The following exchange occurred after Lena expressed concern about assigning primary research in her American government course. She worried her inability to individually mentor students with varying levels of experience with disciplinary methodology might lead to misconceptions about legitimate research in the field. In response, Bill told a story about how he wrestled with similar concerns:

1. **LENA:** So, my previous concern is, and that's why I think I ended up going back to, "Oh, I'll just let them do the secondary research, because I don't want anyone to walk out of my class thinking that anything they do is legitimate," [laughs] you know?
2. **BILL:** Right, right, I think that's a good question with undergraduate students when you're introducing the research like this, primary research. I mean I know I had this question even with this graduate course that I taught last spring. [I]t really freaked me out because one of the students wanted to use the paper she wrote for my course as the seeds for her master's thesis. And it was a little outside the boundaries of what I felt comfortable with in terms of my knowledge, that she was writing on something that I was interested in. And
somebody in my field is publishing about that, but it's not me, and I'm also not reading those people. But the other piece was just that, from a methodological standpoint, it was just a mess. I mean it wouldn't have passed muster, and she had no sense of why. And it felt like, [sigh] it's like an entire another thing, and this was a graduate student. And then last fall I taught an undergraduate course where the students were doing some primary research. And again, this question of, "Is this legit?" You know? “Is it legit for this course? Is it legit for the students who are taking this one class that's going to ask them to do this kind of work? Would an undergraduate journal publish this?" I have all those questions too.

**LENA:** Yeah.

**BILL:** And I guess the right way to do it, I guess, would be kind of the method sequence and all that. [B]ut on the flip side of it, just to hold off on all that stuff and just sort of have them read and test them until they get there, I guess, which seems like they don't get to do anything.

**LENA:** Right.
BILL: I mean, I guess... The sort of conclusion I came to with both these instances was that these students were going to ask a question and begin to try on a methodology or method to explore it for the first time.

LENA: Mm-hmm.

BILL: And so that counts as something. You know, where it goes from there, who knows. I mean, with undergraduates I think a lot of times it doesn't go anywhere... But how much time do you have time mapped out for this in terms of...?
Works Cited


