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*"It's only right that you should play the way you feel it":  
Examining the Fleeting Emotions of Preservice Teachers'  
Navigation of Critical Historical Inquiry*

MICHAEL JOSEPH

*The University of Texas at Austin*

MATHEW BAKER

*The University of Texas at Austin*

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## **“It's only right that you should play the way you feel it”: Examining the Fleeting Emotions of Preservice Teachers' Navigation of Critical Historical Inquiry**

MICHAEL JOSEPH  
The University of Texas at Austin

MATHEW BAKER  
The University of Texas at Austin

### **Introduction**

As major 2020 events like the Black Lives Matter movement and the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have shown, *all* educators must examine the ways in which they teach, not simply from a curricular framework, but with awareness of the emotional nuances that influence their students as well as them as educators. Scrolling through their social media feeds and watching television, millions of students across the United States have seen how Black Lives Matter protest marches have stoked political change and challenged officials and leaders to rethink the nature of policing. Months of learning online using platforms such as Zoom have not only highlighted the value of physical interactions within classroom spaces, but also the troubling emotional side effects of an all-digital education (i.e., depression, anxiety, etc.) (Medina, 2021; Taboada, 2020; Thakur, 2020). Sheppard et al. (2015) assert the field of social studies has been curious about the role of emotion within curricular and pedagogical discourses, yet there remain opportunities to expand the literature. Justice-oriented educators believe that social studies should open windows for students to hear diverse perspectives and grow in their civic-mindedness to become more active and socially-just participants in the communities they inhabit (Banks, 2014; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Gutmann, 1994; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). This requires examining and incorporating emotional aspects into teaching practices and should be a central tenant in pre- and in-service teacher pedagogical endeavors.

Reidel and Salinas (2011) support this by positing that positioning emotions as an asset to learning about diverse perspectives "can help students and teachers move out of their comfort zones and begin the hard work of re-examining ideas, values, and beliefs presumed to be common sense" (p. 8). The "common sense" that Reidel and Salinas (2011) mention can be seen in the dominant narratives that infest social studies curricula, pedagogy, and practices. These dominant narratives often present simplistic, nationalistically progressive, and white male-framed histories as means to fashion a "common sense" (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Epstein, 2009; Santiago, 2019). Due to political, social, and economic forces in and out of educational spaces, the stories and voices of historically marginalized communities have remained truncated or muted, limiting the opportunities for teachers and students to grow in the understandings necessary to flourish in diverse linguistic, racial, cultural, and gendered societies (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Trouillot, 1995; Tyack, 1974). Currently, the social studies field has seen a rejuvenated attack by conservative-leaning institutions on Critical Race Theory and other entities that challenge hegemonic and assimilationist logic (Chute & Méndez, 2021; Lopez, 2021; Sawchuk, 2021). These brazen attempts through legislation and lawsuits look to silence historically marginalized voices and promote a singular, "unified" history that does little to account for the diverse racial, social, political, and gendered dynamics of the United States. In social studies teaching, engaging in critical historical inquiry gives students and teachers enormous power and agency to challenge dominant historical narratives that have long served to fashion an "American" history, voice, and identity (Apple, 2000; VanSledright, 2008; Wertsch, 2002).

Critical historical inquiry enables teachers to delve into and challenge dominant narratives permeating official social studies curricula (Blevins & Salinas, 2012; Blevins et al., 2020; King, 2017; Parker, 2003; Rodríguez, 2018; Santiago, 2019) while also providing moments to learn counter narratives that expand accounts and challenge (mis)representations, myths, and/or inaccuracies. Crowley and King (2018) note critical historical inquiries, "rely on teachers who question the common-sensical ways the world works and how social studies knowledge is presented" and "should be designed to identify and to challenge master narratives that legitimate systems of oppression and power" (p. 15). Critical historical inquiry allows for participants to engage in Seixas and Peck's (2004) concept of historical thinking and the six elements that comprise it – significance, epistemology and evidence, continuity and change, progress and decline, empathy, and historical agency. Yet, there is still a need to expand the scope of critical historical inquiry and strengthen its transformative capacity by considering the importance of emotions within the process. The instructional gatekeepers of knowledge and content (Thornton, 1991), teachers intent on infusing this practice into their toolkit need to delve into their own emotions whilst engaging in critical historical inquiries.

In 1996, Jennifer Nias claimed,

Since the 1960s teachers' feelings have received scant attention in professional writing. At present, they are seldom systemically considered in pre- or in-service education. By implication and omission teachers' emotions are not a topic deemed worthy of serious academic or professional consideration. (p. 293)

Nias' proclamation still rings true in more contemporary times. Sheppard and Levy (2019) assert that the ever-changing political and social climates of education calls for "an increased need for emotional research to help make sense of the emotional dimensions of teaching social studies" (p. 193). Emotions, according to Denzin (1984), are a form of consciousness that can be lived, sensed, and experienced. Zembylas (2004) elucidates, "emotions and teaching are deeply interrelated in complex ways, both epistemologically and constitutively" (p. 198). Day and Leitch (2001) posit that teachers' feelings about their work affect how they conceptualize and perform their duties. With the power emotions possess in shaping how preservice teachers view themselves and the ways in which they teach, White (2009) contends that preservice teacher education must expand beyond purely educational pursuits. Emphasizing this point, White (2009) adds, "If I want my preservice students to engage critically with important educational issues, then I need to engage their emotions as well as their intellects" (p. 13). Sheppard and Levy (2019) as well as Zembylas and Barker (2002) stress the need for preservice teachers to have spaces individually and/or collectively to partake in safe reflection so they can share their emotions and the positives and negatives of engaging in new pedagogical practices. As teacher educators, we also believe that preservice teachers, individuals completing the necessary state-mandated coursework and fieldwork requirements in order to obtain a teaching license, deserve an opportunity to explore their own emotions when working with and developing critical historical inquiries. Traversing critical historical inquiries as participants and creators, preservice teachers offer a unique perspective in relation to emotion because they are learning what critical historical inquiries are and the challenges in building their own. Previous research has delved into how both preservice teachers have infused critical historical inquiry into their teaching practices from pedagogical content knowledge and positionality perspectives (Blevins & Salinas, 2012; Blevins et al. 2020; Salinas & Blevins, 2014; Salinas et al., 2016). For example, Blevins et al.'s (2020) study focusing on two early career teachers concluded that political and ideological beliefs heavily influence the enactment of critical historical inquiries into teaching practices. Blevins et al. (2020) suggest that developing teachers' perceptions of efficacy and their pedagogical content knowledge can lead to infusing

more critical pedagogical practices like critical historical inquiry. Seeing how a teacher's beliefs and content knowledge impact their teaching, an opportunity to study how emotions play a role in the critical history inquiry process offers another unique pathway to explore. We, the researchers and authors of this project, assert that examining how preservice teachers emotionally navigate and understand critical historical inquiry as a means to disrupt dominant narratives, as both participants and designers, the social studies field can learn what attributes either support or hinder their incorporation of counter narratives into their pedagogical practices.

Using a critical qualitative case study framework (Denzin, 2015), we worked with and learned from five preservice teachers to explore how they emotionally grappled with critical historical inquiries as students and creators in a semester-long social studies methods course. We begin by explaining critical historical inquiries and the power of emotions in the social studies field. Next, we explain the study's context and critical historical inquiry practices the participants engaged in as well as our analysis procedures. Our findings suggest that critical historical inquiry is a complicated and nuanced emotional endeavor for our preservice teachers due to feelings of frustration, hope, and apathy. Finally, we share our discussion and implications for the social studies field and beyond. We hope that this paper and study shed light on how we can continue to dismantle educational structures of oppression and inequality constraining the power and agency of students, (preservice) teachers, and schools.

## **Frameworks**

### **Critical Historical Inquiry**

Critical historical inquiry allows for teachers and students to examine primary sources to further expand upon their understanding(s) of eras, events, places, and people. Through these sources, the process challenges all participants to construct historical knowledge beyond dominant narratives and view how race, gender, sexuality, and other facets converge to fashion new understandings (Blevins et al., 2020; Salinas & Blevins, 2014; Salinas et al., 2016; Santiago, 2019; Schmidt, 2010). As Blevins and Salinas (2012) state, "in conceptualising a more critical notion of historical inquiry we situate teachers' understandings of their content within two important bodies of knowledge": official knowledge and subjugated knowledge (p. 24). Creating official knowledge is "always a political process" and can come in the form of state-mandated curriculum, can be seen in commercialized textbooks, and focuses on promoting a hegemonic/assimilationist (i.e., "common sense") historical narrative (Apple, 2000, p. 92). Subjugated knowledge is knowledge (personal stories, counter narratives, etc.) that has been restricted by social and/or political forces from being found in educational spaces (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997). These two knowledges can enhance or hinder the accessibility and criticality of historical inquiry. If thoughtfully and intentionally structured to challenge oppressive narratives, critical historical inquiry allows teachers an opportunity to disrupt the essentializing and limited scope of curricula and learn about the complex racial, social, and political nuances of systemically marginalized people and communities (Epstein, 2009; Fránquiz & Salinas, 2011). Although critical historical inquiry has the power and ability to disturb banal curricula, Blevins et al. (2020) remind us that teachers enact historical inquiry with varying levels of success due to their own teaching beliefs and the knowledges they possess.

To better leverage the disruptive potential of critical historical inquiry, historical thinking skills must be developed for students to partake in this worthwhile practice. Countering the mundane practices of rote memorization of facts or the coloring of maps that have plagued the social studies field for

generations (Parker, 2015), Seixas and Peck (2004) propose historical thinking as a different method of examining history. Seixas and Peck's (2004) six elements that comprise historical thinking provide students a framework in which to look at pictures, letters, newspaper articles, etc. from a perspective they may not have considered prior. By asking teachers and students to immerse themselves in thinking historically while working with primary sources, it challenges them to consider the complicated and nuanced facets of people, places, and/or events. Expanding Seixas and Peck's (2004) historical thinking framework, Salinas et al. (2012) push that *critical* historical thinking "acknowledges and makes transparent the ends, purpose, and values embedded in the master historical narrative" (p. 25). According to them, two things must happen in order for critical notions of historical thinking to occur, teachers must 1) "reflect upon the intersection of their knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values and their pedagogical content knowledge with regard to the pedagogical and curricular choices they make in their classrooms" and 2) examine how they communicate content to their students, for that determines if it essential (continuously taught) or peripheral (hardly or never taught) knowledge (Salinas et al., 2012, p. 26). If teachers are to engage in critical historical thinking and critical historical inquiry, they must be cognizant of their own knowledge and intentionally incorporate counter narratives into their pedagogical approaches. By no means an easy task, this reflective practice serves to push teachers to actively think about which dominant narratives exist within their curricula and ways in which critical historical inquiry can remold, raze, and/or correct those accounts. This research further stresses the importance of working with preservice (and in-service) teachers to develop their historical thinking skill sets and offer them spaces to reflect on their emotions so they can support their students in their own critical historical inquiry journeys.

### The Power of Emotions

Emotions in educational spaces have the capacity to extend knowledge, build community, and allow for teachers and students to express their true selves. Yet, the opportunity to share one's emotions publicly is not always available or permitted. As Arth and Whittemore (1974) claim, "public school curriculums suppress the right of the student to be emotional and provide no avenues for the understanding of those basic emotions that form the basic nature of human interaction" (p. 2). However constrictive curricula and administrative policies can be, emotions will always manifest within teachers and students, especially in relation to topics that personally impact them. These topics, regardless of eliciting positive or negative emotions, serve as opportunities to expand beyond prepackaged knowledge (i.e., standardized curriculum and textbooks) and push into territories previously unexplored by teachers and students. Knowing that emotions play an integral role in both teaching and learning, educational spaces must continue to develop platforms to allow for teachers and students to infuse their feelings. If teachers are to build the "whole child," as John Dewey (1916) once proposed, neglect of emotions leads to failure in that creation. In conjunction with the process of "forming" students, teachers must also be attuned to their own emotional states because of its interconnectedness to their actions as educators. Echoing this proclamation, Hargreaves (2000) notes, "Teaching, learning and leading may not be solely emotional practices, but they are always *irretrievably* emotional in character, in a good way or a bad way, by design or default" (p. 812).

Teacher emotions have an impact on what is presented within the classroom, potentially impacting the infusion and effectiveness of historical inquiries into teaching practices. Many historical inquiries contain difficult knowledge, with an example being the death and destruction found in photographs and firsthand accounts about the Syrian Civil War. Britzman, one of the originators of the concept of *difficult knowledge*, suggests that what makes knowledge "difficult" is twofold: how curricula show traumas and a person's interaction with them in pedagogical pursuits (Pitt & Britzman, 2003).

Therein lies the importance of emotion in critical historical inquiry endeavors. For critical historical inquiries that might contain traumatic or controversial issues (Busey & Mooney, 2014; Byford et al., 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Zembylas, 2020) that include difficult knowledge, teachers must consider their own emotions when determining if and how to present these critical historical inquiries (Sheppard & Levy, 2019). In failing to examine their own emotional understandings in relation to difficult knowledge and critical historical inquiries, teachers have the potential to unknowingly inflict harm on their students. There are no truly "safe" classrooms due to various political and power dynamics within educational spaces (Boler & Zembylas, 2003; Zembylas, 2015). For example, a harm-inducing misstep such as misrepresenting a historically marginalized group by using dominant group-generated propaganda by a teacher could destroy the classroom community. Building upon research involving critical historical inquiry and on teachers' emotions, this study examines preservice teachers' emotional navigation of historical inquiries as student participants and as developers of historical inquiries.

## Methods

In the Spring of 2021, we initiated a semester-long qualitative, critical case-study (Denzin, 2015) examining how the emotions/emotional responses of preservice teachers influenced their understanding of critical historical inquiry tasks. Knowing the value and power of emotions in teacher decision-making (Day & Leitch, 2001), our research focuses on *preservice* teachers because they are beginning their journey as educators and our research positions allow us to watch their growth throughout the semester. Our guiding questions for this project were:

- 1) When first encountering critical historical inquiry as a student participant in a social studies methods course, what emotions emerged while engaging in this practice?
- 2) When creating a critical historical inquiry project, what emotional navigation occurred while being involved in this production?

The goals of this project are to expand upon critical historical inquiry literature already produced by adding an emotional element into the discourse, to continue to learn how to disrupt dominant narratives found in social studies curricula using critical historical inquiries, and to provide additional insight into ways to support preservice teachers as they grow in their pedagogy and practice.

## Study Context

Participants for this case study were purposefully selected (Merriam, 2009) preservice teachers enrolled in a master's plus certification program for social studies at a large, public university in the southwest. In order to be accepted into the program, participants had to demonstrate a willingness to engage in discussions and teaching around race, gender, class, and other topics associated with critical social studies pedagogies. The second semester of a two-year program, Spring 2021, the participants already took a methods course the previous fall focusing on themes such as intersectionality (Collins & Bilge, 2020; Crenshaw, 1991), (anti-)colonialism (Grande, 2015; Lomawaima, 1993; Shear et al., 2018), and textbook (mis)representations of people, communities, and historical events (Brown & Brown, 2010; King & Simmons, 2018; Loewen, 2007). Developing the preservice teachers' historical thinking and inquiry skills in their Spring 2021 social studies methods course, their curricular readings consisted of works by Barton and Levstik (2004), Blevins and Salinas (2012), Drake and Brown (2003), Seixas (1993), Seixas and Peck (2004), and others. The course featured three main historical inquiry activities, two of which will be briefly described due to their value in

providing the framework for the interview questions and other data sets. The first engagement the preservice teachers had with historical inquiry was the various representations of Rosie the Riveter used throughout World War II via propaganda posters and archival photographs. In the next class session, the preservice teachers undertook an examination of the Longoria Affair, an event involving Beatrice Longoria, the widow of U.S. Army Private Felix Longoria Jr., who was denied funeral arrangements for Private Longoria at their local funeral home due to her late husband being Mexican American. Later in the semester, the preservice teachers used primary source documents furnished by our institution's Latin American History department to fashion their own critical historical inquiries. These projects were designed with the intention of sharing them online so that secondary social studies teachers could incorporate them into their curricula.

We chose five preservice teacher participants to learn from due to our positions as teaching assistants supporting them in their methods course and having built a rapport with them the previous fall semester. Out of the five, two of the participants (pseudonyms) identified as white women – River and Audre, while two of the three men identified as Asian - Leland and George, and one as white – Dave (See Appendix A).

### **Researchers' Positionalities**

As teacher educators, we recognize the value and power our own voices possess, but also those of the preservice teachers we teach and learn from in our program. We are two, cisgender men (one Arab-American/white-identifying, one white-identifying) and our experiences are not only distinct from each other, but also from our participants. Although both researchers spent at least six years in social studies classrooms before joining the university's PhD program, each individual brings a different lens to the project based on their personal and professional experiences. Our preservice teacher participants also come from various political, social, and economic backgrounds, thus serving as a constant reminder at the unifying power of education. Yet, we would also be remiss to ignore the power dynamics between us as researchers/teaching assistants and our preservice participants and the potential for this imbalance to impact our findings (Banks, 1998). Delving further, as Love (2019), states, "too often...our allies are eager White folx who have not questioned their Whiteness, White supremacy, White emotions of guilt and shame..." (p. 117). We acknowledge that most university spaces are made for white, male students and there has often been a complicity in buttressing white supremacy in educational spaces. Consequently, while revealing the complexity of engaging in historical inquiry for preservice teachers, our positionality also makes clear the importance of individual and communal reflection through discursive practices. Finally, we intend for this paper and research to reflect the voices and agency of our participants in a dignified and respectful manner.

### **Data Collection & Analysis**

In addition to a digitally recorded, semi-structured, 60-minute interview with participants, data also included observations from the semester-long university social studies methods course, and student-generated artifacts, such as written reflections and historical inquiry projects. Serving simultaneously as field researchers and teaching assistants, our observations largely consisted of field notes taken during the entirety of five three-hour methods class sessions that focused on the preservice teachers' historical thinking, questioning, and acceptance or rejection of the narratives presented in the historical inquiries. The five sessions were specifically chosen because they were the participants' first forays into interacting with historical inquiries, thus providing opportunities to gain data as they developed their knowledge about critical historical inquiry. At the midway point of the semester, we asked

the preservice teachers to ruminate on their experiences as participants of the two aforementioned historical inquiries by writing a few paragraphs and sharing them with us. As the semester came to a close, we interviewed each preservice teacher separately to gain insight into their understandings of historical inquiry, as participants and creators, while paying close attention to their reflections on emotions and their navigation of those emotions. Individually, we manually coded transcripts of the interview and data and analyzed them by noting patterns and themes, arriving at comparisons and contrasts, and determining conceptual explanations of the case study (Miles et al., 2020). Returning together, data was then analyzed again focusing on the codes that emerged through the comparative process. The patterns, themes, and comparisons of interviews, observation, and artifact data led to the findings included in this paper.

Two major themes emerged indicating the complexity of both understanding the exercise and counter narratives presented in critical historical inquiries and in developing critical historical inquiries that yielded counter narratives.

## Findings

Participants' reflections offered a snapshot into how they emotionally navigated the complexities of engaging in the critical historical inquiry process and fashioning their own critical historical inquiry projects. As preservice teachers develop their identities, emotions play a considerable role in the way they define their own successes and failures both inside the classroom and in their education courses, and the pedagogical and curricular decisions they make (Day & Leitch, 2001; Matias & Zembylas, 2014; Schutz, 2014; Zembylas, 2007; Zembylas & Barker, 2002). In our analysis, two major themes emerged in relation to critical historical inquiries: 1) emotional reactions as participant learners and 2) emotional reactions as inquiry creators. These offered deeper insight into the ways in which preservice teachers' emotions informed their understandings of critical historical inquiry's counter narratives and its effectiveness as a teaching tool to expand their own pedagogical approaches.

### Theme One: Emotional Reactions as Participant Learners

The first theme describes participants' emotional reactions of frustration and hope when learning and engaging with the critical historical inquiry process in their social studies methods course as students. For instance, River, reflecting on her initial experiences with the Rosie the Riveter historical inquiry, wrote that, "navigating through historical inquiry emotionally initially felt very frustrating, but it was through the primary sources of the counter narrative that made me find the light" (Written Reflection, March 10, 2021). This same sentiment resurfaced during her interview at the conclusion of the semester. When asked about her emotions when learning about the Longoria Affair, River mentioned,

Frustration just at that situation, even if he wasn't a World War Two veteran. It just makes it so wrong to begin with and hearing these stories is important because it makes you frustrated and question and just paint a fuller picture of history. (Interview, May 28, 2021)

Like River, Audre remarked in her interview, "it's always frustrating learning about these struggles because it's like, 'are you kidding me?' It just seems so important to know where this history is...it's just crucial to understand and I'm excited to be learning about it" (Interview, May 30, 2021). The feelings of anger and hope expressed by Audre and River transcend historical proximity and



highlight the humanistic connections individuals can make when engaging in critical historical inquiry. The photographs, letters, and posters were no longer static objects, but near lifelike entities that carried an emotional gravitas that spurred an emotional response. During those two critical historical inquiries, Audre and River's emotional merger with the stories of Rosie the Riveter and Felix Longoria Jr. brought them deeper into the counter narratives and epitomized the power critical historical inquiry has on students' understandings of historical events.

Yet, Audre and River's statements contrasted with their colleague, Leland, who commented in his interview that when partaking in the Rosie the Riveter historical inquiry that "emotionally, it didn't really elicit any emotions...for me it was "how am I going to answer these questions?" (Interview, May 25, 2021). In examining his own emotions in relation to the Longoria Affair, Dave felt almost emotionally ambivalent like Leland. Dave said in his interview,

It just didn't really surprise me that much because that time period is chock full of stuff like discrimination. I thought it was an interesting story to be honest. I couldn't connect to him, obviously, because of his Mexican background, because I'm not and I don't have that background. (Interview, May 26, 2021)

Emotional disengagement echoes a similar disposition Leland wrote about weeks prior in relation to critical historical inquiries and counter narratives:

I also approach the push towards identifying and teaching counter narratives with caution. While the search for and teaching of the counter narrative in many cases is a good thing, we lessen the ability to understand how the narratives interrelate and therefore miss the most important lessons... (Written Reflection, March 9, 2021)

Leland's hesitation indicates that although counter narratives often cause ruptures to the dominant narratives found within social studies curricula (Loewen, 2007; Salinas & Blevins, 2014; Salinas et al., 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Takaki, 2008), they also run the risk of feeling detached from those dominant histories as a whole. In this sense he is uncomfortable with resisting the dominant narrative (Wertsch, 2002).

Further, in that same writing, Leland mentioned, "I really enjoy historical inquiry because it allows me to learn about new topics I had never thought of, but I worry that I don't even know the dominant narratives enough to get the most out of this process" (Written Reflection, March 9, 2021). He is referring to a lack of mastery that deepens his doubts and perhaps emotional responses (Wertsch, 2002). Leland understands that critical historical inquiry opens the door for him to learn counter narratives he may not have originally known, but he still feels he lacks enough knowledge about the dominant narrative to fully appreciate the exercise.

The apprehension Leland experienced also relates to Shulman's (2004) focus on teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). According to Shulman (2004), PCK is the knowledge teachers use when refashioning their subject matter so that students can learn and understand the content. PCK pushes teachers to think not only about what they know about a particular topic, but what funds of knowledge (González et al., 2006) their students bring and what possible misconceptions may need addressing (Shulman, 2004). Preservice teachers who believe they lack the foundational critical knowledge required to teach dominant narratives express "fear" when deciding to delve into an even

more complex PCK that requires them to synthesize dominant and counter narratives into a cohesive educational tapestry (Wertsch, 2002).

Conversely, while building their own informational base, Audre's emotional frustration switched to a more astonished disposition. In her reflection, she mentioned, "I have definitely been on a roller-coaster of emotions when processing the new information I've gained throughout my inquiry, just based solely on the shocking information that one finds when engaging in the critical part of a historical inquiry" (Written Reflection, March 7, 2021). In a similar vein, the act of learning about histories that countered dominant narratives amazed Dave in our interview. He shared, "when she (the course instructor) showed the, I guess what you call the 'counter narrative', I was a little bit surprised that it revealed some stuff I never knew" (Interview, May 26, 2021). Learning more about and from the critical historical inquiry process led them to an emotional conclusion that is common for those studying and valuing counter narratives (see Salinas et al., 2016). As the preservice teachers learned counter narratives through critical historical inquiry, the emotions they felt, positive and negative, largely stemmed from their prior knowledge and personal connections with the accounts presented in the inquiries. This in turn played a role in their desire to infuse these counter narratives into their own critical historical inquiry projects.

## **Theme Two: Emotional Reactions as Inquiry Creators**

The second theme centers on preservice teachers' emotional attitudes towards designing their own critical historical inquiries and incorporating counter narratives into those projects. Even though learning about the process in their methods course posed a challenge and induced feelings of frustration, caution, and apprehension, the majority of the participants felt invigorated, curious, and excited when sharing their thoughts about creating and enacting critical historical inquiries in their teaching placements. In her written reflection, Audre expounded, "Although, I have found that through continuing to develop my inquiry skills, I have been better able to access topics that I might not usually find so fascinating which shows some development in those skills" (Written Reflection, March 7, 2021). Frustrated initially when fashioning critical historical inquiries due to counter narratives being less prevalent and more challenging to find than dominant narratives, River noted in her interview, "it's rewarding to put the pieces together and dig deeper and realize there is no perfect way to define history. But realize that it's also a set of stories, so you feel agency by creating them" (Interview, May 28, 2021). River's statement reflects the messiness of historical representation through critical historical inquiry. The troubling of dominant narratives shows the layers and multiple stories that comprise historical events as well as the power the narrator possess. In another written reflection, George commented that although historical inquiry at first seemed hard, "after seeing it and doing it a few times, I'm eager to try it with my students. Even if I have to simplify or change it a little for them" (Written Reflection, March 10, 2021). While discussing how to bring historical inquiry into his classroom placement, Dave wrote, "I would say that one of the biggest emotions I am feeling through historical inquiry is curiosity. It has been fun learning about how to put together compelling questions/DBQs and seeing how they can transform historical learning" (Written Reflection, March 10, 2021). Audre voiced a similar excitement about using unique primary sources, "I thought they were so cool and things I haven't seen before. So, anything new is exciting and I felt like, 'oh, this is stuff I think kids are gonna want to see and explore I hope'" (Interview, May 30, 2021). The participants' sense of enthusiasm ties to Bloomfield's (2010) research on preservice teachers' emotional navigation of the profession and "about the excitement and exhilaration of new learning, about being found as credible in teaching, about the joy of connection with children..." (p. 232). The

preservice teachers' thrill shows just how rewarding critical historical inquiries can become because of the opportunities to learn new narratives and the various ways of examining historical events.

When reflecting on his experience creating a critical historical inquiry, Leland remained hesitant to infuse too much of a counter narrative into his project. His feelings of trepidation and reluctance show that critical historical inquiries are not always met with ardor or inquisitiveness. He understood that he was not like most of his peers in regard to creating critical historical inquiries, and although the process was worthwhile from a pedagogical standpoint, Leland expressed a few critiques during his interview:

We miss the power of the counter narrative when we start directing an inquiry towards a certain direction. Okay, because what that does is now we're proselytizing. I think it's really counterproductive to what we want to do...if we just push that narrative, it doesn't solve the deeper issue. And we miss getting at the root cause. We miss actually diving deep and teaching the real issue and helping our kids. We're talking about agency and citizenship and understanding, where the real issues are so they can solve them well. We just focused on one narrative, even if it's a counter narrative, it is one narrative. We fail to tie those two together and we send them off and what gets done, nothing. I mean, think about it, the Civil Rights Act was passed in '63. Where are we today? (Interview, May 25, 2021)

Leland's viewpoints suggest the challenges teachers face when generating critical historical inquiries that center counter narratives. The dominant narrative, perceived to be an essential element when knowing what is traditionally taught in social studies contexts, has the potential to be overshadowed by the infusion of counter narratives. When the dominant narrative becomes a subsidiary to the counter narratives, it can cause emotions of uneasiness, resistance, and/or a pedagogy of discomfort (Boler, 1999; Boler & Zembylas, 2003). However, in many ways, this is one goal of critical historical inquiries. Critical historical inquiries encourage teachers and students to delve into the complexities of histories and difficult knowledges (Garrett, 2011; Pitt & Britzman, 2003; Zembylas, 2014) to see a deeper picture. The boundaries of classical stories centered around individuals, communities, and events we believe we know are pushed, urging us to expand not only our intellectual states, but our emotional ones as well. By no means an easy task for participants and creators alike, the power of critical historical inquiries to disrupt dominant narratives and amplify the voices of historically marginalized peoples must become or remain a central component of (preservice) teachers' practices.

Over the course of learning about critical historical inquiry, acting as participants in the process, and then developing their own, most of the preservice teachers' emotions shifted drastically. Although initially apprehensive and frustrated with critical historical inquiry due to it being a new practice, most participants' reflections suggest that with more time partaking in the activity, feelings of curiosity and excitement arose. Allowing the preservice teachers reflective spaces open to sharing their emotions, both through writing and orally, aided in their grappling with this new pedagogical endeavor. By challenging them to delve deeper into their own emotional understandings, not simply cognitive or ideological understandings, course instructors/assistants center emotion as a viable part of teaching and learning.

## **Discussion**

In examining the emotional reactions of preservice teachers engaged in critical historical inquiry, we found a range of responses that reflect the complexity of engaging in dominant/counter narratives

and difficult knowledges (Garrett, 2011; Pitt & Britzman, 2003; Zembylas, 2014). First, we contend that our participants' emotional responses served as evaluative gauges of both the dominant and counter narrative (Zembylas, 2004). Their emotional stance can promote/diminish the use of critical historical inquiry. As some of the preservice teachers' stances suggest, the infusion of counter narratives into dominant narrative discourses can amplify or curtail the power of adopting critical historical inquiries. As participants, the emotional weight of learning about counter narratives served as a gauge for them on their acceptance or rejection of critical historical inquiries into their pedagogical practices. For Audre and River, the feelings of anger and hope they experienced while partaking in critical historical inquiries during their social studies methods course fueled their passion to craft inquiries that students would connect to intellectually and emotionally. Their responses also suggest a desire to make critical historical inquiries a part of the pedagogical practices long after they leave their teacher education program. Leland troubled this notion due to his emotional apathy as a student taking part in these exercises. His emotionally reticent stance and desire to remain "impartial" influenced the construction of his own inquiries (Banks, 2014; Journell, 2016; Kelly & Brandes, 2001). Although not addressed directly, Leland's comments hint at his future pedagogical decisions in relation to critical historical inquiries.

Second, we contend that more political or ideological responses were not explicitly labeled through emotional discourses. The challenge at hand, then, is that emotion was not always seen as a viable means to express the adoption or rejection of disruptive pedagogies. Emotional discourses, an element heavily focused on during this study, were not essential elements when students initially examined dominant or counter narratives *during* critical historical inquiries as participants. Upon their reflection *after* engaging in and developing their own critical historical inquiries, they shared their emotional navigation, but throughout the actual processes, they did not take into consideration their own emotional conditions. Although the majority of preservice teacher participants expressed excitement about bringing these practices into their pedagogy, they largely turned to lack of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 2004) and difficulty in finding counter narratives as potential barriers. While this shows how important the development of pedagogical content knowledge and availability of counter narrative resources is for teacher education programs intent on instilling disruptive pedagogical practices like critical historical inquiry, it also highlights the negation of emotional discourse in preservice teacher training. Although directly focused on for our research project, the participants involved in critical historical inquiry would likely not have independently reflected on how their emotions played a role in their conceptualization and fashioning of the inquiry process and creation. Seen in the preservice teachers' responses, strategic discourse around emotions served as a catalyst for the potential of deeper personal connections to counter narratives as well as a reexamination of their own pedagogical practices. Failure to offer preservice teachers a space to ruminate on their emotions not only limits opportunities for them to delve into the complexities of critical historical inquiries, but also the deeper impact such a venture might have on the emotional wellbeing of themselves and their students when enacting such a process.

### Implications

As this study exemplifies, social studies education, and teacher preparation programs in particular, do not delve enough, if at all, into the emotional navigation preservice teachers go through *while* partaking in new pedagogical processes that have the potential to disrupt dominant narratives. Zembylas (2004), notes, "emotions and teaching are deeply interrelated in complex ways, both epistemologically and constitutively" (p. 198). Sheppard and Levy (2019) echo Zembylas' claim by stating, "Teachers are making pedagogical decisions based on their beliefs about emotions; it is crucial that

they are given the opportunity to reflect on their emotional experiences with students, content, and the community in productive, collaborative spaces" (p. 202). Preservice teachers do not grow in closed conditions, they are influenced by political, social, and economic discourses within their university courses and teaching placements. Yet, teacher preparation programs rarely delve into the emotional factors that influence teacher development and decision making. The failure to examine emotional components with educational practices at the preservice level can lead to detrimental results once those teachers enter their own classrooms. We assert that in examining preservice teachers' opportunities to reflect on and express their emotions while participating in a venture like critical historical inquiry, educators and teacher preparation programs dedicated to supporting the emotional facets and critical dispositions of their own preservice teachers can continue that engagement.

One possible suggestion for teacher preparation programs to address the emotional aspects of engaging in new teaching practices, and critical historical inquiry in particular, is to designate time in methods courses to partake in sequential restorative circles. Although typically viewed as means to address disciplinary issues, sequential restorative circles allow for participants to immerse themselves in reflective dialogue. The act of rumination offers individuals an opportunity to examine their own emotions and consider others as well. As a collective endeavor, these circles build connections through the power and relatability of emotions. Future research looking to expand upon emotions and historical inquiry might delve into how in-service teachers' emotions influence their curricular and pedagogical decisions. Differing from their preservice counterparts, many in-service teachers are held accountable not by their preparation program, but by rubrics designated by their state and evaluated by the performance of their students on standards-based examinations. Critical historical inquiry often challenges these content standards through the presentation of counter narratives. Understanding this, examining how in-service teachers use their emotions to justify their decisions can further social studies discourse in relation to emotions and pedagogical practices. In conclusion, emotions remind us, especially in the education field, that we are intrinsically linked together in the struggle to better humanity for our students, their families, and the communities they inhabit.

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**Michael Joseph** is a fourth-year Ph.D. candidate in C&I, Social Studies Education, at the University of Texas at Austin. Prior to working towards his doctorate, he was a high school social studies teacher in Dallas, Texas. His research interests consist of Arab American educators in the United States, citizenship education, and the presentation of Southwest Asia/North Africa (SWANA) in textbooks.

**Mathew Baker** is a second year Ph.D. student at University of Texas at Austin. Before joining the doctoral program in C&I, Social Studies Education, he taught high school social studies in Charlotte, North Carolina for seven years. His research interests include cultural memory and practice-based teacher education.

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## Appendix A

*Study Participants*

Participant (Age)	Racial Identification	Gender Identification	Originally From	Previous Occupation(s)	Reason to Pursue Teaching Certification
River (25)	White	Female	Connecticut	Undergraduate college student; AmeriCorps member; Lacrosse coach	To support students in their journey to become lifelong learners
Audre (29)	White	Female	New York	Nanny; ESL teacher abroad (Thailand); Assistant Office Manager at Youth Summer Camp	Teacher preparation program; Passion for working with children
George (25)	Asian	Male	China/ California	Undergraduate college student; Part-time National Guard member	Love for spreading knowledge and working with children; being a mentor to students and sharing life experiences
Leland (43)	Asian	Male	China/ Alabama	Financial Advisor; U.S. Marine Corp Officer	To teach students the foundational principles of money in order to empower them to reach their life goals
Dave (26)	White	Male	Pennsylvania	Undergraduate college student; Language Assistant	Mentorship; Community service