1999, p. 370).

To illustrate the difference between a feminist gender discussion and a gender discussion not presented as feminist, consider two CYC related articles on practice authored by Francis Ricks and Scott Okamoto. Ricks chooses to explore issues of gender using feminism while Okamoto explores gender issues without mentioning feminism at all. Both articles are focused on CYC practice and are valuable contributions to child and youth care education. In Ricks' article (1992), she explores "caring" in practice as feminist, and posits that most literature on caring from a feminist perspective presents caring as something somehow different, "having something to do with being a woman, and in some way embedded in a different value structure of feminism" (Ricks, 1992, p. 1). Ricks states that she is purposefully vague in her choice of language as a reflection of the vagueness she sees in the literature about what qualifies as "feminist" caring. In contrast, Ricks uses her article to present a model of caring that she believes is feminist because "feminist ideals have always included justice and equality in relationships" (p. 5), and in the model she has proposed, she highlights equality, partnership, and an emphasis on specificity and concreteness as the three components she believes makes them feminist (p. 5), as well as important to child and youth care practice. Additionally, Ricks believes what makes this caring model feminist is,

The interactive component of attitude of concern(s), need(s) identification, and intentional intervention(s). The interaction that occurs between persons places an equal value on the individual needs of all players and their contributions with regards to what problems to solve and how to solve them. The caring relationship is one of partnership and the interaction within the caring relationship enhances the concern and ultimately the therapeutic relationship itself. The caring

relationship is grounded in values of equity and communion, and values the specific and concrete over the abstract and reasonable. (p. 6)

Ricks' belief that caring is enhanced by partnership, equality, and support in the pursuit of achievable therapeutic and life goals is presented as feminist; however, whether CYC practitioners prescribe to feminist ideals or not, her reflections on caring in the therapeutic relationship are valuable and ring true for child and youth care practice. The Okamoto article is similarly beneficial to CYC learning.

In Okamoto's article (2003), he examines the challenges of male practitioners working with female clientele, and the establishment of therapeutic relationships between male CYC practitioners and female CYC clients. Okamoto conducted his research using semi-structured interviews with sixteen male practitioners, focusing on their experiences working with female youth clients. Practice is a focus of both articles; however, in contrast to the Ricks article in which a relationship is established between gender, feminism, caring, and child and youth care, Okamoto explores an equally important gender-related issue among CYC practitioners without feminism being identified as a contributing factor to Okamoto's conclusions. Okamoto explains the motivation behind writing his article as, "because of the prevalence of males working with female youth clients in juvenile justice and mental health settings, attention to this therapeutic relationship is essential in order to promote effective gender-specific practice" (p. 93). Okamoto's chosen focus was on "theory generating" (p. 88) with regard to males' praxis with female clients as well as identifying challenges that male practitioners experience in the field, and the therapeutic relationship building process in male therapist/female client scenarios. This research was conducted in order to inform further research examining the

relationships between male practitioners and female clients (Okamoto, 2003). Both Ricks' and Okamoto's articles demonstrate that a conversation about gender and practice may or may not be informed by feminist theory. The articles further support that gender and feminism are not identical concepts, and that in the case of these articles the presentation of gender as feminist is related to the theoretical interests of the author, not the topic of gender alone.

I believe the distinction between the article by Ricks (1992), which I see as an example of feminist gender discussion, and Okamoto (2003), which I see as an example of a gender discussion without a feminist theoretical connection, is important and highly relevant to the topic of this research. In the classroom situation described in the introduction of this paper, I discussed how a documentary about human nature, oppression, and patriarchy that was written and narrated by a man—and was not presented as a work informed by feminist scholarship—developed into a heated debate about feminism and its role in child and youth care. Although gender has been identified as relevant to CYC practice, research has shown that gender discussions that are perceived as politicized or feminist are more often met with resistance and rejection by students (Moore, 2005; Webber, 2005). Moore (1997), a university instructor, describes resistance as “an unwillingness to consider research and theories that contradict one’s sense of social order” (p. 128). Moore further clarifies that “resistance is not challenging research or theory; this can be valuable and may result in the most instructive class discussions. Rather, resistance means denial or recalcitrance and is problematic because it acts as a barrier to learning” (1997, p. 128). To illustrate her point, Moore (1997) describes three forms of resistance by students including the dismissal of material that is

perceived as derogatory to men, using individual examples to challenge structural patterns presented in the research, and blaming women for the experiences of oppression and discrimination documented in research (1997). Moore posits that these resistance behaviours disrupt the learning of both the resistor and the classmates through the resistor's refusal to "engage in the content of the course" and "the distraction they represent for other students as they attempt to garner support for their resistance" (p. 128). Such an experience occurred in the previously mentioned classroom in 2005. Students who were unwilling to engage in the course content (the documentary) created a distraction that redirected the conversation from an exploration of human relations using patriarchy and oppression as an example to a negative focus on feminism and 'male-bashing'. The distraction was carried over into the afternoon class where students not in the morning class learned of the morning class as an attempt to garner support for resistance to the documentary's message.

This experience was both surprising and disappointing to me. During the discussion I felt as though I had been put in a position of remaining silent and accepting what was being said through my silence—suggesting agreement—or speaking out in support of the film's message and risk alienating my classmates or feeling alienated myself. My goal in this research is to understand how my fellow CYC graduate students experience gender and in the process to also discover if my experience was an anomaly or typical of the feelings of students in our program. I hope that an increased understanding of these experiences will allow me to contribute knowledge that is both theoretically sound and relevant to child and youth care practice, and will inform future instruction (including course content and material selection) of gender issues in the child and youth care program.

CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review

In order to establish a theoretical foundation for how students experience gender discussions, a comprehensive literature search was conducted in the University of Victoria library databases (primarily the education, psychological, social work, and sociological databases) and the library stacks at the University of Victoria and Thompson Rivers University. An initial search of the literature using key words including “gender”, “classroom”, and “child and youth care practice” provided some interesting articles. The materials chosen for this review were selected because they focused on the experiences of adult learners and educators in a university or college setting. Materials with a focus on child and youth care learning and practice were also chosen. The selected articles were instrumental in identifying important themes and concepts related to the original research question, and often resulted in additional searches that contributed to a deeper understanding of the issue of gender as well as informing me on concepts essential to a broader understanding of issues of gender in the classroom. Conversations with my thesis committee were also essential in identifying important theorists and relevant works.

This literature review is reflective of my own research experience beginning with an exploration of the relevance of gender to Child and Youth Care, followed by a review of current publications discussing gender discussions in the classroom, and enhanced by related topics that both strengthen an understanding of how individuals make meaning with gender and how that might be important to child and youth care learning.

Relation and Benefits to Child and Youth Care Practice

The importance of gender issues and feminist theory to child and youth care

learning and practice is noted in the competency documents that inform CYC practice, such as the North American Competency Document (Mattingly & Stuart, 2002) and the Competencies for Child Welfare Workers in British Columbia (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2007). CYC literature that supports reflections on self and the ways in which we self identify (including gender, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class) have been provided by a number of authors:

- β Phelan (2005) posits that “the goal of CYC education rests on the development of a ‘reflective practitioner’” (p. 354), and “CYC education is a complex process of creating self-awareness, developing relational skills and attitudes, learning change strategies and dynamics, and valuing the struggle of separation and closure” (p. 350).
- β In 2001 Mattingly and Stuart (2002) produced the North American Certification Project (NACP) document in response to a call for certification standards made by a variety of North American organizations. The NACP detailed the “competencies” practitioners in the field of child and youth care felt to be essential to quality child and youth care practice. These competencies are assembled through the experiences of esteemed professionals in the CYC field, and are designed to provide an achievable ideal for the future of child and youth care practice. Within contexts of practice, they first considered “self” stating that practitioners should “have insight into the factors of their own development, the impact of self factors on practice interventions, and the dialectic tension between using one’s personhood in relationships and their inter-personal communication with a client” (p. 23). Mattingly and Stuart went further to say that “foundational

to child and youth care is the use of self, but to make use of self in practice one must first be aware of and able to articulate the nature of self” (p. 23).

- β In 2003, SCYC faculty member Marie Hoskins wrote, “much of our curriculum is geared towards the self-development of the student, and at the same time, we also rely heavily on a body of knowledge—both multidisciplinary in nature and unique to Child and Youth Care” (p. 328).

These examples demonstrate a role for self-reflection in child and youth care practice and education, and explorations of challenging issues (such as gender) in the curriculum often begin with a student’s/practitioner’s own experiences. Gender issues are presented in course reading packages (Artz, 2005; Hart, 2005), and gender issues and feminism are taught in the classroom (Hoskins & Artz, 2004). Child and youth care scholars are also publishing on the issues of gender and feminism in child and youth care practice (Hoskins & Artz, 2004; Lee & De Finney, 2004; Little, 2005; Ricks, 1992). Understanding how gender and feminism matters to Child and Youth Care graduate students will be helpful in preparing lessons and materials in the future.

In their book *Working Relationally with Girls*, SCYC faculty members Dr. Sibylle Artz and Dr. Marie Hoskins (2004) related their experience of teaching gender in the SCYC classroom: “During the last few years we have found that while teaching feminist theory in our undergraduate courses, we are often met with resistance and, sometimes, indifference” (p.5). They continue:

What this signals for us is the difficulty that arises when attempting to draw attention to the complex relationship between social construction of gender and everyday lived experience. Discussing gender relations with our students, clients,

and research participants, therefore, becomes challenging for several reasons. Particularly challenging is that, invariably, increased gender consciousness requires a change of some kind on the part of the individual. Girls often describe being caught in a double bind when they challenge sexist attitudes and behaviors. Another aspect of the ignorance is bliss theme is that many young women want to be able to identify with social constructions of what it means to be “feminine”, not necessarily feminist. Often this means identifying with hyper-feminine characteristics such as being cooperative, nice, agreeable, sexually appealing, and so on, so much so that when it comes to challenging the status quo girls also find themselves challenging their own “good girl” images. In our classrooms, students often state that they do not want to be angry, assertive, disruptive, and that, above all, they do not want to be seen as hating men, characteristics and approaches they describe as associated with feminism. (Hoskins & Artz, p.5)

Artz and Hoskins refer to feminist theory in this quote; however, I think this is indicative of our understanding of gender and feminism as linked, perhaps because it is feminist scholars who largely raise the issue of gender. In my research I found that literature on academia and gender issues was often approached from a feminist perspective (Moore, 1997; Roffman, 1994; Webber, 2005). This led me to wonder that if the feminist or perceived feminist presentation is not well received, is the important gender message ignored? How do we teach gender and learn about gender if the leading theorists on gender (feminists) are perceived as biased and not academic (Webber, 2005)?

Reflecting on gender and other means of socially locating oneself and others is highly relevant to child and youth care learning and practice, and child and youth care

literature supports reflective and informed practice (Phelan, 2005). The School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria includes “self awareness”, the ability to “promote reflection and articulation of self location to ensure respectful, accountable practice across cultures and social groups” (SCYC, 2009, SCYC Values section) as a core value of CYC education and practice. Certainly, this core value is reflected in the work of two SCYC graduate students who published articles in the *Child and Youth Care Forum* in which they explored their identity and locations in relation to practice and influences related to child and youth care work (Bates, 2005; Little, 2005). These articles became assigned readings in *CYC 541: Historical and Contemporary Theoretical Perspectives in Child & Youth Care* as taught by Dr. Sibylle Artz in the fall of 2005. CYC literature supports a reflective and informed practitioner. Understanding how gender matters personally and professionally is important in the development of such a practitioner.

Gender, Feminism and Education

In my examination of literature on the topic of gender and education, references to feminism and the issue of feminism were very present. I purposefully searched for “gender”; however, findings related to this search prompt seemed centered on elementary education. With this in mind I continued to honour the distinction of naming “gender” as opposed to “gender and feminism” previously set out. Identifying these differences was important to understanding the literature that informs this topic as well as being open to how participants qualify their experience discussing gender. The literature about gender and education is found primarily in the fields of Women Studies, Education, and Sociology (Maher & Thompson Tetreault, 1994; Moore, 1997; Webber, 2005). This

literature often originates out of Women's Studies and Gender Studies programs where faculty members have written about their experiences instructing feminist curriculum.

Some researchers spoke to their own reasons for presenting feminist content. For example, Roffman (1994), who identifies as a feminist educator and feminist, states that,

As a teacher, I am committed to creating a classroom environment in which students can articulate their understanding of self, other, subjective reality, empathy, and the surrounding environment through the critical lens of a feminist framework. As we recognize our experiences, we become more capable of making changes. (p. 82)

Roffman felt that feminism supported her in establishing an environment that supported personal and academic growth.

Some of the works on gender and education include the results of interviews with students and course evaluations. For instance, Webber (2005) interviewed students, teaching assistants, and faculty in an exploration of how "faculty utilize feminist perspectives in social sciences courses that are cross-listed with women's studies in one Canadian university and the phenomenon of student resistance to such content" (p. 181). Her research showed that feminism is perceived as being based on personal viewpoints and therefore is seen as biased and is not a source of legitimate knowledge (Webber, 2005). This point was illustrated in my own classroom experience (see pgs. 4-5) where "patriarchy" was treated as a controversial opinion rather than a factual argument outlined by the film's narrator.

Other findings relevant to how gender discussions are experienced in the classroom in this gender and education literature include the finding that resistance and vulnerability

are common responses to the presentation of gender issues in the curriculum (Webber, 2005; Moore, 1997). Resistance is described as “an unwillingness to consider research or theories that contradict one’s sense of social order” (Moore, 1997, p. 128), and is considered a necessary step toward social change, evidence of engagement with the material, and emotional protections for students learning about oppression for the first time (Webber, 2005). Webber provides an example of resistance in her exploration of student responses to discussion of gender and feminism in the classroom using course evaluations completed by students: “It was very one-sided. Didn’t focus much on the male gender, more directed towards females” (p. 189), and “prof was very biased, did not discuss certain issues, i.e. male perspective. Men are evil” (p. 189). Young (2003) includes gender, as well as ethnicity, culture, and sexual orientation, as heightening the likelihood of a “difficult classroom dialogue” (p. 348). When students discuss gender in the classroom attention is called to the way students identify, and therefore opportunities are created for students to relate and/or to feel polarized (Young, 2003). Hoskins also speaks to the role of identity in a learning environment:

The process of identity construction is discursive in that the discourse shapes the self and people shape the discourse (collectively and individually). At the same time that I have the capacity to privilege one identity over another, the same is true for societal privileging and denigrating when it comes to cultural groups.

(Hoskins, 2003, p. 323)

Our identities are works in progress and are influenced by our environment. In the classroom scenario I presented earlier, students shifted from being a collective of CYC graduate students, to a classroom of male and female (in their silence) non-feminist CYC

students, and (in their loudness) feminist female CYC students who disagreed about the content and appropriateness of a film. Issues related to gender, such as gender relations and the gender performance expectations, were, of course, always present and were often examined within a therapeutic framework; however, until gender was presented as an oppressive identifier, gender never seemed to be the most notable group identifier. Before the movie and our following discussion, we seemed to relate by commuters versus residents of Victoria, or therapeutic practitioners versus front-line workers. After the movie, the discussion quickly divided us along lines of how we perceived gender and oppression, and moved from theoretical discussions to personal reflections. It wasn't what was said necessarily. Instead, it was a feeling, a recognition of a lack of safety from those of us who viewed gender oppression as current, and perhaps a lack of trust from those who didn't feel the movie was an accurate portrayal of their feelings and experiences.

Conversations about gender in the classroom can generate strong emotional responses and contribute to a sense of vulnerability (Young, 2003); however, the classroom environment can also be instrumental in supporting the professional growth of students (Mishna & Rasmussen, 2001). bell hooks states,

If we really want to create a cultural climate where biases can be challenged, all border crossings must be seen as valid and legitimate. This does not mean that they are not subjected to critique or critical interrogation, or that there will not be many occasions when the crossings of the powerful into the terrains of the powerless will not perpetuate existing structures. This risk is ultimately less threatening than a continued attachment to and support of existing systems of

domination, particularly as they affect teaching, how we teach, and what we teach. (1994, p. 131)

I believe that by having these discussions in the classroom and exploring the meaning and significance of gender to self and others, students, in turn, will be better able to apply this experience and knowledge to their Child and Youth Care practice.

Gender and Practice

When I used the keywords “gender and practice”, I found a multitude of sources in child and youth care, social work, and nursing. Much of the literature on “gender and practice” looks at how gender intersects with other aspects of identity, including culture, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, religion, nationality, citizenship, age, and location (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2007; Rabin, 2005). The authors (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2007; Rabin, 2005) identify that addressing gender without addressing other oppressions results in further marginalization and therefore supports an integrated understanding of gender and culture (Rabin). As well, Razack (1998) points out that as women, we are not uninvolved in the subordination of others, and therefore this factor must be a part of our discussions on gender and oppression.

A second literature search was conducted based on information found in the literature on gender and education, and gender and practice. This second literature search was primarily informed by the research and literature reviews of the theorists I had been reading up to this point, and the literature indicated that theories such as positionality, intersectionality, and moral dichotomies were relevant to issues of gender and would contribute immensely to this research study.

Positionality is a concept where people are not defined by fixed identities, but

instead by their location within shifting networks of relationships, which may be analyzed and changed (Maher & Thompson Tetreault, 1994). Some current thoughts on the issue of positionality suggest that faculty and researchers must reassess the shifting contexts and abandon the universalizing of gender, race, culture, class, and sexuality for a more fluid understanding of these dynamics in different contexts (Maher et al.). Locating perspective, experience, and knowledge in historical, political, and cultural contexts is essential to understanding the meanings people attribute to how they identify (Maher et al.).

Intersectionality is an analytical tool developed to address omissions and distortions in feminist analysis caused by a failure to consider factors outside of gender, including race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and nationality (Hawkesworth, 2006). Some current principles that inform work grounded in intersectionality suggest that practitioners must be able to recognize the intersection of gender, race, class, and other important areas in order to achieve a greater understanding of why people respond the way they do when learning about privileged systems (Vasquez, 2006). Intersectionality scholars posit that the focus on a single domain rather than the intersectionality of multiple domains has contributed to the marginalization of all domains (Silverstein, 2006). In both positionality and intersectionality theories, it is agreed that “gender, ethnicity, and class, are all fluid constructions”. We are reminded that identities are formed by a multitude of identifiers and experiences, and that identity is not a static concept and “the personal experiences and feelings of students are central to understanding forms of oppression and bringing about social change” (Munro, 1995, p. 103).

The literature on gender in the classroom also supports an examination of moral dichotomies in the learning process when reflecting on the resistance faculty feel when presenting gender or feminist material (Moore, 1997; Markowitz, 2005). Moral dichotomies are the right/wrong, good/bad, and objective/subjective styles of thinking that make it difficult to engage students in critical thinking about oppression, and create skepticism and distrust for knowledge that exists outside of their “norm” (Markowitz, 2005). Oppression, difference, and resistance are common themes when gender and feminism are discussed in the classroom (Markowitz, 2005; Young, 2003; hooks, 1994). Webber (2005) found that Shields’ comments in 2001 spoke to the issue: “while issues of domination, dependency, and subordination are still often taken seriously by students in terms of for example social class, the politicisation of these issues in relation to feminist agendas are more often resisted or rejected” (p. 187).

What began as a literature search for keywords that I believed reflected the purpose of this research expanded from “gender” to the importance and weight of gender and the intent of my question. Razack (1998) states that,

Before we can determine how far we can go, either in essentializing or not essentializing, we need to examine how we explain to ourselves the social hierarchies that surround us. We need to ask: Where am I in this picture? Am I positioning myself as the saviour of less fortunate peoples? As the progressive one? As more subordinated? As innocent? These are moves of superiority and we need to reach beyond them. I return here to my notion of politics of accountability as opposed to a politics of inclusion. Accountability begins with

tracing relations of privilege and penalty. Only then can we ask questions about how we are understanding differences and for what purpose. (p. 170)

Examining “difference” requires openness to constructive conflict and an understanding that margins have been “both sites of repression and resistance” (hooks, 1990, p. 151).

Ann duCille (1994) asks,

How do we negotiate an intellectually charged space for experience in a way that is not totalizing and essentializing—a space that acknowledges the constructedness of and the differences within our lived experiences while at the same time attending to the inclining, rather than the declining, significance of race, class, culture, and gender? (p. 607)

My search through the literature uncovered for me a realization that “gender” is not a concept that stands alone, but instead must be considered in concert with the multiple and complicated realities including class, culture, and sexuality.

The articles and texts I have presented illustrate that an adaptation of theories derived from a variety of disciplines is essential to supporting this research project. The literature underlines the importance of exploring how SCYC students experience gender discussion in the classroom, but cautions that gender discussions are best enhanced within the framework of positionality and intersectionality. Understanding reasons for resistance may be helpful in understanding student experiences. bell hooks speaks to the relevance of this research endeavour while citing similar issues in her Women’s Studies classrooms,

Suddenly, the feminist classroom is no longer a safe haven, the way many women’s studies students imagine it will be, but is instead a site of conflict,

tensions, and sometimes ongoing hostility. Confronting one another across differences means that we must change ideas about how we learn; rather than fearing conflict we have to find ways to use it as a catalyst for new thinking, for growth. (hooks, 1994, p. 113)

The literature I explored in preparation for this research study was instrumental in understanding how the issues of gender have been explored by theorist, and how gender issues in a classroom context have been previously examined. I have detailed my own experiences with an uncomfortable and heated gender discussion in the classroom and the lack of safety I felt. The literature reflects similar experiences provided by experienced instructors (hooks, 1994; Hoskins & Artz, 2004; Moore, 1997; Webber, 2005). My goal in pursuing this research question was to understand how other CYC graduate students experience gender conversations and through their responses provide a CYC specific document that contributes to CYC education.

CHAPTER 3 - Method

The purpose of this study is to explore how SCYC students experience gender discussions in the classroom. The predominant questions of this study are designed to have participants reflect on an experience they had discussing gender, how they experienced these conversations, and how they feel gender fits in the Child and Youth Care program at the University of Victoria.

As a first time researcher, determining my method was an overwhelming task. My search for a method was broken down into two stages. First, I knew that I wanted to pursue a qualitative research design. I believed that in the case of my research, the experience of the participating students would be most successfully captured through the use of qualitative research methods because qualitative methods “accommodate an approach to the total process of research which fully recognizes the critical, and indeed necessary, inter-relationship between the subjectivities of both the researcher and her participants in the social construction of knowledge” (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995, p. 9). Further, researchers within a qualitative paradigm are privileged with the opportunity to create relationships with participants that support cooperation and rapport (Henwood & Pidgeon), and I felt these qualities best suited my desired approach. As Dowling concluded in a study of reflexivity in qualitative research, “the researcher and informants are viewed as partners (Sigsworth, 1995) and intersubjectivity between researcher and participant and the mutual creation of data are essential aspects of research (Im and Chee 2003)” (2006, p. 14). I believe that this method of obtaining data would best honour the relationship I established with the research participants, being student-student, and best support the knowledge that was developed out of our individual and shared experiences.

This approach also challenged me, the researcher, to identify preconceptions and assumptions that may limit understanding, thus allowing the researcher to appreciate and reflect a participant's own experiences and frames of reference (Henwood & Pidgeon). I knew that a method of research which emphasizes the importance of relationship and experience was essential in interviewing participants about a topic many may feel vulnerable discussing (Young, 2003). The second aspect of determining how I would conduct my research was exploring the different styles in qualitative research. There are a variety of approaches to qualitative research, including grounded theory, life histories, phenomenology, and ethnography (Strauss & Corbin, 1990); however, I chose to pursue an approach informed by phenomenology using telephone interviews to obtain my data because I believed such an approach would most successfully capture the experience of graduate students discussing gender in CYC classrooms.

The purpose of this study was to explore how graduate students in the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria experienced gender conversations in a classroom setting utilizing an approach informed by phenomenology. Phenomenological inquiry is recommended for research questions that aim to discover the essence of an individual's experience (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007).

Phenomenology allows researchers to "reduce the experiences of persons with a phenomenon to a description of a universal essence" (Creswell et al., p. 252). The focus of phenomenological inquiry is to "explicate the structure or essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon in the search for unity of meaning which is the identification of the essence of a phenomenon, and its accurate description through the everyday lived experience" (Rose, Beeby & Parker, 1995, p. 1124). The "lived world/life world" is the

central theme of phenomenology (Wertz, 2005), and the “life-world” is the world as it is encountered in everyday life (Kvale, 1996). A phenomenological approach includes an investigation of the life-world using high quality communication and empathy as well in a search for essential meaning in the descriptions (Ashworth 1996; Kvale, 1996).

Individuals experience the world in ways that are unique to their own histories (Wertz, 2005). Phenomenology acknowledges that collective forms of subjectivity have shaped the life-world and must be considered when seeking knowledge about the human experience (Wertz), and I believe that research informed by phenomenology would best support my desire to understand how my participants have experienced gender discussions in CYC classes and allow for an accurate description of the experience.

Phenomenology is an inductive process which allows patterns and themes to naturally develop after data has been collected (Coombes & Wratten, 2007). Phenomenology is summed up as a research method that strives to be faithful to participants through an openness to the life-world of the interviewee and a celebration of the experience and experiencing person (Garko, 1999). Ideally, the reader of a phenomenological study will understand what it is like for someone to experience the phenomena explored (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007). In the case of this research project the phenomenon explored was how SCYC graduate students experience gender discussions in the classroom. An additional question of interest to me was whether or not CYC graduate students who took part in this study experienced gender discussions as feminist discussions. By interviewing participants about their experiences discussing gender in the classroom and allowing patterns and themes to develop naturally from their collective responses, I hoped to successfully achieve the goal

of phenomenology “to capture and understand phenomena in the social world while retaining the context in which they occurred” (Coombes & Wratten, 2007, p. 383).

An important aspect in designing my research study was to consider my participant pool. As formal course work had concluded for the majority of the students, some of my participants were no longer in the Greater Victoria area nor in the Thompson Nicola region (where I reside). With this in mind, I opted to interview the participants by telephone. My research procedure was influenced by the work of Veith, Sherman, Pellino, and Yasui (2006). In their study of peer-mentoring relationships among individuals with spinal cord injuries, Veith et al. determined that a qualitative approach using telephone interviews was best as traveling to interview each participant was not logistically possible (2006). Telephone interviews are considered an effective tool for gathering qualitative data when distance is a factor (Berg, 2004), as well as for reaching a diverse participant pool. Having a previous relationship (student-student) is believed to be beneficial in developing rapport during a telephone interview process (Berg). Telephone interviews are also valuable in eliciting some sensitive information (Ibsen & Ballweg, 1974; Pridemore, Damphousse, Moore, 2005; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004), and increasing participants’ sense of anonymity (Sturges & Hanrahan). In this study, telephone interviewing was certainly helpful in giving voice to diverse and alternative perspectives as it allowed me to interview students who were living in a variety of communities, and who were in different stages of their SCYC education.

Berg (2004) suggests that standardized and semi-standardized interview formats are most effective for telephone interviews. I opted for a semi-structured model for this study as it provided me with some structure; however, I was still able to be flexible in my

wording as well as being able to explore individual experiences with follow up questions and clarifications (Berg, 2004).

Phenomenological inquiry guided the design and development of this research study; however, in some cases my attempts to elicit descriptions of classroom experiences from the participants may seem more reflective of a descriptive exploratory study. Not unlike phenomenological inquiry, descriptive exploratory design methods are used to describe a phenomenon, and are interested in generalizing findings to a larger population from a sample population (Steinberg, 2004). Flexible data collection procedures and a “trial and error” approach to obtaining the information desired are elements of this research method (Brink & Wood, 1989), and the purpose of the exploratory interview is to “develop ideas and research hypotheses rather than to gather facts and statistics. It is concerned with trying to understand how ordinary people think and feel about the topics of concern to the research” (Oppenheim, 2000, p. 67). Methodological issues are further addressed within the “Limitations” component of this chapter.

Participants

The target population of this study was present and past female and male SCYC graduate students. This was a population of interest for this study for two reasons. First, SCYC graduate students are exposed to potentially difficult discussions (such as gender discussions) in small groups. Second, SCYC graduate students are expected to have had a CYC or related academic experience as well as two years post-baccalaureate Child and Youth Care work experience (University of Victoria School of Child and Youth Care: Admissions Requirements). I believed this would provide the participants with sufficient

classroom-based gendered experiences, allowing the research to explore a variety of SCYC graduate classroom experiences. Similar studies involving telephone interviews have included a variety of participants from seven to twenty-two (Veith, Sherman, Pellino & Yasui, 2006; Schoonveld, Veach & LeRoy, 2007; Harala, Smith, Hassel, Gailfus, 2005). Polkinghorne (2005) recommends 5-25 individuals for a phenomenological study (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007). A study of SCYC alumni conducted in the summer of 2005 included 21 participants (Prescott, 2005). For this research project I opted to interview 5-6 participants. This was the number of participants recommended by my committee of experienced researchers, and their recommendations are supported by a search of similar studies that interviewed an equivalent number of participants (Camp, 2007; Coombes & Wratten, 2007; Veith, Sherman, Pellino, and Yasui, 2006).

Recruitment

The recruitment strategies for this research study followed Berg's (2004) three-step process. I first emailed eligible SCYC graduate students in an effort to provide information about the study and hopefully recruit interested participants. In the second step, I followed up on interested replies and answered any outstanding questions as well as securing an agreement for participation. If the first step had failed to generate enough interest, a snowball technique, using people who had shown an interest in helping to recruit other potential participants was an option I was prepared for (Berg). In the third stage, the interview took place by telephone at a negotiated time and place.

For the purpose of this research I utilized two recruitment strategies approved by the UVic Human Research Ethics office. The SCYC program's graduate assistants

forwarded my letter of introduction and consent by email to the SCYC graduate student community on SCYC letterhead (Appendix A & B). I also posted my letter of introduction and consent on the SCYC graduate blackboard community site. The letter forwarded by the graduate assistants was successful in obtaining six interested individuals, and the blackboard posting was successful in obtaining one interested individual. From this pool of seven potential students (4 females, 3 males), one participant was discovered to be ineligible because she was not a graduate student, and a second male student was not available to participate within the previously scheduled interview period. This left five interested participants (3 females, 2 males). Graduate students were invited to email me through my UVic email account to indicate a potential interest in participating in the study. All email responses were replied to quickly and personalized in order to encourage interest and confidence in me and my research project (Dillman, 2007). After securing the addresses of interested participants, I mailed a package including the letter of introduction and consent printed on SCYC letterhead, a stamped return envelope, and a short personal note of appreciation to each participant. Dillman (2001) notes that a letter sent prior to a telephone survey decreases the likelihood of refusal, and I hoped my personal note as well as previous email contact would increase the likelihood of having the letters of intent signed and returned. The mail-out package was constructed in a manner supported by Dillman (2007), who suggests that mail-out packages be sent in regular business envelopes when possible, use of a stamped return envelope, and an image that conveys personalized attention rather than a bulk mail-out. Each participant returned his or her letter of introduction and consent signed. One participant attached a note requesting further conversation about concerns regarding

anonymity. The concerns were addressed immediately, and the participant was comfortable with the measures in place to ensure confidentiality. After receiving the signed consents, copies accompanied by a review of the interview details (Appendix C) were made and forwarded back to the participants for their own reference.

Participant Descriptions

Students' personal lives are not shed like coats and left in the cloak room as students enter the classroom. The personal experiences and feelings of students are central to understanding forms of oppression and bringing about social change. (Munro 1995, p.103)

In the School of Child and Youth Care students are often asked to reflect on their own experiences and biases in relation to what they are learning and ultimately how they practice. Earlier in this document (p. 15), I noted the importance of self-reflection in both learning and practice to the discipline of Child and Youth Care. True to the spirit of child and youth care learning, participants in this study were asked to identify their social location in Question 8; however, with confidentiality being of utmost importance, I am only able to provide a brief sketch of my participant pool.

Two male participants and three female participants participated in this study (Appendix D). All but one participant identified as "privileged", and all remarked on the importance of gender, ethnicity, family status, religion, class, sexuality, and age, as well as health and ability in how they see themselves. Several participants spoke of family histories and education as also being important in how they locate socially. Even though this information about the participants is provided at the beginning of these research findings, the question, "how do you socially locate" was actually the last question asked

in the first interview. The question was presented last for two reasons. First, should the interview go well, the participant would feel more comfortable sharing potentially personal markers of identity. Second, should the interview not go well and/or not progress to the final question, participants would not be left feeling they had revealed too much. The question “how do you socially locate” was phrased with the intention of providing participants with the ability to shape the question in a way that best suited their confidence in the researcher and the process. Ultimately, the participants were very forthcoming in their descriptions of their social locations, resulting in a need to carefully edit responses in order to preserve anonymity.

The Interview

Current SCYC graduate students were interviewed about how they have experienced gender discussions in the classroom. Qualitative interviews are especially effective for understanding how participants perceive experiences as well as learning how participants make meaning with phenomena or events (Berg, 2004), and a qualitative approach is supported by an interview that is flexible and an interviewer that is reflective and sensitive to the tone of the interview.

I elected to use a semi-structured interview approach because while such an approach does involve the use of predetermined questions and special topics, it also allows the interviewer the freedom to deviate from the questions for depth and clarity (Berg 2004). Questions used in a semi-standard interview process often assume that the interviewees have varying understandings, and therefore questions are posed in a fashion that reflects awareness of a subject’s perspective (Berg). In the case of my research interviews, questions were structured in a way that assumed that each participant had had

an experience in a CYC classroom and had experienced gender issues in the classroom; however, I still had the freedom to pursue lines of interest derived through the interview process and thereby stay true to my desired phenomenological orientation. I could freely pursue questions about each participant's personal meanings of gender, identity, and issues of positionality or intersectionality. This allowed me to exercise some control over the interview process and at the same time have the flexibility to pursue an interesting point or further lines of questioning. Although open ended interviews may be more common in phenomenological research, semi-structured interviews have been used in previous phenomenological studies (Coombes, & Wratten 2007; Mitten, Treharne, Hale, Williams, & Kitas, 2007) and are believed to be helpful in cases where the phenomenon being explored is "complex in structure, extensive in scope, and/or subtle in features that participants are not likely to offer spontaneously" (Wertz, p.171). The questions (Appendix E) were generated with an examination of my own experience discussing gender in the classroom and my desire to comprehend the experiences of the others. My goal through these questions was to understand the experience as well as how our related experiences both inside and outside the classroom contribute to that experience.

Dillman's (2001) work on telephone interviews was an important resource as it had successfully guided past SCYC telephone interview projects (Prescott, 2006), and was valuable in advising on issues of procedure and reducing participants' refusal in this study. Specifically, by focusing on engaging and maintaining the interest of participants through personalized correspondence, I was successful in obtaining the consent of all the eligible and interested participants who, in turn, followed through with both interviews (Dillman, Gallegos & Frey, 2001).

Interviews were expected to take place over 1-2 hours, and for the most part I was able to adhere to that agreement. Ultimately, interview length was determined by each participant's interest, responsiveness, and level of relatable experience with gender. Interviewees were asked to reconstruct their experiences discussing gender in the classroom in order to place clearly the focus on the "experience" (Seidman, 1998).

In order to create an interview atmosphere that produced an in depth account of the participants' experiences, Polkinghorne (2005) suggests three meetings to become acquainted, establish a relationship, and then focus on the interview goals. I aimed to achieve this in two interviews with the additional use of email. Unfortunately, I did not live in the same community as most of my participants, so I needed to be creative about how I built a relationship that elicited meaningful dialogue with the constraints of time and travel in mind. I was hopeful that telephone and email contact would be sufficient in creating a level of comfort and trust. This was the case for all participants save one who requested a brief letter of introduction as well. In cases where I thought more time might lead to greater depth of sharing, I was prepared to request an additional conversation with the participants; however, this was not necessary. The interviews were recorded with the use of a speaker-phone function and a digital recorder. I transcribed all the interviews myself.

Data Analysis

Phenomenology advises the researcher to slow down, listen, and reflect for accuracy of what I was hearing—the lived experience of the interviewee—not for the sake of theorizing or structuring, but instead to illuminate the experience for its own sake (Willis, 2001). Phenomenology was an ideal influence for this study as it aims for a

description of an experience rather than an explanation of the cause or an analysis of the origin (Kvale, 1996). Analysis in a phenomenological inquiry involves a series of recommended procedures. First, a phenomenological study always begins with a description of an experience to be understood psychologically, most often obtained through an interview. The interview provides participants with the opportunity to relate an experience or situation, and the resulting transcript becomes data on which the analysis is based (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Analysis of the data involves several steps as outlined by Giorgi & Giorgi, including reading for a sense of the whole with the goal of achieving an overall sense of the description, establishing meaning units through attention to shifts of meaning in the description, transformation of meaning units expressed in the participants own words into psychologically sensitive expressions reflective of the phenomenon under study, and finally using the meaning unit expressions as a basis for describing the psychological structure of the experience (2003, pp. 243-273).

Phenomenologists seek to illuminate human phenomena and not necessarily to generalize findings, and it is believed that methods arise from responsiveness to the phenomena (Hycner, 1985). They are reluctant to create a step-by-step style guide to the methodology as they feel their approach is less of a set of instructions and more of an “investigative posture with a certain set of goals” (Hycner, 1985, p. 279). Despite this, Hycner (1985) and Giorgi & Giorgi (2003) have created descriptive works that are helpful for the novice phenomenological researcher.

This research study benefited from two scheduled interviews with the participants, leaving me with a large volume of data to analyze in several stages. The first

stage of data analysis began immediately following the first interview. The first and second interviews were scheduled within one week of each to keep the initial interview fresh in the minds of the participants, capitalize on the interest of participants, and keep the interviews within the scheduled Reading Break period with the goal of inconveniencing the student participants as little as possible.

Following the first interview, I listened to the interview as a whole and then transcribed the interview. After each transcription was complete, I read the document repeatedly in order to form follow up questions for the second interview. At this point my focus was on each individual interview rather than the interviews as a whole. Once the second interview took place, I followed the initial procedure listed: first listening to the interview, then transcribing, and then reading the interviews multiple times.

I began to read for a sense of the whole (Giorgi and Giorgi, 2003; Kvale, 1996) once all of the interviews were completed and transcribed. The interview transcriptions were divided and then gathered into sets of questions 1 through 8, and then read again. From the whole document natural meaning units (Kvale, 1996) were identified, and these units were highlighted and then categorized—using a numbering system—into common themes that had emerged from the transcriptions. Each theme category was assigned a number and then a post-it note was used to indicate where in the document the theme originated. The themes were then analyzed for their value to the study (for example, reflections on undergraduate experiences although interesting and important were deemed unrelated to this study's focus on graduate program experiences). Upon determining all of the common themes (approximately thirty to forty per question), I then created umbrella themes that best reflected the experiences of the whole, such as gender

and practice, while allowing the individual experiences of the participants to illuminate the experience. Finally, each highlighted portion of the document was cut and pasted (using scissors, tape, coloured sheets of paper, and glue) to create an all encompassing document that reflected the themes that occurred in the participant's answers. This process was followed for all eight questions. The experience of the participants is presented according to the themes generated by the research interviews. These themes follow the relevant interview question to enhance coherence and overall interest in the research study. The results are found in the findings section of this paper.

Limits of the Study

Ensuring there was quality to my data and my research findings was important, and I relied on a multitude of sources to ensure my work was ethical and credible. In using phenomenological inquiry, quality of the research data and findings is achieved through a process of establishing the “trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability” (Coombes & Wratten, 2007, p. 390). In their own research, Coombes and Wratten explored this issue, and their findings were valuable in providing clarity to a novice researcher. Credibility may be understood as “the confidence that qualitative researchers have in the truth of the data”, and two techniques are presented for establishing this credibility: “Debriefing with peers to provide an external check on the inquiry process and member checks” (p. 390). In the case of my own research, debriefing with peers was not an option; however, debriefing by phone and email with my thesis supervisor and committee was invaluable. Member checks were built into my research process by having two interviews, and especially by the fact that the second interview was based on my reading of the transcripts from the

first interview. The second interview allowed me to review the first transcripts with my research participants, as well as allowing me to explore questions or interests I may have had based on the first interview. There were also cases when participants were contacted a third time to ensure that how I was understanding and using the data was congruent with their meaning.

I believe the goals of transferability, dependability (the stability of the data over time), and confirmability (the neutrality of the data) is also met in the case of my research. My data reflects the experiences of a variety of CYC graduate students who referenced experiences in a multitude of graduate classes, thus allowing readers to read their experiences as reflective of the CYC program. The dependability of the data is enhanced by the research participants being in different stages of their Master's program, and therefore providing a larger sample of the CYC graduate experience. The data obtained is also reminiscent of academic studies reviewed in preparation for this research, suggesting that the experiences illustrated by the participants are not new, nor are likely to be seen as only reflective of a brief graduate experience. The neutrality of the research was established through the writing of and constant referencing back to my research proposal, consultation with my advisors, and careful bracketing throughout the entire research and analysis process.

The issue of "validity" is also concerning to phenomenological research, and validity may be understood as "the notion that an idea is well-grounded and well-supported and thus that one can have confidence in it" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 57). Simply put, the reader must be able to have confidence in the data collection process, the analysis, and that the description of the experience provided to the reader is "an accurate

portrait of the common features and structural connections that are manifest in the examples collected” (p. 57). I believe that my data collection process is sound and well documented as was my process of analysis. Further, I feel that the reader will find that my description of the findings is both an explicit and accurate portrayal of the experiences related throughout the data collection process.

Another factor presented in the literature as important to phenomenological research is consistency in the use of methodology in order to avoid method-slurring, an issue that may result in inconsistencies and potential ethical dilemmas (Rose, Beeby & Parker, 1995). In the case of this research project, the research design was informed by phenomenology; however, attempts to create opportunities for participants to reflect on their experiences may at times seem more reflective of a descriptive exploratory study as I have deviated from phenomenological inquiry in several ways.

First, my interviews were not open-ended and unstructured, but instead involved a semi-structured questionnaire with an approximate time limit provided to participants. There are examples in the literature that support the use of semi-structured questionnaires (Polkinghorne, 1989), as well as examples of other research studies employing this approach, including Coombes’ (2007) phenomenological study of the experiences of mental health nurses working with people who have a dual diagnosis. Second, my research method was not developed in response to the phenomenon, but instead was decided in the planning stages of this study. This decision was made based on my inexperience as a researcher and is supported by Hycner (1985)—who provided a guideline to phenomenological analysis for beginner researchers—by acknowledging that inexperienced researchers may require more support in implementing their research

method. Third, I did come to this research with knowledge, experience, and some assumptions about the phenomenon (as detailed earlier in this paper), and for this reason bracketing throughout my interview and analysis process was especially important (Ashworth, 1996). Fourth, I failed to use the language of the methodology consistently. And finally, the methodology was used and valued throughout the interviews, analysis, and writing of this paper; however, despite this the methodology was not well-reflected in the discussion section.

Any movement away from a phenomenological study was likely a result of my inexperience as a researcher and my experience and comfort in a therapeutic setting where descriptive and exploratory work is commonplace. Further, it is my belief that while any movement away from phenomenological methods show that method-slurring may have occurred, I do not believe that this compromised the integrity of my research data or created ethical dilemmas.

The participant pool for this study is small, and participants seemed very open to discussions about both gender and feminism. They rarely appeared bothered by any gender or feminist conversations introduced into the curriculum and, in fact, campaigned for more gender learning opportunities. Participants in this study also demonstrated a range of knowledge regarding the issues related to gender from stereotyping to performativity, indicating that gender as a topic was an area of interest to some, and that they had previously explored these issues in class or through individual study. This research invited interested graduate students to participate, and it makes sense that these positive responses could be a result of individuals—already interested and approving of gender related or feminist learning in the CYC graduate program—volunteering to

participate in a study that matches their interests. As a result, it may be considered difficult to generalize the findings of this research to the larger population.

Reflexivity and Bracketing

Reflexivity and bracketing were important considerations in this research as I was mindful of the sensitive nature of gender discussions, and I was eager to convey a sense of openness and acceptance during the interview phase. Researchers who conduct phenomenological inquiries are advised to “see what is there and not what they have been taught is there or what they might desire to be there” (Garko, 1999, p. 172) in order to be open to lived experience of participants. A concern I had from the beginning was how I might influence the interview negatively. I thought a lot about how I might cause a sense of caution or, alternatively, an increased comfort to the interview subject. For example, I asked myself questions like, “how does my social location effect how the interviewees will answer the questions?”; “Does my being a woman who is white, middle-class, and heterosexual indicate to the participant that I am only interested in answers that affirm that gender is indeed a concerning issue in the School of Child and Youth Care?”; and “If the interviewee should know my educational and professional background is grounded in gender studies and feminist therapeutic services, would they feel obligated to speak for feminism and gender awareness in a manner that does not represent their true feelings?”

The issue of reflexivity is important in the field of feminist research as it addresses the power issues inherent in research (Ramazanoglu with Holland, 2002). Feminists support research methods that “take account of the power dynamics involved in producing (qualitative) research data, and have focused on a need to empower research participants in order to produce ethical research outcomes” (Del Busso, 2007, p. 309).

Reflexivity is important to feminist research as the researcher identifies with research participants and therefore strives to be aware of how values, beliefs, and perceptions influence the research process (Dowling, 2006). Reflexivity is best understood as the “process through which a researcher recognizes, examines, and understands how his or her own social background and assumptions can intervene in the research process” (Hesse-Biber 2007, p. 129). Ahern (1999) presents bracketing as a reflexive journey involving preparation, action, evaluation, feedback, and reflection of the effectiveness of the process. She recommends several steps, including clarifying personal value systems, identifying potential conflicts, and recognizing feelings that could indicate a lack of neutrality (Ahern). Bracketing in the phenomenological methodology is also important and provides the researcher with the opportunity to address assumptions and pre-conceptions (Ladkin, 2005).

Special attention was given to bracketing and reflexivity in order to allow for the opportunity to reflect more accurately the experiences of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon in question, and Ahern’s article *Pearls, pith, and provocation: Ten tips for reflexive bracketing* was invaluable in preparing for my research endeavour. My committee also suggested that I take the time to answer my own research questions in order to identify any issues that may occur during the interview process, and I also found this to be a helpful exercise. This research project was born out of a negative experience I had with gender discussions in the classroom. It was important to me, and essential to the research question, that I be open to how my participants experienced gender discussions in the classroom, and in remaining open to their experiences it was equally important that I not be looking for ways to impose my own

“understandings and constructions on the data” (Ahearn, 1999, p. 407).

CHAPTER 4 - Results

Question 1

To begin the interview, participants were asked to reflect on their experiences with gender discussions in the classroom. They were asked, “Can you remember a time gender was discussed in the classroom?” Participants primarily responded to this question by defining gender, reflecting on gender discussions they had experienced, reflecting on how gender was discussed, reflecting on what they felt was not discussed, and finally reflecting on how men experienced gender discussions.

Defining Gender

Knowing how participants defined gender was important in understanding how they experienced gender discussions, how they made meaning with gender issues, and what role gender has in the CYC graduate program. How participants defined and related to the term “gender” was also important in determining the course of the interview. For example, Participant 3 spent a good deal of our conversation focusing on issues of gender awareness and feminism, while Participant 4 preferred to focus on issues of gender performance and stereotyping. Despite their different focuses, both participants addressed issues of gender-based discrimination throughout their interviews. One participant spoke to a fundamental definition of gender: “I think at an absolute basic level it’s male/female, and then that’s the core of where the dialogue will go and all of the things that come along with male and female” (Participant 2). Others spoke to gender as being a broad spectrum of understanding that is socially constructed and fluid (Participant 3 & 4). Participant 1 made a distinction but not a “clear categorical break” between sex as being physical and gender as non-physical as a way of enhancing her understanding of

gender. Participant 3 characterized gender as “a social construction, but it’s one that materializes in such a way that... it can’t be reduced to just a social construction itself but a lived embodied... concept as well.” Participant 4 stated that:

I think gender is like a construction. It’s definitely a construction that we have of those socially constructed norms, so gender to me, the meaning I make with the term *gender*, is that it’s quite fluid. I mean... and I often catch myself buying into the very discrete boxes we’ve created, like male and female, those binaries. But to me it’s a very fluid spectrum of being. So I mean there’s these actually [sic] parts like the sex characteristics, the biological sex parts, but I see gender as much more of a richer experience of whether we attach those social norms of what it means to be male or female or what it means to be gender ambiguous or to play with gender or gender queer. So to me the meaning I make with gender is that it’s a very fluid... and organic and living concept or construction that is very individualized.

In so doing, Participant 4 spoke to the fluidity and nature of the social construction of gender, and reflected that how we choose to adopt or disrupt gender norms influences our gender experience. Participant 5 characterized gender as what you “portray to the world” and spoke to potential for flexibility or oppression:

Gender to me is a much more flexible category, and it’s what you portray to the world. Now, I have troubles with thinking of myself along the gender lines because I feel a bit oppressed [by] the idea of gender. I mean I don’t like to identify myself as far as sexuality. I don’t like to identify myself as hetero or bisexual or whatever. I don’t think that things can be defined that way. I think

you may have a majority along certain preferences but that there's such a... there's a continuum in sexuality. And I feel the same way about gender. Although the participants seemed somewhat divided on how they defined gender for themselves, they all seemed to feel that the concept was important to their own experiences as well as the experiences of others.

Reflecting on Gender Discussions

Most participants had a gender discussion experience they were able to relate; however, not every participant remembered experiencing a gender discussion in the CYC graduate program. Participant 2 recalled, "I can't think of a time where it became a real topic of conversation", and he further reflected, "I think in a graduate class we didn't really have anybody that seemed to have a need to sort of articulate or bring that to the dialogue, so it never kind of grew." In general, gender seemed most likely to appear as a topic of conversation in classes such as Child and Adolescent Development, Ethics, and Historical and Contemporary Theoretical Approaches to Child and Youth Care, and least likely to appear in research classes such as qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Participant 1 reflected on a gender analysis exercise she experienced while reviewing the North American Certification Project (NACP) competency documents. The discussion centered around the competency documents and how the competencies seemed absent of any discussion of sexual identity or gender:

Yeah, the experience was positive. I mean it was interesting because it does seem like this huge omission. And so we got to talking a bit about why it's omitted and 'cause it's generally omitted in what we're doing, and since then I've had discussions with colleagues and thought about work and realized that we really

don't have, for instance, a course dedicated to gender diversity in child and youth care.

Participant 1 felt the experience was positive and recalled thinking that it was an interesting lesson because the failure to include gender seemed "like this huge omission."

Participant 4 reflected on the "fun" time he had discussing gender in a classroom led by an instructor who presented a non-traditional instructional method he referred to as a "populist theatre class" as a way of exposing gender roles and making the "implicit very explicit." Participant 4 shared his experience in the class:

I think there are definitely benefits to it 'cause my personal experience of it was that it was such a, it was such a lived, we were able to live the discussion. It was a very lived experiential piece, so we were able to kind of take the theoretical argument and discussions about gender in the reading and really put that into very concrete practical action. So it was, it made it easier in a lot of ways because you were able to live the discussion. It wasn't you know 'oh well there's men and women and then there's ambiguity and gender fluidity and this is what the feminist theory said about that and da-ta-ta-da:' like we were able to experience it first hand, and that to me was very important.

Participant 4 also recognized CYC reading packages as being sources of gender discussion and found them to be "rich and phenomenal." Participant 1 also felt that the readings were often a starting source for gender conversations: "some questions would come up like, well what would this narrative sound like if it was a man speaking? Or what would this narrative sound like if the narrator was a homosexual woman and not a heterosexual woman or what have you?" The participants reflected on a variety of

experiences discussing gender that for the most part seemed positively received. It is very interesting to note that while Participant 2 reflected on the sense he had from his fellow students that there was an overall general lack of interest or need in discussing gender in graduate studies, Participants 1 and 4 reflected on their most positive gender discussion experiences as being those that exposed gender issues and called attention to gender when gender is otherwise ignored. It seems that when presented with the opportunity to discuss gender by faculty, students were enthusiastic and rose to the challenge; however, when gender remained absent from the curriculum, it seemed unnecessary and unimportant.

How Gender Came Up

Participants 1 and 4 reported experiencing gender discussions in the Child and Adolescent Development class. In the case of Participant 1, the topic of gender emerged as a result of a student's presentation. In Participant 4's experience, a guest speaker was responsible for providing an "exciting and invigorating conversation about gender fluidity, so really looking at...gender across the spectrum, and it was a very inclusive and important conversation." Participant 5 felt that gender was approached in more of an "odds and ends" manner, sometimes emerging in the readings, and was often being reduced to issues such as sexual assault and victimization.

Participants often reflected on how gender conversations would arise when searching their memories for examples of how gender was discussed. Gender often seemed to be present in conversations about diversity (Participant 2 & 4), and for Participant 1 the notable absence of gender in the NACP competency documents became a classroom lesson. Participant 1 provided this example: "the experience was positive, I

mean it was interesting because it does seem like this huge omission, and so we got to talking a bit about why it's omitted and 'cause it's generally omitted in what we're doing." Participant 1, 2, and 4 noted that gender discussions sometimes seemed to emerge in a developmental context while Participants 2 and 5 noted that in their experiences gender discussions were also occasionally presented within a feminist context. Most participants reported being open to more gender conversations and seemed puzzled by its general omission from the curriculum.

Participant 3 reflected this desire for more diversity in the CYC courses when she said,

I think that there should be a sense of diversity that's in every course and that diversity should look at culture and gender, and just different perspectives, theoretical perspectives from power and especially when we're talking about the way in which we work with families and children and influence policy. I do think there should be some sense of what does that mean from a feminist perspective.

The participant's reflections demonstrated that gender was primarily addressed in lessons about development or diversity, and otherwise gender seemed to appear only occasionally in the curriculum. Most of the participants felt that the curriculum would be enhanced by the introduction of more gender discussions.

How Gender Was Discussed

While remembering experiences when gender was discussed, participants also reflected on how the topic was approached and handled. Participant 3 felt gender was "often an undercurrent", yet often felt "like it had kind of been dealt with":

It almost felt, though, that gender was often an undercurrent, so for myself as an identified feminist it's never, it's never off my radar. Gender's always, gender's

always a filter with which I see theory, practice, and examples, and dialogues, right? But I remember actually in my first semester we did have a... we did have a session on sort of identifying social location and it was more geared toward ethnicity. Quite frankly, it often felt like gender had kind of been dealt with.

Does that make sense?

Participant 3 further characterized the experience of discussing gender in the classroom this way,

Like, you know feminism is over and we've moved on to more interesting projects, so we need now to move on to things that have more subsequently been marginalized by feminism as well right. So I have a really hard time pinpointing explicit moments when gender was really present.

She continued,

For example, in my graduate experience lots of the instructors who taught us you know... work with a gendered lens. So for example, one instructor taught my first semester, and so obviously, like, she sort of cracked the code on girl culture on a topic that was considered taboo because of gendered assumptions, right. Girls aren't, girls can't be violent right. And so for her to be able to explore that... So I mean we have all these people doing these pivotal pieces of research, and I don't know if feminism's... the idea of gender awareness is so ingrained in them that they don't need to be explicit about it. So in that way I think it's interwoven... I guess for me it comes down to you know whether it be aside or interwoven. It's the ideas, the visibility of it I guess. Making it explicit. Naming it for what it is. Like if we're going to talk about gender then name it as gender.

Participant 1 felt that gender was used as a “lens”, and she elaborated,

It became something that was more openly talked about and used as a method of analysis.... I just remembered in that course we did talk about it more than in my other course because we, in doing our analysis of narratives that we would write up and analyzing other readings for the course, because we were sort of in that class, I think, trained to think differently. Gender came up more often as a topic of interest I guess you could say.

Participant 4 shared a similar recollection of gender being approached through the readings when “questions would come up like, well what would this narrative sound like if it was a man speaking? Or what would this narrative sound like if the narrator was a homosexual woman and not a heterosexual woman?” Other participants also reported being introduced to using gender as a lens (Participant 4) to analyze issues of patriarchy, privilege, and oppression:

In my mind, it opened up huge doors for learning and really hearing from a different set of lenses and also to help me become very conscious and very aware of the power and privilege that is linked to my gender which I hadn't really thought about before in any... I had taken it for granted it was something I just kind of toddled along with. And then entering into child and youth care that became even more apparent like really interrogating the fact, you know, looking patriarchy and looking at gender and the nuances associated with that and how gender can be used to oppress, and gender can be used to empower, and gender can be used to take power away from really became much clearer.

Similarly, another participant reported using gender as a personal “filter with which I see theory, practice, and examples, and dialogues” (Participant 3):

I’ve basically chosen a career that focuses on the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families, and communities and understand how on the one hand that’s incredibly gender stereotypical, but on the other hand how that can be quite revolutionary as well. Depending on how you approach it. And, you know, my own experience in my life, you know, like gender, is just a salient issue and it feels like it’s always been present.

For Participant 3 gender was something she felt was always with her, and is integral to who she is privately and professionally.

Some participants reported feeling that gender conversations were approached with deliberation: “We definitely had those conversations of what it would be like to occupy one particular gender location and interact with clients and families who might be a different gender location” (Participant 4). Other participants felt that gender topics were simply something one fell into while talking about diversity rather than being a part of the curriculum (Participant 2). Participant 5 felt that gender was discussed as “feminist theory”; however, she also felt gender would come up as “how would, perhaps males, engage with this material versus females.” Participant 5 also took issue with what she saw as,

This very female way of learning and sharing information, and it was different and in a way it was silencing because all of a sudden it’s just this assumed experience of we’re all female so we all think the same way. We all learn the same way, we all share the same way. But then I never felt that I could bring up

gender because then it just didn't seem like the proper place to do it. You know we're all just so busy with all the things that we need to do that it just seems, like do I really want to open up, you know, another discussion that isn't directly related to whatever we are supposed to be learning and digesting and you know processing right now.

The participants shared a variety of ways in which they experienced gender discussions. Inviting students to utilize a "gender lens" to read and analyze seemed to be the predominant way in which these gender lessons were approached.

What Wasn't Discussed

Participants were also eager to share what conversations they felt were missed with regard to gender and the CYC graduate curriculum. Participant 3 reported feeling so frustrated with the lack of gender discussion that she considered dropping out, and Participant 5 felt that there was a lack of acknowledgment of the gender discrepancies in the program. As Participant 5 said,

But to me there just seemed to be a big gap particularly along the lines of why are there so much [sic] more women in child and youth care than men? And then whenever that question arose, it was always given that kind of like, "oh well you know caring profession" and that was just like nursing, just like teaching the pink ghetto, you know that sort of answer. And I always felt that always left me wondering...I just was never comfortable with it because especially as you go into a masters program, you know, when you look at the proportion in our cohort, we had two males to what, eight females, something like that... You know, how come we never talk about the fact that we are now one to four in the MA, but in

the BA we were one to twenty-five. And what does that mean? And when you look at faculty, it's practically one to one. What does that mean to us here in the classroom? What does that mean to us going back out into the field? What does that mean—the fact that I can look at a male that is my classmate and know that he's probably going to make more money than I will?

Participant 5 was looking for an opportunity to discuss the implications of studying and practicing what she described as a “pink ghetto” profession. She also wanted to discuss the gender discrepancies she felt were revealed within the Child and Youth Care program.

Another issue participants felt wasn't addressed was the ethics of gender and, in particular for one participant, the ethics of touch. Participant 4 described this problem as follows:

For example, with me being male, what's that like around, touch? And as a male practitioner, am I allowed to hug a child that I am working with? Am I subjected to the same scrutiny as a female practitioner who wants to hug a child?

Participant 4 reflects on the issue of physical boundaries, and in his concern he helpfully reveals the bias some men may experience against male practitioners in child and youth care practice.

Men and Gender Discussions

Several participants also reflected on the experiences of men in the graduate CYC program. They noted that, in most cases, it was rare to find more than one or two men in the classroom (Participant 3, 4 & 5), and one participant estimated that at least three men needed to be present in order for men to be able to participate comfortably (Participant 4).

Participant 4 shared that as a man he felt he was “in a minority location”, and he reflected on his experiences as a male in the CYC program:

It’s really interesting. I think I’ve had two themes to my experience of being a male student or male practitioner. Often there’s a silence around it like... the issue of gender in practice is under the surface of...the conversations. It’s palpable... it’s there, but it’s not being actively discussed or deconstructed... and then sometimes, it’s very overt, very much out there in the middle of the forum and people are discussing it. So often being—and I think in all of my graduate classes I, at this current point, I’m the only guy—quite often I feel a little reticent to bring it up. Like sometimes I feel as if I’m tokenizing the issue of being the only guy. And people see my gender as being male, so it’s, I often feel well should I bring this up? Or is there space for me to bring this up? Or am I further perpetrating or perpetuating, you know, male dominance and patriarchy by advocating for the male experience? Should I remain silent in the classroom setting? Is my voice necessary to bring up? And definitely finding times where I choose to remain silent and other times to speak to the issue, and sometimes experiencing the issue of being called upon to share my experience which often is quite interesting because often I don’t feel as if I can speak for the entire male gender of child and youth care practitioners... my experience is my own experience.

The participants of this study identified gender as important to them, and they made meaning of gender in a variety of ways. The participants did not seem to believe that gender was discussed enough; however, they seemed to embrace any opportunities to

discuss the many issues related to gender and the child and youth care discipline.

Question 2

For the second question, participants were asked, “can you tell me what significance gender holds for you in your life (academically, professionally, and personally)?” This question was asked for two reasons. First, I was interested in establishing how much interest there was in discussing gender-related issues overall. I wondered if participants were attracted to my study because of its topic, or were they simply interested in supporting a fellow CYC graduate student? Second, I felt this question was in line with my previously discussed commitment to reflexivity and bracketing throughout this research process. I wanted to ensure what their level of interest was rather than assuming it or inferring it based on my interest in the topic. Participants spoke to each element of the question, but often demonstrated a greater degree of comfort when discussing gender in their academic and professional domains.

Academic Experiences with Gender

Participants seemed to desire more opportunities to discuss gender in the CYC program when reflecting on their experiences with gender in the CYC program. Several participants identified the approaches of other programs as models of interest. Participant 3 identified the Nursing program as doing a “far better job” of “examining power and difference amongst women”, and Participant 2 identified the Social Work program as dealing with gender issues in a “much more meaningful way than Child and Youth Care.”

Some felt gender issues deserved more consideration because they felt that these issues are relevant to the client population. Participant 2 put it this way:

I think that gender identification and gender issues are significant with a population that would often come into focus for child and youth care workers, so I do think that there needs to be some focus and dialogue about that issue of gender. Some participants felt that the history of caregiving in the CYC program (Participant 3 & 5), it's "structural lack of value" (Participant 3), and the discrepancy between the student female to male ratio and the employer and faculty female to male ratio also required gender analysis discussions (Participant 2, 4 & 5). Participant 5 summed this up as follows:

I started to look at the reality. I realized that, geez, the majority of the directors are males, the majority of professors are males, and it just seems to me that nothing ever really changes. So we go into an academic environment where we're all talking about women becoming more educated, and I mean women are becoming more educated and things are changing but it's not changing that much.

The participants shared Participant 5's frustration with a lack of discussion around gender, power, and child and youth care in the classroom/program, and in practice settings. They universally identified this as a glaring omission.

Gender in academia was a source of frustration for Participant 1 who said, "I think what gender holds for me in academia is a possibility and therefore a frustration because it sort of...it would be a great place to explore gender and sexuality" (Participant 1). She continued, "and yet it's not been... there isn't easy access to it I guess I would say. So I sort of have to go take a women's studies class... or create a directed study in order to go more in depth or go into the depth that I would enjoy." Several participants (Participant 1, 2 & 3) suggested there was not enough gender discussion in the current

CYC curriculum; however, they thought students should feel encouraged to create their own gender-focused opportunities, such as pursuing gender-based mentorships and directed study programs that focused on gender. The participants all agreed that gender issues were significant in all aspects of their lives; however, they were aware that not every CYC student agreed. To illustrate this point, Participant 3 stated that:

I don't understand how people can claim to be colour-blind or gender blind when we see the structural inequalities all around us through policies, through everyday practices, you know how we treat the children that we practice with. So it's simply there and I think some practitioners choose to recognize it, and through that have to also then have some accountability and responsibility in addressing it.

And other people choose not to see it as an issue.

The participants were unanimous in their desire to see more gender discussions that were reflective of their realities as CYC practitioners as well as the realities of their clients. The participants didn't seem to think that gender could be separated from CYC education or practice.

Professional Experiences of Gender

The participants seemed most eager to share the importance of gender analysis and the impact of gender differences in their practice. Participant 3 reported:

Gender is ever present in my professional practice... and mostly focused on women, so like I see even though clients might not see gender impacting their development or decision making or oppression in the world... you know I kind of saw it playing out in their narratives and sort of, you know, sort of problematic issues they would bring, whether that be body image or relationship issues or

family issues, you know, so I could see gender playing out and, sort of, it didn't matter in what context I was actually using my skills in, you know gender was ever present.

Participant 4 concurred, "it definitely comes up—the meaning I make with it—comes up time and time again when I'm interacting with my clients." He continued:

Some of those other pieces like, who I'm meant to be working with? My client base is predominately male, male youth and younger boys too, so that way some of the ideas around, well as a male mentor I should be working predominantly with males, is an interesting one and there's an unspoken question of well 'is it possible for me to work with female clients too, and provide that kind of therapeutic space too for them'? So gender in my practice in this particular practice location is huge. It comes up every single minute of my practice of really having to be reflective and open and humble, and very open to the way my gender is perceived. Given the experience of my clients and a lot of the folks that work there, so professionally it's huge.

Several participants spoke to how applying a gender analysis and being aware of gender performance issues is important in their work with clients, and they also identified clients as generating their interest in the role of gender in practice (Participant 1, 2, and 3).

Participant 3 gave this example:

Even though clients might not see gender impacting their development or decision making or oppression in the world, I kind of saw it playing out in their narratives and [the] problematic issues they would bring whether that be body image or relationship issues or family issues....I could see gender playing out and... it

didn't matter in what context I was actually using my skills...gender was ever present.

Although the participants reported different gender-based professional experiences, they identified gender analysis as important in negotiating their work places, assessing and understanding their clientele, and making appropriate therapeutic decisions.

The Gendered Experiences of Men in Practice

Several participants spoke to how men experience gender issues in practice or how they believe men must feel (Participant 2, 4, & 5), and Participant 4 reflected on his personal experiences as a male practitioner when he said,

It's preferred that I work with young men just because of the therapeutic potential there....But my argument has been...surely the same if not more therapeutic potential exists as well if a male is to work with young women, around young women forming a therapeutic relationship with a male who's non-violent, who role models safe expression of feelings, who is supportive, who is compassionate. All of those things that hopefully a practitioner in this role would fulfill...so it's interesting...I'm meant to work with men which is fine and I enjoy working with the male clients I work with, but there's still a missing piece to the puzzle there.

When speaking to the experiences of men, Participant 4 shared the contradictions he experiences in differing work sites, which he believes are reflective of being male in child and youth care. In an anti-violence agency,

It [gender] comes up every single minute of my practice of really having to be reflective and open and humble, and very open to the way my gender is perceived.

Given the experience of my clients and a lot of the folks that work there, so professionally it's huge.

In contrast, he reflects on his experience at a mental health site:

My gender confers a lot of supposed power, so I'm the guy if there needs to be a physical intervention with a child...my presence as a male is taken to be important for that purpose, which I disagree with quite a lot, because I think that often puts me in a place of being in conflict with my values and beliefs about having to be physical with children, like having to restrain children.

Another issue relevant to the experiences of men in practice raised by Participant 4 was the vulnerability some men in child and youth care feel regarding false accusations, and he felt that changes need to be made to improve protection of CYC professionals.

Participant 4 referenced an experience he had in his ethics class discussing the ethics of touch from the perspective of a female practitioner:

For example, with me being a male, what's that like around touch, and as a male practitioner am I allowed to hug a child that I am working with? Am I subjected to the same scrutiny as a female practitioner who wants to hug a child? The ethics of touch and the ethics surrounding gender was really important too... several of the readings that the instructor had chosen were very much related to touch specifically, so physical boundaries and the paranoia that tends to exist in... out there in litigation and liability. And it served as a kind of springboard, a very natural segue into a conversation about gender, but I think it was me who initiated that

conversation in some ways because often I occupy the place of being the only guy in the room.

Participant 4's openness about his experience as a male CYC practitioner reflected the concerns and feelings of other participants. The participants shared an interest in discussing the experiences of men in the field.

Importance of Gender Awareness in Practice

Some participants shared their frustrations with the issues of gender in practice and learning about gender in practice. They spoke to seeing clients being impacted by gender issues and to feeling that gender differences did impact their therapeutic experience; however, they did not find that these issues were addressed in the CYC graduate program to any satisfaction. As Participant 3 noted,

I get really tired of, you know, younger practitioners or I guess, on the same wave length, older practitioners saying that gender doesn't matter, that we're beyond that or that gender matters, but now, it just matters for boys because we've ignored them through this feminist revolution.

Participant 3 was not the only one who felt that the curriculum wasn't meeting her needs.

Participants 1, 2 and 3 wished that the graduate program had gender-based lessons more grounded in their practice experiences. Again we hear from Participant 3, who said,

So I think for myself, being able to develop as a feminist practitioner in a way that brings gender awareness to a client in a non-threatening but equally challenging manner, and so I think, you know, we can talk about social location, we can talk

about gender and issues of race, for example in a graduate seminar, but I don't think the skills are then communicated [about] how to relay that sort of way of viewing the world to your clients.

Practiced-based learning was advocated by many of the participants. Participant 2 also called for CYC learning to be more reflective of the client issues he encounters in the field:

They [male practitioners] are often caught between who they are... Are they a male that likes males? Are they a male that likes males and females? How do they construct that identity for themselves? It would have been nice in the graduate program to have some more sort of discussion or focus on that.

Participant 3 agreed,

I can also really relate to, you know, needing to know then how do you take pieces of this theory and be able to communicate that to clients into practical tools that they can then use to not only deconstruct pieces of their lives that are problematic, but, you know, help them sort of rebuild their lives in a more gender aware way from [people].

The participants were very interested in an education that supported them in their desire to both understand and respond to the concerns of their clientele.

Instead of voicing frustration with a lack of gender discussion, Participant 4 spoke to his growing awareness of "the power and privilege that is linked to my gender" and how his experiences in the CYC program have highlighted these issues of "looking [at] patriarchy and looking at gender and the nuances associated with that and how gender can be used to oppress and gender can be used to empower and gender can be used to

take power away from [people].” The participants clearly felt that the CYC classroom was an ideal place to prepare for the gender issues that they would experience in their practice, and they welcomed opportunities to explore these issues with classmates and professors.

Personal Experiences of Gender

Participants reflected on gender awareness, gender discrimination, and gender performance when they were asked how they made meaning with the word *gender*. Participant 4 and 5 identified gender in relation to the resistance they felt to the binary (male/female) nature that is often attributed to the concept of gender by some in the classrooms. Participant 5 identified gender as “the root of the majority of any oppressive experiences I’ve had in my life”, and “I remember from a very young age knowing that gender had everything to do with my role in society and what was expected of me in my family. Participant 4 spoke to his own experience: “I’ve always resisted the boxes of this is what it means to be male so you need to behave in this particular way, and I think I’ve done that since my youth and childhood”, and he felt that his involvement in the CYC program was an extension of this resistance: “so sharing feelings and being in the field of child and youth care... being a helper, I think, are my ways of hopefully messing with some of the stereotypes.”

Participation in the UVic CYC graduate program was identified by several participants (Participant 3 & 4) as a deliberate act of gender resistance. Their willingness to embrace their chosen field while challenging the stereotypes is important to them, and while the program offered the opportunity for resistance, for some it also supported a growing sense of awareness in others.

Participant 1 and 3 spoke about gender as a sense of awareness they had developed or were developing both personally and professionally. As Participant 3 said, “it’s one of those awarenesses that once you have, you can’t necessarily take away.”

Participant 2 also spoke to awareness and how he saw issues often related to gender (sexual abuse, identity, and sexuality) developing for people close to him when he said, “I think... in working in that world... I became immersed in my own lived experience [of gender].” This left him feeling as though his personal life was being reflected in his practice, and he felt that this influenced his interest in gender issues (Participant 2).

Each participant reported feeling that gender held importance in his or her academic, professional, and personal life. Some felt that the CYC graduate program did not do enough to support their interest in exploring gender academically and professionally. They wanted to see a curriculum that enhanced their learning through deliberate examinations of the role of gender in child and youth care from the point of view of practitioners and clients. What does it mean to be a male practitioner? Can we talk about being in a field that is undervalued, under-paid, and where men still are in power positions despite their relatively low numbers in the field? What are the gender realities of clients and how can we best assist them? These were some of the many questions they wanted to explore.

Others felt that the program had enhanced their understanding of how gender was important to practice. They credited the program with introducing them to the importance of gender and aiding them in developing a personal and professional

awareness. They saw the CYC graduate program as a safe place to explore gender-based theories and feminism, to resist gender-based expectations, and to challenge gender stereotypes.

Question 3

After reflecting on the significance of gender in their lives, participants were asked, “How do you think your feelings about gender are similar/different to those of your fellow students, faculty, and the CYC program?” My question did not specify “gender discussions” so as not to limit any potential responses; however, the participants spoke to the issue of gender discussions in their responses. In most cases, this question seemed to require some time for contemplation before an answer could be provided.

Similarities and Differences in the Classroom

When asked to reflect on similarities and differences, the participants answered this question carefully. They seemed reluctant to seem disrespectful to others. Participants did report feeling that there were some similarities with classmates in how they experienced gender discussions, as well as their openness to discussing it. As Participant 1 indicated, “I think there’s a general desire for there to be more access to discussions.” Participant 2 felt that being CYC students and practitioners meant,

There is [sic] some common themes that we share broadly around acceptance, which comes in all different forms of the way in which we connect and interact with people and gender is—would be one of those things.

Participant 1 felt the lack of gender conversations in the classroom spoke to similarities in experience:

I don't think there is an active desire on any of our parts to omit it from our class-work. I think it's just so ingrained from the way we function as a society that it's sort of separate. And maybe we're not working hard enough to pull it in.

Several of the participants identified points of similarity between them and their classmates; however, most participants reported more differences than similarities in how they experienced and felt about gender. Several participants (Participant 1, 3 & 5) reported feeling a sense of not knowing, hesitancy, isolation, and, at times, feeling silenced in their desire to include gender aspects into the conversation. Participant 3 reflected on her experiences,

Where I see myself as somewhat differing is, despite the fact that we say that gender is, you know, one of the lenses with which we view children and youth, families and communities. How is it that when you talk about gender you often feel like the only voice in the room?

Participant 3 wasn't the only participant who identified feeling uncomfortable or alone when broaching the topic of gender.

In a similar vein, Participant 3, said, "oh here we go, another, you know, another feminist interpretation" while Participant 1 said that others wanted to discuss gender more, but "nobody wants to be that guy to bring it up." Safety was of concern for another participant who had several classroom experiences that left her feeling that "gender is not one I'm going to bring up because I don't feel safe bringing it up" (Participant 5). She continued "and that's based on a couple of my experiences in the classroom where I did not think the environment was safe enough to have a productive discussion." Other

participants (Participant 4 & 5) reported feeling limited by “that binary M or F and there’s no other which I find less useful” (Participant 4).

While there were some similarities identified by participants, the sense of isolation and lack of safety identified by most of them is what stands out. In not deliberately addressing gender, participants identified feeling vulnerable and hesitant to advance a concept of importance to them. It is powerful to note that when discussing differences (between self and other in the classroom) the individual participants identified a feeling of isolation and fear separately; however, within their descriptions the participants have identified a similarity of experience.

Similarities and Differences with Faculty and the Program

Participants reported having varied experiences in how their feeling about gender issues corresponded with their experiences with CYC faculty and the CYC graduate program (Participant 3 & 4). Several participants cited recent developments in the graduate CYC curriculum as better representing how they experience gender issues, and how gender issues fit into their practice. One participant credited several faculty members for introducing theories and concepts that have brought “feminist theory kind of up to speed with contemporary practice, so I see that as a positive change” (Participant 3). One participant took issue with where gender conversations took place:

Conversations tend to take place in the places you’d expect it, so the diversity class you’d expect those conversations to take place, you’d expect it in the foundation theoretical class where lots of theories are being talked about, contemporary and historical, and ethics too. You’d expect those conversations there. But what I’m really fascinated to see [is] if those same conversations will

take place in quantitative stats where gender, well sex is, you know, a statistical variable. (Participant 4)

Where gender conversations arose was often identified by participants as more reflective of the professor than the course content (Participant 2 & 3).

Another participant reflected on how he felt the faculty demonstrated how they value gender issues and feminism: “I think in the academic world you are more drawn to talk about feminism, and if you’re an academic that practices, you’re probably more drawn to gender” (Participant 2). To illustrate this point, Participant 2 contrasted the work of two female faculty members whom he saw as focusing on gender and feminism in their academic scholarship, and two male faculty members whose frame of reference is practice and who he believes “don’t think much about it [gender].” Participant 3 also noted differences in how faculty approached gender issues and embraced this as an opportunity for growth:

There are those who do see it differently on staff, you know. I see them as sort of challenging me to read, to read more texts. You know, read more broadly, and to read more critically. And so that’s been very helpful.

These similarities and differences were also identified outside of the classroom.

Participant 5 reflected on faculty relationships with students as an example of difference she had experienced:

There’s this certain air of camaraderie between the male faculty and the male students that doesn’t automatically happen with the female student, but then it’s possible male students would say the same thing about female faculty toward female students, so it could be that, you know, it’s just one of those gender

relations things that's never going to be solved right: that women just feel more comfortable with women and men feel more comfortable with men.

Although Participant 5 felt this reality was frustrating, she was unsure about how things could be changed.

Participants were able to identify similarities and differences in how they feel about gender issues. Most often differences were not attributed to personality, but instead to degrees of interest in gender issues and the desire to be respected and remain safe in the classroom. The desire to engage in more gender-based discussions was expressed by most of the participants; however, they feared the consequences of proposing the topics on their own. The participants seemed to feel that the value differences they saw between themselves and their classmates were also reflected between students and faculty members, and perhaps the faculty as a whole.

Question 4

For the fourth question of the interview, participants were asked, "Do you think gender discussions are relevant to CYC practice?" The participants were unanimous in their support for the relevance of gender discussions and supported their beliefs using a variety of examples derived from CYC learning, CYC practice, the CYC program, and the CYC profession.

Relevance to Learning: Faculty

Several participants cited the CYC faculty as an area that generated the need for gender discussions. They noted a demographic shift in the faculty: "As soon as you go into the faculty then all of a sudden the number of men jump up" (Participant 5); and that

there appeared to be a obvious division of research styles, with the male faculty leaning toward quantitative research (Participant 2 & 3) and the female faculty having a more qualitative focus: “it’s interesting how gender roles actually get reified through faculty representation no matter how diverse the faculty is” (Participant 3). One participant reflected on classmates in her program who had families and were experiencing personal life challenges. She felt that she and her classmates could have benefited from female faculty members “talking about their experiences of being a woman in the field” (Participant 3). She also wondered if working from a “gendered lens” was so ingrained in the female faculty members that they were not aware of the need to be explicit about it (Participant 3).

Relevance to Learning: Classroom and Curriculum

All participants seemed to feel that the current attention given to gender in the CYC program is not enough, and they suggested several remedies. Some participants called for the addition of another course. They argued that the courses inform and support practice as well as personal growth:

Courses on communication, for example, and counselling profoundly change how you communicate with people, sometimes right sometimes not, for the better, you know, because you’re recognizing patterns of communication. For example, you’re recognizing roadblocks to communication, and I think the same can be said if you had people immersed in talking about all facets of gender and the multiple multiple meanings of gender. I think that they would start then to recognize interactions in their own life and their own practice. For example, you know to be able to take some time to critically reflect on that instead of always

being in the defensive position of ‘I don’t do that’ or ‘I’m not sexist’. (Participant 3)

Participants spoke for designated courses as well as enhanced learning opportunities in existing courses.

Several participants felt that when gender was discussed, the discussions lacked depth or remained on the periphery despite the interest and willingness of students to participate (Participant 1, 3 & 5). One participant characterized the discussions as “tokenistic” (Participant 5). Another participant felt that effective discussions have to begin with each individual student:

If you can start from the subjective place of gendered experience, whether that be one of privilege or one of oppression or one of both, you know, then I think people are more inclined to start unpacking the meaning around that, and if they’ve had that experience, then, what does that mean for, you know, the people on their caseload, for example, or the people who consult with them. (Participant 3)

Many of the participants seemed to agree that child and youth care learning could benefit from a number of theoretical lenses, including gender.

Relevance to Practice

Many of the participants spoke to how gender is relevant to their practice and their clientele. They saw gender discussions as contributing to the growth of the profession:

If we consider ourselves a relatively new profession, then I think that, you know, we do need to examine gender. We can't assume the profession's caught up with a lot of other changes in the world. I just don't think it has. (Participant 3)

Participants felt that gender was salient to the experiences of their clients: "As practitioner we really need to be comfortable in that domain if we expect to include that topic of conversation with the people that we connect with" (Participant 3), and several participants identified gender as a "cornerstone" of their practice (Participant 3).

Participant 1 reflected on how gender impacted her clientele:

There's also the fact that we work with a lot of people who have been sexually abused or who have been in abusive relationships and what have you. Things that directly relate to their gender and sexuality. So if it's generally omitted in our practice, how can we be effective when working with people for whom it's been, not just been a salient piece of their identity, but something highly negative in their lives?

Participant 5 also felt gender was important to practice and provided an example from her own experience:

I think that, I think that it's a part of our practice every single day, you know. Whatever population you're working with, there are populations that will, you know, refuse to deal with a man, others that will want to deal with a man because... you need to know how to work in those areas and you need to know how your colleagues are going to be able to work in those areas or not so that you can work together as a team.... [In] the place that I work at now for my practicum... the majority of our clients are female—girls and youth but we do get

some males, and we only have one male therapist. And gender is something that comes up all the time in our discussions because he [the lone male therapist] gets a little bit tired where he sees most of the boys or the youth that want to have a male counsellor, and he sometimes talks about how it's limiting for him because he doesn't see himself as someone who would only be working with males. He would like to work with females too and then you've got [to ask] how do you respect the client's wishes and at the same time encourage the client.... Gender's a really large part of it all the time. And then we talk about... do we hire a male, another male therapist so that things are more evenly spread out, but then does that mean you have to lay off one of your females therapists and is that sexist? You know, (laughs) it's just, it's a huge part of what we talk about, how we react as males or as females—two different issues in the work.... It's part of the discussion all the time.

The issues effecting men in CYC practice were important to female and male participants. Participant 5 illustrated how the realities of being a male CYC practitioner may also affect their female colleagues.

The reality of child and youth care being a “gendered profession” was another reason provided by the participants in support of more gender discussions in the classroom (Participant 2, 3 & 5). Participant 2 reflected,

That I am in a group, being white-Anglo Saxon male, being very powerful and we tend to support each other I guess. I mean maybe it's the similarity thing. But I don't know, it's weird; I mean it's why our profession is one of the lowest paid.

Participant 3 supported Participant 2's comments saying students need to "systematically evaluate, you know, why the majority of women are direct practitioners, and how it is then that men assume positions of power?" About the profession, Participant 3 observed,

Why is it okay that the majority of people directly caring for children youth and families are women? How did that ever get socially constructed and okayed and validated and verified? And then of course, why is it okay that then you get paid [less] and other professions [but not this one] that are considered skilled and important in developing leaders and that sort of thing. And you know, trying to tease apart all these social scripts that have been basically etched on our bodies as women...the idea that your job's not worthy, you are not worthy, and what you're doing is somehow [something] you're naturally inclined to do...now I think for students that's really a hard place to be.

Participants spoke for a deeper conversation about the CYC profession "understanding the relationship between patriarchy, capitalism, and the undervaluing of children: You know those are conversations that fall under the umbrella of gender that I don't think can be ignored" (Participant 3). They seemed to feel that such in depth conversations would be beneficial to them personally and as professionals. They also seemed to see these conversations as being beneficial to their clients. Participant 3 provided the Nursing program as an example of a program she felt addressed issues of gender, difference and power in the workplace well.

Why the Deficit in Gender Discussions?

Some participants also used this opportunity to reflect on why more gender discussions are not happening. Participant 3 wondered if "our professors at the graduate

level have so much faith in our intellectual capacity that maybe they've assumed we've worked through this", and she followed with her belief that instructors "assume that everybody is ready to engage in talking about gender at the graduate level, which I don't think is true":

We pride ourselves on being so multi-disciplinary and transdisciplinary, however you want to word it, and I think it's also dangerous to assume that everybody comes with the same level of critical thinking, including critical thinking about gender. (Participant 3)

Some participants felt that a lack of safety limited opportunities for gender discussions:

There were many times when I found discussions went in directions that were a bit dodgy, and that I didn't find that things were resolved or addressed. It was all kind of left up to us to debrief. Kind of left up to us to deal with it. (Participant 5)

One participant wondered if gender discussion do sometimes occur, but remain unnamed because there is a fear of alienating students:

I guess for me it comes down to, you know, whether it be an aside or interwoven, it's the ideas, the visibility of it I guess. Making it explicit. Naming it for what it is. Like if we're going to talk about gender then name it as gender. (Participant 3)

Participant 3 provided an example to support her claim:

Why are we so scared to say that that's what we're talking about... and it seems like especially with speaking about race for example, in the classroom. Often it can be conflictual. For example, it can be, it can arouse a lot of strong emotions. But people talking about race and racism and colonialism, you know, I think that's under...I think that's understood.

Some participants (Participant 1 & 3) also reported feeling reluctant to begin gender discussions: “I do find it really challenging to put gender at a forefront in terms of wondering sometimes how that will be perceived... or resisted” (Participant 3).

According to the participants, gender discussions are not happening because some faculty members feel the lessons have been learned in undergraduate classrooms, or they are happening but not being named as gender discussions. In any case, with either of these scenarios the participants have related the need to more openly challenge the gender realities of CYC practice. They want to explore both how gender impacts their clients, and also how gender issues effect practitioners. They seem to collectively see a benefit in addressing these issues within the classroom.

Question 5

Participants were asked on the fifth question, “Is there any aspect of how gender is discussed that you found effective? Is there something that you thought could have been done better”? Participants seemed to agree that a variety of factors including curriculum and materials, the competency and willingness of the instructor, and the openness of the student body were instrumental in facilitating effective gender discussions in the classroom. Safety and competency, openness and fluidity were also prevalent themes. One participant seemed to capture the feelings of most:

I think quite often it depends on the instructor, their [sic] theoretical location. I think it depends on the course that’s being taught, and the readings that have been selected and where they’ve been taken from... and I also think it depends on the mix of students you have. (Participant 4)

All of the factors listed by Participant 4 are similarly expressed by other participants in their reflections.

Examples of Effective Gender Conversations

Several participants provided examples of effective gender conversations they had experienced in the CYC graduate program. Participant 1 recalled a lesson she characterized as grounded in practice with a focus on stereotypes and breaking them down: “I think it’s so easy for us to take on gender stereotypes because they’re so salient and so ingrained in our everyday thinking.” She continued, “so for me it’s making the invisible visible.”

Participant 3 recalled a similar exercise designed to make the “invisible visible” where the instructor,

Came to a classroom and basically just asked each of us to talk about an experience we had had with gender for better or for worse... and I got to know my classmates so much better through that exercise.... She opened it [the class] up by talking about some stories of women, and so she brought a newspaper in. She said, ‘I challenge anybody to look through this newspaper and to find an article that actually talks about women and children in a critical—by critical I don’t mean newspaper critical but like in an informative non-stereotypical manner’. We just sort of flipped through the paper.

A participant’s experience with the lesson was often connected to a faculty member’s style of instruction or abilities to facilitate and convey feelings of safety and openness. Participant 1 attempted to put words to the experience: “It’s a feeling she conveys...and it also comes out verbally. She’s a facilitator”. She continued, “and she can challenge

ideas but at the same time help you to realize that all of the ideas are valid”, concluding, “so but she definitely has an energy about her that allows that space to happen”.

Participant 4 also recalled a positive experience he had and attributed it to the skills of the instructor whose,

Gift in knowing so much about popular theatre or drama therapy or playback theater was really powerful in, putting into relief a lot of our ideas about gender and gender roles. So that was a really neat kind of classroom learning technique and opportunity that she used to really exemplify and make, kind of make the implicit very explicit.

Reflecting on what he felt characterized an effective conversation, Participant 4 said,

I think the most effective conversations have been those where students and individuals have been left to make their own individual meaning with what gender means as a word, and a concept, and a term, and when students have been left to make their own individual meaning with the descriptors of gender that are out there. So I think the most effective conversations have been to allow students to make their own meaning but also to be guided by, you know, a theoretical framework that is predicated upon intersectionality and positionality and uh how gender as a, as an identity marker intersects with many other markers too. That it's not just this little thing that floats around.

Ethics class was often noted as a place where effective gender conversations would take place. Participant 5 recalled her experience,

I mean the whole structure of that class was, I found, very effective because it really made us stop and talk about... is there something in our background that

makes us feel this way? Why are we leaning more towards this or towards that? It was already a very analytical class but with a lot of communication, and it was a very small class—there were only five women and two men, so even smaller than the other one and just very very open and the teacher, the way she engaged us in conversation, she really pushed that envelope too, like she really went deep with the conversation. So to me, I mean I found that really useful because she would never let it just sit on the surface; she would always just dig a little deeper, dig a little deeper, and really get us talk to each other and to dig a little deeper.

And I found that very useful... because there is so much safety in the classroom.

In recalling her experience in the ethics class, Participant 5 effectively illustrated a gender conversation that is reflective of what most participants found to be effective: skilled instruction, safety, a sense of openness previously demonstrated, a small classroom creating a sense of intimacy, and depth of conversation.

Examples of Ineffective Gender Conversations

Participants also took this opportunity to reflect on experiences they found less effective when discussing gender. Several participants felt that gender was often “glossed over” (Participant 1 & 5). Participant 2 felt that gender conversations were never a focus, rather, “I think we tripped into it sometimes or fell into it”, and Participant 5 felt that many opportunities to address gender issues in the child and youth care profession were lost because gender was rarely explicitly addressed, and when it was addressed gender was often introduced as a statistical variable. Participant 1 recalled a less than positive classroom experience:

That class also has an entire atmosphere of “don’t ask questions” kind of. And that’s not because questions weren’t permitted or there was an authoritative kind of ruling over the class, but it’s because the questions and answers are all sort of within the positivistic science. It’s sort of like “here’s the question and here’s the logical answer as it pertains to a data set” (laughs). Rather than let’s explore that or discuss it in a group kind of format (Participant 1).

Participant 1 has provided a valuable example of a classroom where safety was not established resulting in her feeling uncomfortable.

Safety was an important factor for many of the participants when evaluating how they had experienced gender discussions in the classroom. Participant 5 didn’t feel safety was addressed at all:

In fact, it was something I was a bit surprised. In the BA we often talked about confidentiality and safety, you know, sort of how we were going to run the classroom right from the first class, and that wasn’t done in the MA.

Safety is clearly an issue of significance for several of the participants. Safety was an aspect of discussion that they indicated was established through discussion of what constituted the safe sharing and receiving of information as well as the manner in which the professor conducted the classroom.

Types of gender conversations that participants noted as being ineffective were conversation where assumptions guided the discussion. Several participants highlighted conversations that relied on assumptions that everyone accepts binary models of gender as the norm rather than making room for gender inclusivity as ineffective (Participant 4 & 5). An example often used by participants of where these types of conversations

occurred was the statistics or quantitative research methods classes (Participant 1 & 4). Several participants (Participant 1, 3 & 5) also challenged the assumption that all CYC graduate students were capable of participating in difficult conversations,

This assumption that we're now colleagues, like there's this area that's now understood. And that's enough. Like we all understand ethics, we understand confidentiality, we already understand. You know we're all adults here and we all know how to manage a classroom and we all know how to manage discussion, yet my experience in the classroom wasn't like that. (Participant 5)

The participants clearly felt that guidance on how difficult discussions should be managed, established safety considerations, and an openness in the lesson to allow for questions and the challenging of assumptions is what would feel most effective for them.

Curriculum

Several participants addressed the CYC graduate curriculum as a whole when reflecting on classroom discussions they had found effective and ineffective.

Some of the participants in this survey seemed to feel that gender was not an explicit part of the CYC graduate curriculum and took issue with this omission: "I think that gender is like multiculturalism, like race, like special needs, like sexuality...it's one of those things that needs to be made explicitly part of the curriculum or else it just won't get addressed" (Participant 5). Participant 1 concurred and called for a more "open discussion and exploration" of gender in the classroom.

Some participants used the CYC focus on multiculturalism and diversity as a framework for how they believed gender discussions should be managed:

I think gender needs to be an awareness that we have in our everyday discussions. I mean in some areas people have really improved, I mean racism and diversity discussions are now woven into most of the course work, or at least there's an effort or an assumption that there's going to be. So I think, yes given that we're in a gendered field, it's our responsibility to discuss gender in all the coursework. (Participant 5)

Participants also expressed satisfaction with the CYC's graduate curriculum,

I would also say that child and youth care offers such a unique and wonderful opportunity to really make those discussions a priority. It has the space, the flexibility, and also the theoretical lenses to do that well. (Participant 4)

Participant 3 focused on the school's willingness to take feedback and revise curriculum as its strength: "I think that's important if the school's going to continue to develop its graduate program and to include some of the amazing critical thinkers that we have in the school." Overall, the participants expressed disappointment with the lack of gender content in the curriculum; however, despite this omission they were generally satisfied with the CYC graduate program.

Course Packages and Literature

Participants (Participants 1, 3 & 4) spoke to the importance of assigned reading in creating an environment that allowed for gender discussions. Participant 1 reflected on an assigned reading that she found to be helpful: "Gender, race and class were intersecting in the example of the intersection, and then she gave the example and tied it directly to social services and how they are provided." Participant 3 recalled another experience with readings in a course package she found to be less helpful:

And then the last two articles in that section, it was like oh yeah, oh yeah, we forgot about women and oh yeah, we forgot about the indigenous students, and so there was this really condescending article on using the medicine wheel as a way to guide your leadership, but never got discussed. And then there was this article by a woman—I'll never forget this article 'cause she referred to leadership, that's why I was like “nurturing's” the wrong word—she talked about leadership as like cultivating a garden. You know as if we're all out there in big sunhats and our Jackie O sunglasses, you know, like planting these little seeds and watering them with a dainty little watering can, just you know it was such an essentialist way of looking at gender and such a sharp division and such, like when you get it stuffed in at the end of the course pack, you know it was an afterthought.

Participant 4 expressed satisfaction with CYC literature's treatment of gender, and its reflection on the child and youth care field as a whole:

I think the child and youth care literature does things a little differently, in [that] there's definitely an acknowledgement and celebration and an honouring of the fact that not all of us occupy those very fixed gender spaces, that some of us kind of go between. Some of us cross them. Some of us stay. Some of us do subscribe to those gender stereotypes, so on a whole, I would say that the field is perhaps there and the space is being made.

Participants were also mostly satisfied with the course packages and readings, and found they were mostly helpful in addressing gender issues when they were grounded in CYC practice.

Other Opportunities

In discussing effective conversations, several participants also addressed opportunities they had been provided with as graduate students that they believed had enhanced their learning. Several participants in this study reported having the opportunity to act in an Instructional Assistant or Research Assistant capacity, and all expressed gratitude for the experience: “I can’t say enough about that space kind of sustaining me through my MA, like it was absolutely critical. So that was a super positive experience as well” (Participant 3). Participant 3 highlighted the importance of this experience in connecting self with practice and learning: “Cause you know as graduate students we’re often asked to talk about our research first and foremost and not about ourselves even though the two are often connected.”

Question 6

In an attempt to understand the experiences of graduate students in the CYC program having “gender discussions”, participants were asked the following question, “How would you describe what gender discussions in the SCYC look like?” Responses to this question were detailed and, for the most part, focused on how the participants felt gender discussions currently look in the SCYC, issues with faculty and the student body, the role of men in the program, how they would like to see gender discussed, and who they believe should run such discussions.

How a Gender Discussion Looks in the SCYC

Most of the participants felt that the topic of gender was more likely to surface through other conversations rather than a conversation or lecture specifically designed to address gender issues in child and youth care. Participant 5 felt that gender discussions

were “very tokenistic scratching the surface, we don’t talk about the things we all know.” Others felt that if the topic came up it would be discussed, but they could not recall a time a whole class was devoted to the topic: “It just comes up during other topics. Then we can discuss it, but I can’t think of a time that we spent an entire class, even just one class—three hours—dedicated to the topic” (Participant 1). Participant 4 reflected on his own experience with gender in the classroom: “You know you have ‘gender week’ and you have ‘indigenous week’ and you have ‘queer week’, and it’s kind of replaying into creating those discrete categories.” Participant 2 recalled his experience: “I don’t think, I think it was avoided, no I don’t want to say that ‘cause I don’t think it was like an obvious avoidance, I just think it was...it wasn’t pushed. I guess it wasn’t exposed.” Participant 2 continued, characterizing his experience this way:

So, yeah I think that it, it’s not an obvious... it’s kind of like when people go downtown and there’s a person that sits outside a building with a hat looking for change, and eventually that person becomes a part of the building because—it’s, like you don’t explore it. I think it’s the same thing as the discussion of gender. Another participant took issue with the fact that whether or not gender or feminism were discussed, the topic was never named,

I appreciate them not dumbing down the curriculum in any way, but at the same time, it’s like well, if you’re going to claim in your policy and your advertisements that gender is salient to what we study, then yah, why isn’t it explicitly addressed? (Participant 3)

Others (Participant 2 and 5) took exception with an issue they viewed as important to child and youth care never being discussed: “And I think the big deal for me was that the fact that it’s a gendered field was never discussed at an MA level” (Participant 5).

When answering question 6 many of the participants spoke to their own experiences as well as the experiences they felt their classmates might be having. Often gender was referred to as requiring a level of competency: “We’re just working from the assumption that everyone has a working knowledge of gender and they just simply don’t” (Participant 3). Participant 2 agreed, “some people feel way more capable”, and Participant 5 provided an example from her own experience to support this assertion:

It wasn’t until later when I was tutoring another grad student from a different cohort where she was talking about some of the theories that are really espoused in the classrooms... this depends, of course, on the teacher, so feminist theory, post-structuralist theory, post-modernist theory, and she really doesn’t agree with the postmodern/poststructuralist theory. She finds it...she has some points of view where actually I agree with. She pointed out that you know, you’re talking about deconstructing the field so you can learn from it. Well, what happens after you’ve deconstructed it to bits? What do you do with the ruins? And that it’s a very academic exercise. How does it affect the field? And that’s always been one of my criticisms, is that whenever you start talking theory within academia it becomes very elitist.... The words become very big and if you’re not part of that group, if you’re not part of that school of thought, then that in itself silences anyone else.

Participant 5's example demonstrates how content of instruction style may inadvertently create a situation where students felt silenced and uncomfortable speaking up about their lack of understanding.

In addition to competency, comfort with the discussion was also an issue addressed by participants: "It's uncomfortable right because you don't want to offend someone. It's easy to stay on a theoretical level. You can blame it on theory" (Participant 5). Participant 5 continued to reflect, "but the moment that it goes out into an area that is not comfortable, we either shut down ourselves or we shut someone else down." Participant 2 supported this statement:

It's easier to be pragmatic and (groans) in some ways to be more collaborative when we're talking from different feminist perspectives because it's a dialogue about construction of information and fact whereas when we start to talk about gender, it becomes much more personal and it can bring into the dialogue the person's lived experience, and those two things blend together. Sometimes they're not always completely separate. But I think that a gender issue is more likely to be personal and potentially more conflict[ed].

In the experiences of Participants 2 and 5, theory was used to deflect personal examinations, avoid discomfort, and protect the feelings of others.

Some participants took exception to how gender was addressed in the classroom. They felt the conversations were too theory driven:

No one ever wants to get personal because it is such a loaded issue. It's safer to stay behind a discourse of theory than it is to get personal, or if the personal stories are used, they're used to illustrate a point of oppression of a point of, you

know, 'I was passed up for a job promotion because I'm female' or that sort of thing. It's never discussed from the point of view 'well this is how I see this because I am a woman and I was socialized this way' or 'because my experiences were such and this is what I value...how do you see it?' You know, 'you may be a woman, you may be a man, how do you see it? How do you make sense of this? Where can we.... You know we've never taken that step of you and I and what we can learn from each other. (Participant 5)

Some participants felt that the focus on theory could be silencing: "And I'm sure there are a lot of people that really don't like this talk about patriarchy. They don't agree with it, so then that kind of silences their views as well, right" (Participant 5). Participant 2 felt that the "topic of feminism can sort of create a lot of fervour and a lot of energy in a room too because some people like have a reaction to it." Some of the participants expressed a difficulty with feminist theory: "I mean feminist theory is totally new to me at least I think it is, and some of it I can't figure out for myself let alone other people" (Participant 1).

Participants also felt that they would have appreciated more of a theoretical focus: "Even though we did use it as a lens in the development class, that wasn't the most prominent way we approached it" (Participant 1). They also felt that they would have liked to have seen gender addressed within a broader, more inclusive context: "My view of gender is much broader than just feminist theory. I think we need to look at gender as one of several lenses that we address the world in" (Participant 5). About feminist theory, Participant 4 said, "we haven't gone too deeply into a particular feminist theory, but we have touched on it."

Other participants felt that the resources assigned and made available to students were also silencing:

You can't overlook the course packs and the texts that are chosen... because those are the catalyst to conversation, and if they are too silencing then the conversation that you hope to have is never going to emerge anyways. (Participant 3)

The participants were able to identify several aspects of their classroom experiences that left them feeling silenced and/or desiring more from their educational experience.

Participant 1 reflected on how gender conversations in the classroom had impacted her practice: "I have started to think about it more deeply now and so I recognize...it's almost like I've taken on a bit of a new lens or I've been provided with several options, right?" She continues, "I can sort of see things in different perspectives, and I just notice things more now, about policy or how things that I do or think relate to gender."

Several participants reflected on how a homogenous student body affected the CYC program (Participant 4 & 5), and Participant 4 reflected that as a man in the program he was provided with the opportunity to experience working with women; however, he imagined some women might have concerns as a result of having fewer opportunities to work with men in the program:

So I imagine it must be tremendously scary, like if I didn't have the experience of being able to counsel a woman, well to learn how to work with a person who occupies a different gender space than me, I'd be terrified.

Men and the SCYC

The issue of men in the SCYC surfaced occasionally throughout the interviews, but became a prominent theme throughout the responses to question 6. How men experienced gender conversations was an issue for several participants. For example, Participant 5 indicated,

It was like there was this sort of pre-ordained way of speaking about gender, so often [we] would talk about the oppression of women in patriarchy. Well, I think for most men that would be a very difficult place for them to be in. Like if there is a guy in the classroom, you know, how is he going to talk about the oppression that women feel in patriarchy? What does that mean to him?

Participant 5 worried that the discussions of patriarchy and oppression would be unrelatable to her male classmates.

Participant 4 reflected on his own experience as a man in a graduate CYC classroom:

There is definitely a privileging of one gender experience of a particular phenomena, and it, it's kind of funny, because sometimes being in the classroom and, the presence of kind of, of my male voice, is sometimes not seeming to be at the table, or it's kind of because I blend in...I kind of blend in.... And that's interesting, but that's just from my experience of being in a lot of classes where I happen to be one of maybe two or three, or the only male.

Participant 4's experience was that the female experience took precedence in classroom discussions, and he had had feelings of a lack of representation of the

male experience which were compounded by the small amount of male CYC graduate students.

Recruitment and retention of men in the SCYC was of interest to several of the participants. Participant 4 felt that the lack of men in the program was limiting to female students and used the example of practicum placements to illustrate his concern: “The placement can either limit or de-limit your experience with gender diversity compounding the limitations within the school itself of what population it recruits and retains.” Opinions on recruitment differed amongst the participants. Participant 4 felt that,

The school really tries hard to welcome men into it. I mean I think that the conversation needs to start, or has started and needs to get louder, to really look at [this] ‘cause that’s going to be another tragic loss. I mean we’re going to have less and less male child and youth care practitioners with the hallmark of a child and youth care education in the field.

Participant 3 and 5 felt that questions about how to recruit men to the field of child and youth care were directly related to the societal value of child and youth care as a profession:

We’re kind of approaching this question from the wrong direction, I think. It’s not what’s wrong with our ads and posters or website that men don’t get a charge out of applying to the School of Child and Youth Care, but... who else is going to pick a job that’s so devalued? (Participant 3)

Participant 3 also reflected on the campaign to recruit men into the field of child and youth care:

What's going to be considered an appropriate male to enter the field? Well, chances are they're going to be straight, right, 'cause we still live in a homophobic society that says that men who work with children are pedophiles, right?

Ultimately, participants seemed to agree that more students needed to be consulted about recruitment, and, more specifically, there needed to be increased discussions regarding the campaign to recruit men into the program.

The Role of Faculty and Gender Discussions in the SCYC

In describing how gender discussions in the SCYC looked, most of the participants eventually reflected on the role of faculty in addressing gender issues in the SCYC. They reflected on the systemic nature of gender issues in child and youth care, and wondered how the faculty could be immune. Several of the participants reflected on how student experiences with gender discussions might relate to faculty experiences: "I bet if you brought the whole faculty together to have a discussion on gender, it would be very much like a graduate student class" (Participant 2). When pondering gender discussions, Participant 2 also questioned, "I just wonder how many of the, of the faculty have done that themselves"? Participant 4 didn't feel that a gender discussion amongst faculty was likely to happen soon:

I think, I think those conversations happen behind closed doors, you know, off the radar, because I think it means challenging the whole system that the ivory tower or academia is built upon. [I think] they think of child and youth care as a microcosm and there is a degree of heterogeneity in faculty, and there have

definitely been women in senior faculty positions and there are women in senior faculty positions... but there is some replication of other systems here.

Participant 4 was not the only participant to observe the challenges facing the SCYC faculty should they decide to address gender issues within the school.

Several participants (4 & 5) made note of the discrepancy between what they saw as a largely homogenous CYC student body and a relatively heterogeneous faculty, and directly related the issue to privilege. Participant 5 questioned, “is there male privilege in the faculty? Is there not”, and Participant 4 expanded,

I think it’s the way the academy is set up. I think those age-long patriarchal influences are very much in play, even in our forward thinking progressive open-minded niche of child and youth care. Power is held by certain folks by virtue of the privilege that’s afforded to their particular gender location. So to me it is, it is fascinating that that plays out. And I don’t know if there’s conversations on that or even if that’s acknowledged, or even if that’s an issue, but to me, it’s fascinating that our students are very homogenous, yet when it comes to those in positions of power or who are instructing, or who are making academic decisions, the picture of that ratio changes demonstratively.

Several participants (Participant 3 and 4) reflected on how establishing relationships with faculty members provided them with the opportunity to pursue an interest in gender and child and youth care, and other participants (Participant 4 and 5) also noted that camaraderie among faculty and graduate students often played itself out along gender lines.

How Gender Conversations in the SCYC Should Look

Participants 3 and 4 felt there was a move toward more inclusiveness in the SCYC curriculum, and noted that they sensed students as well as faculty felt bound by the current course allotment:

I think there's a shift happening. There's a recognition that diversity and being informed about diversity is a huge part of ethical and relational-wise practice and my hope is that shift continues, because to me it's fascinating which courses...you have qualitative and quantitative stats, they're core mandatory courses. You have to know how to do your regression analysis or code a qualitative document, but yet you're not expected to have to know what intersectionality is or what oppression and privilege are. You know, to me there needs to be more deliberateness, I think, and my hope is that shift is happening. (Participant 4)

The participants contemplated a more diverse curriculum and the opportunity to challenge the CYC curriculum status quo with enthusiasm. More learning opportunities in the form of coursework, literature, on-line discussions and conferences were advocated by the participants. Whether year long gender or diversity courses should be offered was mulled over by a few:

Yeah, I think that it comes a little bit back to diversity and I think it should be a core course. All of us [should] take diversity... and look at how we construct that from different theoretical orientations, including the feminist orientation, and that we need to have a paper, I think, we have to look at what is the relevance of gender to the way we think we're going to proceed with our practice, because each of us are going to proceed with our practice in different ways. Some of us

are Outward Bound adventure-type people, some of us are doing what I do, some people work and so on... If we would get to share those papers, those topics, in an open class discussion about what my paper's about [and the other students' papers are about] and this is how gender is related to my practice [that would be great] (Participant 2).

But whether or not there was an appetite for more courses was also questioned.

Participant 4 observed, "I mean how many students would sign up for a year long course on diversity. You know given that there's so few numbers in the class I'm currently talking... maybe not many." Participant 2 proposed a gender and feminism course taught with a multi-disciplinary perspective that includes students in nursing, clinical psychology, and education as well as CYC students.

Safety was also an issue that presented itself throughout the interviews, and it was identified here, as well, as a key component to successful gender discussions:

I think it would be, I think a huge part of that picture would be safety. So I think as with any conversation about identity markers, there's huge potential for discomfort and the unearthing of scripts we've held close to us for many years, that perhaps we haven't shed any light on for a long time and no one's seen them, and we've hidden them even from ourselves. So I don't think a conversation about gender, I mean it seems like something that trips off your tongue. It's like "oh let's talk about gender today" it's not...I don't think it's as easy as that. I think the conditions need to be set within that learning environment amongst the learners, the co-learners, and also the instructor. For safety, I think that discussion needs to be held in an ambiance that there's a safety that's been

created, expectations that have been created that acknowledge that the conversation might become conflictual or prickly or unpleasant or unhappy or oppressive. But to name that and to accept that, that would probably be part of the process. So I think specifically conversations around gender have to be done with strategic deliberateness. They have to be done... but deliberately; they have to be deliberate and intentional conversations. I think that has to do with the fact that child and youth care has such a unique gender mix in some ways. I mean maybe one could find this in other disciplines, but I think child and youth care bears the responsibility to—because that's what we're expected to do with our clients—we're meant to learn how to initiate therapeutic relationships that are safe. We have to create opportunities and possibilities for difficult conversations, so in the classroom I think these expectations needs [sic] to also be carried out.

(Participant 4)

The specificity of Participant 4's description of how and why safety should be established in a CYC classroom is helpful to those wanting to ensure a sense of safety to CYC learners.

The participants provided other several concrete examples of how they would like to see gender issues presented in the classroom. Participant 2 felt that all gender discussions should,

Keep true to a CYC frame of reference of learning and anchor it in the ecological approach and a self-awareness funnel.... So we should have focused discussions about gender from those two constructs. And I would also say that that

conversation should also be informed by the principles of the competencies which have been identified in the Certification Project.

By beginning with these familiar points of reference, Participant 2 felt the conversation about gender and feminism would be anchored, allowing students to “discern the difference and also to internalize them within the practice of the profession.”

Several other suggestions for effective gender discussions were made, including observing a dialogue between a male and female faculty member discussing the realities of the profession as a potentially enlightening experience (Participant 5), emphasizing the importance of gender in the curriculum and creating space to discuss gender (Participant 1 & 5), and allowing alternative avenues to reflect on the role of gender in child and youth care, such as assignments and relationships with faculty (Participant 3).

In concert with how gender conversations should look, participants were also clear on who should teach or facilitate such discussions. Participant 1 provided two examples of a gender discussions she experienced in the CYC program. The first she described as safe and inclusive:

When I say safe I mean there was an atmosphere of equality and no matter how much you know, you don't know. There's so many things you don't know. So it was sort of rely on the same level of inquiry and curiosity rather than...at the same time realizing that the [instructor's] this wonderful source of information and experience.

The instructor's style of teaching in this example was described by Participant 1 as more facilitative and informative rather than authoritative. In contrast, Participant 1 reflected on an experience she felt was lacking in safety and comfort:

And that was I think a combination of things. The material was new and I guess there just wasn't an explicit provision of a safety net, we were just kind of thrown into material and we were given uh we were given space to play with it and be safe with it, but weren't told that we had that and didn't and somehow that feeling wasn't conveyed until later on in the course.

Ultimately, participants seemed to agree that for an effective gender conversation to occur, the instructor needed to facilitate rather than teach, possess knowledge without perpetuating an expert dynamic, maintain a comfortable and open environment, be skilled at facilitation, and most importantly be someone who had reflected on the importance of the issues to self and practice for him or herself.

Question 7

Toward the end of each of the first interviews, participants were asked to reflect on what percentage of the curriculum they believed focused on gender. Specifically, the question asked was, "Off the top of your head, what percentage of the curriculum, including instruction, course work, and materials focused on the issue of gender?" All of the participants required some time to formulate their responses, and then generally answered first with a numerical percentage, followed by a clarification for their answer, and then finished with some thoughts on what percentage they believe would best enhance the graduate child and youth care learning experience.

Participant responses to the question of what percentage of the curriculum, including instruction, course work, and materials, focused on the issue of gender ranged significantly, from 0% and 0.1% (Participant 2 & 1) as the lowest percentages provided. Participant 3 felt that by including direct and indirect references to gender 10% was

probable. Participant 5 felt that her response of 20% was generous, and was the result of what she felt was a very general description of what would qualify as a gender discussion. Participant 4 expressed the highest percentage at 30-40% and felt this number was reflective of “diversity conversations period, let alone gender diversity.”

In clarifying the reasons for their chosen percentages, several participants (Participants 4 & 5) noted that they believed that gender should be woven into the curriculum as a whole: “It should be one of the lenses we are looking through and analyzing things through...if we look at everything through the multi-cultural lens, well then let’s look at the gender lens too” (Participant 5). Participant 5 expressed a frustration with what she saw as the School of Child and Youth Care’s inability to focus on more than one issue at a time:

But it seems, people aren’t able to discuss more than one thing at a time. I don’t know, it’s like the big thing now is multiculturalism, and that’s great and I’m not saying anything against it. I think that we still have a long ways to go, you know, towards having a truly multi-cultural education. But we also need to...it shouldn’t be multiculturalism at the exclusion of and let me re-word that ...it shouldn’t be multiculturalism at the expense of not talking about other things. I wouldn’t say gender is excluded. It’s never excluded, it’s just never addressed, or rarely ever addressed.

Participants expressed a strong desire to have gender more substantially incorporated into their educational experience, and currently they felt the CYC graduate program wasn’t meeting their needs in this regard:

Those discussions just don't happen, and I think that we're only going to...students are only going to feel safe having those discussions if it's included in the curriculum, if it's encouraged in the classroom, and managed properly and carefully so that it's done in a respectful and inclusive manner that we all learn from and grow from. (Participant 5)

The participants felt these gender discussions were integral to the development of their practice. Participant 4 reflected on a practice issue related to gender:

So there's clinical skills, there's foundational skills of what it's like to start, initiate, retain, close therapeutic relationships. Those active listening skills are done in such an artificial way that they're first—students' first—exposure to the skills are in such a homogenous group that interfacing with other genders or different genders isn't part of the curriculum because of the demographic that's attracted to the field and are in the field, and who are accepted.

Participant 4 is concerned that when students are provided with the opportunity to practice therapeutic skills in a classroom setting with each other, the primarily female student body is limited to primarily only females to practice with.

Several participants also noted what they believed was a disconnect in the lack of gender discussions they experienced and their experience with child and youth care as a “gendered profession” (Participant 2 & 5). Participant 2 remarked, “seeing that 80% of the work force of CYC professionals is female led by mostly males—which is weird—I think it should probably be 10 or 15%.” Participant 2 also noted that he had never seen the issue of gender presented on a course syllabus as an example of how gender is not a focus of the CYC graduate program.

Although most participants felt more gender content was important, some participants did feel that there had been an effort to increase the focus on gender, especially at the undergraduate level (Participant 3 & 4). They felt there was movement toward including gender as well as other identity markers throughout the program (Participant 4).

The participants were asked to reflect on what they thought would be an ideal percentage of focus on gender in the CYC curriculum, and all felt more of a focus on gender issues was important. Several participants questioned the privileging of gender over other identity markers (Participant 3 & 4). One participant felt that 50% was ideal (Participant 3); one participant advocated for gender receiving equal weight with other important themes in CYC (Participant 1); and other participants felt that gender should simply be embedded in every class (Participant 4 & 5), with an increase focus on issues of ethics (Participant 2), a look at making diversity classes mandatory (Participant 4), including more critical theory (Participant 3), and introducing issues of gender into statistic and research methodology classes (Participant 3 & 4).

CHAPTER 5 - Discussion

This study provided me, as the researcher, and the participants with an opportunity to explore the question, “How do SCYC graduate students experience gender discussions in the classroom?” Gender issues have been identified as important to the School of Child and Youth Care by SCYC graduate student participants. The opinions of the participants in this survey were remarkably similar at times, reflective of my own experiences, and reminiscent of the literature in understanding gender and how it is constructed and lived.

The purpose of this research was to explore how CYC graduate students experience gender conversations in the classroom. Through their reflections, the participants provided me with an opportunity to establish an illustration of that collective experience. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that gender was an emotionally charged issue whose meaning was often grounded in the experiences of the participants. For some participants the gender discussion experiences were positive and exciting (Participant 1 & 4); however, for most of the participants, their experiences were characterized by a sense of isolation, hesitancy, and feeling silenced (Participant 1, 3, 4 & 5). Participant 3 asked, “how is it that when you talk about gender, you often feel like the only voice in the room.” The sense of feeling silenced seemed exacerbated by the fact that gender conversations were rarely made explicit in the classroom (Participant 1, 3, 4 & 5).

Despite concerns that gender conversations were rarely explicit or even planned, the participants didn't seem to feel that the conversations were purposefully avoided; instead, they felt the conversations were simply overlooked (Participant 1, 2, 3 & 5).

When conversations about gender did occur, participants reported feeling that they were something that had been “tripped” into or “glossed” over, rather than being deliberately planned discussions. Some participants reported feeling silenced by a sense that “gender had kind of been dealt with” (Participant 1, 3 & 5), and others identified a feeling of hesitancy about proposing the gender issue because “nobody wants to be that guy to bring it up” (Participant 3). Others identified assumptions about how others make meaning with gender (Participant 4 & 5), and a student’s capability to discuss gender at a graduate level as also being silencing (Participant 2 & 5). Being the only male or one of few males in the classroom was identified as a silencing experience: “Often there’s a silence around it like... the issue of gender and practice is under the surface of... the conversations. It’s palpable... it’s there, but it’s not being actively discussed or deconstructed...” (Participant 4). One male participant reported feeling hesitant to broach subjects related to being male for fear of “further perpetrating or perpetuating, you know, male dominance and patriarchy by advocating for the male experience” (Participant 4).

Some participants also spoke to their frustration (Participant 1 & 3) and the discomfort (Participant 5) they felt with the lack of gender analysis they experienced in the program. Participants reflected on their desire to discuss gender and practice as well as the relationship between patriarchy, child and youth care work, and their disappointment that these needs weren’t met.

Several of the participants related their experiences in the classroom to their practice experiences and wished that the program was more reflective of the client issues encountered in the field (Participant 2). Other participants spoke to the vulnerability to

false accusations and frustration male practitioners may feel when dealing with clients and employers (Participant 4 & 5). Participant 4 reflected on having to be both “humble and open to the way my gender is perceived” as well as being identified as a potentially advantageous source of strength should restraints be required for child clients depending on his workplace. Participants 4 & 5 identified client load (who male practitioners are allowed to treat) as a source of frustration for male practitioners and their female colleagues. They wished these issues had been dealt with in the classroom.

Being one of few males in the CYC program was also identified as potentially discomfoting by several participants (Participant 4 & 5); however, Participant 4 also reflected on his growing awareness of the power and privilege of being male and felt that his experiences in the CYC program were responsible for this growth. With his appreciation for his growing awareness in mind, Participant 4 noted, “there is definitely a privileging of one’s gender experience.”

Safety was on the mind of several participants who reported situations where they simply did not feel safe broaching any subject related to gender (Participant 1 & 5). Participant 5 recalled gender conversations that she felt were left unresolved: “It was kind of left to us to debrief. Kind of left with us to deal with it.” Elements that the participants identified as contributing to the level of emotional safety in the classroom included the instructor; the instructor’s emphasis on safety, confidentiality and openness to the experience of students; the course; the assigned readings; the topic of discussion; and the other students in the classroom. Several participants noted that during classroom discussions students seem to feel more comfortable discussing theory versus speaking to their personal experience (Participant 2 & 5). Despite this, they felt that feminist theory

had the potential to be silencing, difficult, and divisive (Participant 1, 2 & 5) Several participants also reported feeling that gender conversations in the CYC classroom lacked depth, were “tokenistic”, and often remained untouched despite the interests of students (Participant 1, 3 & 5).

Through the course of the survey, participants were provided with the opportunity to share how they define gender. Some of the participants defined gender using a binary model (Participant 1 & 2) and others used performativity and a social construction model to define gender (Participant 3, 4 & 5). Each participant acknowledged that gender is complicated by how we and others choose to make meaning with gender, and issues such as sexual identity, gender roles, biology, and societal expectations are important in understanding gender as both a concept and an experience. I believe the following quote fairly represents the feelings of the participants in this research study:

A sophisticated understanding of gender as an analytical tool can enable feminist scholars to identify important issues pertaining to social institutions, relations, and symbols, as well as individual identities, which can be investigated within particular cultures and subcultures at particular historical moments. Developing conceptual distinctions that differentiate sex, sexuality, sexual identity, gender identity, gender role, and gender role identity can enable feminist scholars to deploy gender as an analytical device, illuminating power relations and engaging questions that confound the natural attitude, thereby contributing to progressive feminist goals. (Hawkesworth, 2006, p. 173)

For the participants of this study, discussing gender may have satisfied a personal need; however, they also saw it as integral to their ability to support the gender-based needs of clients as well as successfully manage a child and youth care practice.

Messerschmidt (1997) presents that “gender, race, and class are accomplished systematically, not imposed on people or settled beforehand, and never static or finished products. Rather people construct gender, race, and class in specific situations” (p. 4). The experiences of my participants seem to illustrate his claims. Deconstructing gender was a discussion of interest to several of the participants. Cornwall (1997) discusses the deconstruction of gender in this way: “The principle of taking apart taken-for-granted assumptions to explore the contradictions on which they are based—is equally valuable. Deconstructing the category ‘woman’ or ‘man’ reveals a host of assumptions, ideas and judgments, that can be understood in terms of people’s experience and their cultural context” (p. 10). Participants felt deconstruction was both professionally and personally beneficial.

While binary models of gender are challenged and critiqued throughout this thesis (by the author when examining gender definitions at the beginning of this paper, and by many of the participants throughout the discussion section), binary models are heavily relied on when gender is referenced or discussed outside of theory. I believe there are several reasons for this. First, much of the Results section relies on the participant’s own words, and they used binary models when reflecting on their experiences. An example of this lays in Question 8. In question 8, participants were asked, “How do you socially locate?” In their responses to previous questions, participants spoke to their conflicts with binary models and the personal constraints they found with binary models of gender;

however, all of these participants then elected to self-identify as female or male in Question 8. This may have occurred because that is, in fact, how the participants identified; however, it may also have been that within the context of this researcher-participant relationship conducted through telephone interview, this is what the participants felt was the safest response. Second, I believe that in my desire to provide an open opportunity to identify gender, I may have inadvertently conveyed the sense that only a binary understanding of male and female is what I was interested in hearing. I rarely asked participants to expand on how they made meaning with gender, but instead chose a companionable silence to encourage more reflections on an issue with as little direction from me as possible. In retrospect, because these interviews were done over the telephone, this silence may have been more intimidating than welcoming to participants interested in exploring their gender identity. Finally, I believe our collective reliance on the binary model is a reflection of habitual use and comfort as well as a demonstration of the lack of language we possess around how to articulate how else gender may feel or present. The reality is that although gender theories may be explored passionately in the classroom, in our professional lives we are rarely afforded the opportunity to explore gender outside of these binary models. Ideally, as more Child and Youth Care students gain confidence in challenging binary gender models in the classroom, we will see that reflected in the workplace. I believe that any future research around the issue of how gender is experienced in the classroom should include further explorations around how students make meaning with gender, how they articulate this meaning, and what this looks like in their personal, professional, and scholarly lives.

The participants unanimously agreed that gender is important to child and youth

care learning and practice; however, they were careful not to privilege gender over the other ways in which we identify. The participants seemed interested in creating equal consideration of and opportunities for gender conversations. They felt that gender was relevant and should be introduced as one of the many theoretical lenses students apply to child and youth care learning and practice. This is also found in the research.

Several of the participants reflected on how they satisfied their own gender learning goals by establishing relationships with like-minded professors. Mentoring was a solution used and subsequently proposed by several participants in this study. Hulbert defines mentoring as “a professionally centered relationship between two individuals, in which the more experienced individual guides, advises, and assists the career of the less experienced, often younger protégé” (Hulbert, 1994, p. 250). In her article on gender patterns and on faculty-student relationships, Hulbert (1994) found that “same gender faculty-student advising/mentoring relationships seem most comfortable for both faculty and students and are, therefore, most likely to occur” (p. 257), and this was a pattern remarked on by several participants (Participant 4 & 5). Ideally, a mentorship arrangement would be mutually beneficial as research has found that “women faculty members feel obligated to advise a disproportionate share of students, conduct research that addresses gender relations, and perform ‘emotional work’ that provides emotional support to colleagues and students, thus reinforcing traditional feminine roles” (Lester, 2008, p. 278). Several of the participants who spoke to the benefits of mentoring in their graduate experience saw these relationships as a way of accessing the feminist content they felt was missing from the curriculum (Participant 1, 3 & 5). These women saw an opportunity to work with faculty members who were publishing on subjects that were not

necessarily explored in the classroom, and they felt mentorship in the form of a research assistant, instructional assistant, or thesis supervisor-student relationship would support their learning and growth as practitioners. In my own experience, I endeavoured to work with faculty members whose research was both interesting, reflective of my interests in gender and child and youth care, and who were respected for their contributions to child and youth care literature. Like the participants in this study, I saw mentorship as the way I met my need to explore gender within a child and youth care framework.

The role of men in CYC practice was an issue that surfaced throughout most of the interviews. Several of the participants reflected on the role men play in agencies as co-workers and therapists. Participant 4 shared his difficulties reconciling the expectations of a man in the CYC field with his therapeutic approach and the challenges he met trying to address what was expected of him by clients and co-workers while also trying to honour his own needs, and the research reflects his struggle. In a study of men, masculinity, and gender, Cornwall found that “not all men conform to the ‘hegemonic’ version; those who do not may find themselves disadvantaged, and even discriminated against” (1997, p. 11). Other theorists have also explored the tension that some male caregivers experience “because of the lack of fit between the hegemonic ideal and the caregiver role” (Campbell & Carroll, 2007, p. 495), and some research has shown that “women, even feminist women who verbally reject the behaviours and traits that define hegemonic masculinity, nevertheless find it difficult to form relationships with men who do not conform to that hegemonic ideal” (Campbell & Carroll, 2007, p. 505). Despite this, several participants (Participant 3 & 4) saw studying child and youth as an act of resistance against gender-based expectations.

A related issue that seemed salient to the participants of this study was the issue of men in CYC practice and the recruitment of men into the SCYC. One participant (Participant 4) called for more focus on recruiting men into the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria, while two other participants (Participant 3 & 5) questioned the reasons for male recruitment, believing that the lack of societal value for child and youth care work, not recruitment of men, should be the true focus. When one considers the data, the concern over recruitment becomes obvious. A desire to recruit men into the field appears beneficial. Additional men will help to address the silencing aspect of being the only voice in the room or the only identified male, and male practitioners are important to child and youth care clients. Yet when considering the issue from the point of view of the participants who spoke to the power dynamics they were observing, recruitment of more men into the field before power differentials both in the SCYC and the field have been addressed may seem off-putting. Despite differing opinions, participants agreed that more student consultation is needed regarding recruitment strategies.

After analyzing the data and considering my secondary question—Do SCYC graduate students experience gender discussions as feminist discussions in the classroom? (a question I asked myself after my own classroom experience discussing gender)—I believe the answer to this query is both a yes and no. Participant 5 suggested that gender was only explicitly discussed within the context of feminist theory and felt that there was an assumption that gender and feminism were the same issue: “I guess a lot of it too is, if you’re going to talk gender then you’re a feminist.” For some participants (Participant 3 & 4), gender and feminism did seem positively connected. For example, Participant 3

wondered how the topics of feminism and gender could be separated. Participants who did make the effort to qualify “feminist” from “gender” in their responses were asked to examine how they differentiated between the two. Participant 1 felt that feminist theory is something that can be applied to any discussion: “It doesn’t have to be about gender whereas a gender discussion is a very explicit forum for talking about gender, sex, and identity. So that’s how I would make the distinction.” Participant 2 also differentiated gender discussions from feminist discussions, providing examples of how he establishes the difference:

I think the content difference between a feminist dialogue and a gender dialogue is, a feminist dialogue, as I experience it, is more about a theoretical construct like an ethical position. So a feminist dialogue would look at power dynamics, would look at the way in which we construct knowledge, would look at the way in which there’s the relational kind of connection between information gathering, sharing, and dialogue. So it’s more of a construct, and the way in which you relate to all of your thinking around what is fact. I guess. When I think about gender dialogue, I think more practical[ly] about developmental considerations. I think about roles within society and community, and familial kinds of aspects....

Participant 2 saw feminism as being theory driven and gender as being grounded in practice. He seemed to see a value to CYC practice in both discussions and did not seem to believe that the issues of gender and feminism needed to be considered together.

Four of the five participants (Participant 1, 2, 3 & 4) took the time to speak to what this research project meant to them. All four expressed the belief that the study was timely and important to the discipline of Child and Youth Care at UVic, and several

participants (Participant 3 & 4) welcomed the opportunity to discuss gender and child and youth care: “It’s a conversation that I have carried inside me for so long” (Participant 4). Participant 3 reflected on the mixed feelings she had regarding the design of this study. She noted that despite her excitement, she felt some concern about the need to censor herself in order to avoid revealing her identity: “I think people who work around issues, especially around issues of race and gender and oppression, I think they have to walk a really fine line in child and youth care.” Despite this feeling, she was disappointed that the conversations had to be anonymous. Participants 1 and 2 felt that the information derived from the interviews had the potential of providing important information that may contribute to the enrichment of the School of Child and Youth Care through the examination of the role of gender in the SCYC.

Child and Youth Care students are loyal to their chosen discipline, and the participants in this study participated with the hopes of illuminating and providing opportunities for the positive advancement of the curriculum. They appreciated that this research project was supported by CYC faculty members (Participants 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5), and embraced the school’s willingness to accept feedback and revisit their curriculum (Participant 3). As a graduate program they identified the hallmarks of the CYC program as what keeps them engaged in CYC learning (Participant 3 & 4). Students are excited by the direction and future of the SCYC:

I think for myself being able to develop as a feminist practitioner in a way that brings gender awareness to a client in a non-threatening but equally challenging manner, and so-we can talk about social location, we can talk about gender and issues of race for example, in a graduate seminar but I don’t think the skills are

then communicated to them, relay that sort of way of viewing the world.

(Participant 3)

Like the participants in this study, I too appreciate the unique qualities of the CYC graduate program. I believe my desire to participate in the construction of quality child and youth care specific education is demonstrated in my work. The question “How do child and youth care students experience gender in the classroom” was conceived out of my desire to have safe yet challenging gender conversations with my classmates, individuals who are in the same field as me and who share a common value. The ability to design a research study so directly related to child and youth care learning was empowering, and I feel the reflections of the participants of this study will be beneficial in reviewing how gender discussions are approached in the CYC graduate program. The participants of this research study enthusiastically endorsed the inclusion of more gender-based content in the SCYC graduate curriculum. Participants agreed that the topic was relevant and saw such discussions as benefiting their practices as well as strengthening the profession of child and youth care through the examination of issues many identified as being directly related to the fact that there are more women in the field than men. Given the support of the participants for more gender content, I believe that the SCYC could take measures to increase the content in a variety of ways proposed by the participants, and I believe the experiences of my participants lend themselves to several recommendations regarding gender and the Child and Youth Care graduate program.

First, although there is some literature that speaks to how students experience gender discussions in Women’s studies and cross-disciplinary classrooms (Maher & Thompson Tetreault, 1994; Moore, 1997; Webber, 2005), there is very little literature that

specifically reflects on the experiences of Child and Youth Care students. More support of research on the role of gender in child and youth care practice and learning would be beneficial in supporting the experiences of future CYC students as well as contributing to child and youth care literature that reflected their experiences and would enhance their knowledge of child and youth care.

Second, an examination of how related disciplines (Nursing, Social Work) address gender issues in their own discipline might be helpful in addressing the concerns of CYC students, as these were the disciplines identified by participants as being potentially valuable based on how they address gender issues within their own discipline.

Third, the participants in this research project indicated a universal desire to see more gender content within the program; therefore, finding opportunities to increase gender content throughout the program is recommended. An increase in instructional time devoted to the issue of gender and child and youth care also seems warranted, and participants spoke to the relational manner in which they would like this approached. Students requested more meaningful materials and assignments related to the issue of gender. They were interested in sharing their experiences with their classmates, but they also expressed an interest in exploring gender theoretically and challenging the manner in which gender is sometimes presented currently (i.e. quantitative research methods courses). Some examples of gender content that the participants identified as effective and desired included lessons “grounded in practice” (Participant 1), an examination of stereotypes and making the “invisible visible” (Participant 1 & 3), as well as innovative classroom techniques that allow students to make their own meaning with the theories that are being presented (Participant 4). The participants also indicated a strong interest

in exploring gender content that introduced a variety of identities, including, queer, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, and gender spectrum issues. Gender content that was deemed effective was also directly related by the participants to the skills of the instructor. They identified an effective instructor as someone who was able to present challenging material, but also allowed for an environment in which students could make their own meaning with the material. The instructor also creates an environment where students are guided by the curriculum and directed by the theory, but given the space to integrate what is being presented into their own experiences. For example, in discussing gender theory students might be asked to research and present gender theories that resonate with them. Alternatively, after the presentation of gender theories, students might be asked to reflect on how these theories might apply to self and others in their personal and professional experiences.

Fourth, by supporting the creation of a new elective with a focus on gender, feminism, and child and youth care, students will be able to explore their interest in the relationship between gender and child and youth care.

Fifth, I believe a greater degree of consultation with current CYC students regarding recruitment strategies would be advantageous in both targeting desired population groups (i.e. men) and alleviating the concerns of students who are uncomfortable with current recruitment strategies.

Finally, most of the participants in this study reflected on their roles as research assistants and instructional assistants as allowing them to explore interests they did not feel were represented in the curriculum. The participants positively reflected on how they used their roles as instructional assistants, research assistants, and practicum

positions as a means of exploring their interest in gender. Knowing this, an effort to increase opportunities for students who are interested in exploring topics they feel are marginalized seems appropriate, and an increase of such opportunities would be desirable in meeting the needs of CYC graduate students interested in exploring a variety of topics related to child and youth care.

In asking participants how they experienced gender conversations, I believe I was able to highlight an area in the curriculum that all of the participants felt was lacking. With gender not being overtly discussed or presented as important to the CYC graduate curriculum students, gender has become “implicit”, an underlying factor students were hesitant to broach, and which they rarely found in their readings or classroom lessons. Through our conversation, the participants conveyed an enthusiastic desire to see more gender conversations in the classroom and more gender content in the curriculum. The participants identified an increase in such discussions as beneficial to their practice and important to child and youth care. Ultimately, the experiences explored throughout this research support a thoughtful increase of gender into the graduate child and youth care curriculum introduced through instruction, invitation to discussion, and literature.

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Appendix A

(To be copied on SCYC letterhead)

Dear SCYC Graduate Student,

I would like to invite you to participate in a study entitled “**How do School of Child and Youth Care Graduate Students Experience Gender Discussions in the Classroom**”.

This study is being conducted by SCYC graduate student Tanya Druskee under the supervision of Dr. Sibylle Artz, and it is being conducted in accordance with the requirements for completion of a Masters degree in Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria.

The purpose of this research study is to explore how SCYC graduate students experience gender discussions in the classroom. Participants will be asked to reflect on their personal experiences with gender discussions in the classroom and how gender matters to them. This research has the potential of informing CYC undergraduate and graduate curriculum and program design. This research will also be a contribution to CYC literature as the research will be grounded in CYC theories and programming with the purpose of informing CYC learning for self-awareness and practice.

You are being asked to participate in the research because you are a current or past graduate student of the School of Child and Youth Care, and your experiences as such are directly related to the research in question. Your participation is voluntary, and our relationship as MA Child and Youth Care students in no way obliges you to participate in this study.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include an initial telephone interview taking approximately 45-60 minutes, and a follow up telephone interview taking approximately 30-45 minutes. The researcher will incur all costs for postage and long distance telephone calls. Telephone interviews will be recorded and transcribed. All interviews will take place at a time and date selected by participants for convenience and comfort.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without consequence or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be destroyed at your request or used, in part, with your consultation and permission.

Your anonymity and confidentiality, as well as the confidentiality of the data, will be protected throughout the entire duration of this study. SCYC will not be privy to information identifying participants. All data pertaining to this research will be secured in a locked filing cabinet and a password protected computer. Data will only be available to the researcher, Tanya Druskee. All data presented in the final report of will not

contain any identifying factors. Further, all information and data collected for this research will be destroyed once approval of Tanya Druskee's thesis, by her supervising committee, has been obtained

The results of this research will be recorded in Tanya Druskee's research, and shared with the University of Victoria Graduate Council, Tanya's supervising committee, and anyone person who may attend her thesis defense.

If you have any questions or concerns, at any time, about this research, please contact Tanya by telephone (250) 374-8855 or by email tdruskee@uvic.ca. You may also contact Tanya's committee supervisor, Dr. Sibylle Artz by telephone (250) 721-6472 or by email sartz@uvic.ca. You may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria by phone (250) 472-4545 or by email ethics@uvic.ca.

If you would like to participate in this research, please sign and complete the consent in full, and return the signed document to Tanya Druskee in the stamped envelope provided. Your signature indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation, and you have had any outstanding questions or concerns answered by the researcher. Should more than 6 respondents volunteer to participate in this research study, Tanya will select a random sample of 3 female and 3 male participants. Selected respondents will be contacted by telephone or email to confirm participation, address outstanding questions, and arrange interview dates and times. Those respondents who are not selected as part of the random sample are thanked in advance for their interest in this study.

Thank you for your interest, and potential participation in this research.

Respectfully,

Tanya Druskee

SCYC MA Graduate Student

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Name of Participant | Signature | Date |

This consent form will be retained by the researcher, and you will receive a copy by mail.

Phone: (____) _____

Email: _____

Appendix B

Dear CYC Graduate Community,

I am a distance CYC graduate student currently seeking 6 current or past CYC graduate students to participate in a research project that will contribute to my thesis requirement for graduation. The project is titled "**How do School of Child and Youth Care Graduate Students Experience Gender Discussions in the Classroom**". The letter of information and consent is attached. If you are interested and/or have any questions please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,

Tanya Druskee

tdruskee@uvic.ca

Appendix C

Hello,

I have received your signed consent form. Thank you.

I would like to schedule the telephone interviews at your convenience. I am available at any time (except between 6pm-8pm) beginning on Saturday, February 16. I am hoping to complete the interviews by Friday, February 29, 2008.

Our first interview should take approximately 45-60 minutes.

Our second interview should take approximately 30-45 minutes.

I look forward to scheduling the dates and times that work best for you. Please email me a few convenient times as well as the number you would like to be reached at.

I look forward to our interviews.

Tanya

Appendix D

Participant Matrix

| Participant | Participant 1 | Participant 2 | Participant 3 | Participant 4 | Participant 5 |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Gender | Identify as | Identify as | Identify as | Identify as | Identify as |
| Identity | female | male | female | male | female |
| Graduate | Current | Current | Current | Current | Current |
| Student | | | | | |
| Status | | | | | |

Appendix E

- Hello
 - Interview purpose
 - Recorded and transcribed
 - Review consent
 - 2nd interview
-

Interview Script

1. Can you remember a time gender was discussed as part of your Child and Youth Care practice curriculum? Can you tell me about that experience?
2. Can you tell me what significance gender holds for you in your life (academic, professional, personal)?
3. How do you think your feelings about gender are similar/different to those of your fellow students? Faculty? Program?
4. Do you think gender discussions are relevant to CYC practice?
5. Is there any aspect of how gender is discussed that you found effective? Is there something that you thought could have been done better?

6. How would you describe what a “gender discussion” in the SCYC looks like?

7. Off the top of your head, what percentage of the curriculum (including instruction, course work, materials) focused on the issue of gender?

8. How do SCYC students socially locate?