

Thirteen

(Dis)Embedding Gender Diversity in the Preservice Classroom

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What is gender? Why is it important to understand how gender affects classroom flow? What does gender look like in classroom discourse? How do we locate it in and outside of the classroom? What do we draw upon to help conceptualize understandings of gender? How can we prepare our students to remain open to accepting a socially constructed continuum about gender over space and time and in emerging contexts? Even more important, why are such questions about gender necessary? Such questions are timely tipping points for students to discuss as they consider their own positions about their views on the diversity of gender. In this narrative, I explore myriad ways that my undergraduate preservice English students and I have both theoretically and empirically unpacked gender in the classroom and in the context of their teaching lives. Some discussion will focus on describing how students have wrestled with gender in and outside of the classroom space and illuminate how they have been challenged to renegotiate their views about the gender continuum.

What Is Gender?

There are two longstanding arguments about gender. One view holds that gender is something one just *is* such as secondary sex characteristics; the other view portrays gender as something one *has* such as how one is socially positioned as subject. In the first view of gender, one's (biological) sex affects what one does, because of biological characteristics, which include chromosomes, genes, anatomy, gonads, hormones, and so on, and which is typically socially reinforced through a heterosexual model (Wittig, 1983). In the latter argument, feminist research reveals that gender is the social construction of roles, behaviors, and attributes that is considered by the general public to be "appropriate" for one's sex and which is assigned at birth, typically as female or male (Butler, 1990) or as androgyny. In this school of thought, gender roles vary

among cultures and along time continuums. de Beauvoir (1973) argues that if gender is constructed, that one becomes a gender and thereby has agency in one's social development as it intersects with culture. She also questions the former argument that the body is not a contested site, that it is quite passive, and already has predetermined social norms attached to it. Irigaray (1985) argues that gender, as social phenomenon, is connected to patriarchy and binds women's bodies to men's control. In other words, women are made or "othered" in men's eyes and so is their sex(uality). Both gender and sex have therefore been socially reproduced to reinforce hegemonic dominance and heteronormativity and to further procreation.

Today, there is a widening divide between notions of gender and sex in society. However, in spite of the gap, teachers often reinforce gender normativity in the classroom. As we educate ourselves on shifting gender norms, we can relocate ourselves as subjects in multiple contexts, and be better equipped to unveil and utilize the shifting discourse. de Beauvoir (1973) argues that the female body should be a site of freedom and a tool of empowerment, and that it is not essentialized. This is highly complex and conflated by a history of male ownership of women through law and religion, and social, economic, and cultural practices. In fact, this institutionalized history, has infused itself into social and cultural practices and by proxy, schooling. Fortunately, the rising waves of feminism and research have sought to place women on equal footing with men both socially and culturally and have been careful not to perpetuate the predated dynamics of subjugating one gender to the other.

Although several theories on gender have been fundamental in shaping dominant perspectives on gender, this discussion is premised on Butler's (1990) notion that gender is performance, which is an outgrowth of prior feminist theories on gender. Butler suggests that the given identity of the individual is illuminated by the gender that one performs. Butler says, "gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" [*sic*] (p. 140). She goes on to suggest that gender is a "surface signification" and that gender "is created through sustained social performances" (p. 141). Butler essentially argues that the individual is a subject, capable of action—not an object to be constructed. Such reasoning infers that people have agency in how they invite and embody an identity. Building from this premise then, by inviting discussion about gender in classrooms, we can begin to see how any identity can take on various gender-performed roles.

An identity is how the core self is illuminated in a given space such as "teacher," "mechanic," "dancer," or "coach." When one leaves one space for another, an identity may be less illuminated in a new space, but it is nonetheless part of what that person performs. Gee (1996) suggests that identities are dialogical and relational, constructed in relation to power and discourse. He also says that individuals have multiple and even hybrid identities, which are intercontextually malleable and consequently ever-changing and readily influenced by space and time. An identity then is something one comes to embody and own as s/he self-defines different aspects of the self and comes into different contexts in space and time (Gee, 1996). An identity is illuminated based on the relationship the individual has within and to the various contexts or social spaces. Social spaces are impacted by political (power) and social ideologies (Foucault 1980, 1986; Lefebvre 1991) and are thereby never totally neutral. Foucault (1986) and Bourdieu (1980) suggest that the effects of power construct identities and that the embodiment of identities is vulnerable as a result of power. Social spaces become central to understanding an identity in terms of "race, ethnicity, social class or gender. . . those identifica-

tions shape engagements in spatial tactics of power and in everyday social, cultural and literate practices” (McCarthy & Moje, 2002, pp. 234–235). Because social spaces are defined in relationship to society, such as a school, café, or bar, identities are highlighted by those social spaces and by the way their identities have been defined in relationship to society. Selves therefore are illuminated by their identities within specific social spaces and yet can be excluded when their identities are not defined by their relationship to that space. Identity can therefore either be stabilized, or affirmed in a given social space, or destabilized when a social space excludes or is unwelcoming of a particular identity. As individuals change and merge with other social spaces, their identities can become hybrids layered with a multitude of subjectivities. Preservice teacher identity co-construction as seen through this premise is thereby sociospatial (Leander, 2002) and teacher identities are discursively constructed.

Understanding that individuals are subjects within a larger matrix of life is also important in unpacking how gender is performed. Therefore preservice teachers should begin to understand how to co-opt their identities to help them see that they are subjects, capable of acting on and transforming their students’ lives, not objects to be constructed. By rupturing the notion that teachers are objects, we shift the status of teachers from subservient clones into transformational agents.

Danielewicz (2001) says that teacher education programs should foster teacher

identity development to the highest degree possible. In helping preservice teachers recognize their own identity co-constructions, they become more informed about their own subjectivities that can empower them to challenge being co-opted by hegemonic-based discourse and thinking. Recognizing that their own teacher identities are situated within a complex networked matrix of spacetime relationships can help them negotiate their identity co-constructions and help them relocate to spaces that stabilize and affirm their teacher identities. (Miller, 2007b, p.18)

A teacher with agency is a teacher who is better able to challenge the body/mind split.

The body/mind split is important in understanding agency. The dualism of the mind/body split can render a preservice teacher helpless if the individual does not understand the sociopolitical implications of the separation. If a teacher blindly accepts particular curriculum or ideas without completing background research, s/he may be sabotaging her/his agency. Some sociopolitical teaching ideologies are constructed in such a way that teachers may not understand how they divide body from mind and thus, separate one from her/his power to be fully embodied and have agency. If a teacher teaches from this place, s/he passes on the binary of perpetuating status quo ideology that often displaces personal agency. Such thinking sustains dominant culture and binary categorization—meaning that the answer falls into concrete, fixed categories such as black or white, good or evil, just or unjust.

On the other hand, the empowerment that can arise from the teacher as a whole being, not as object, can lead teachers to be conscientious about their power in constructing their own, as well as students’ identities in the classroom. The importance of such empowerment shifts the binary dynamics and power structures within hegemony and helps individuals become nonbinary agents capable of acting on and transforming the worlds in which they live. On this Bhabha (1994) admonishes us not to simulate the discourse of dominant culture because it reinforces status quo constructs. Nonbinary thinking can liberate and open doors to new possibilities that over time may lead to subvert traditional paradigms once used to keep people silenced and marginalized (Freire, 1970). When we teach preservice teachers to co-opt

their own identities, we can liberate them from binary and dominant perceptions that may have once had their time and place in education but which are now antiquated. Rose (1993) advocates for transcending binary constructs and believes that a politics of “difference and identity built on the opening of new spaces” relocates us to a place where counterhegemonic principles can lead to a liberal democracy (Soja, 1996, p. 111). Such a politics lifts us out of binary identifiers and relocates us to a space where ideas can “co-exist concurrently and in contradiction” (Rose, 1993, quoting deLauretis (1987), as in Soja, 1996, p. 112). Teacher education has the power to greatly challenge and subvert dominant paradigms through each of the constituents impacted.

As we move toward nonbinary understandings of gender, it is important to familiarize ourselves with emerging terminology. As we move into the classrooms where we teach, we are likely to meet students who are typically more familiar with these terms than we are because the space and time that youth are living in are more pluralistic. If we hope to support students to adapt to changing times, we can begin to expand our discourse (and our teaching) around gender. Some common ways today that individuals self-identify with regard to gender can be categorized but not essentialized into ag/aggressive, agendered, androgyne/ androgynous, Berdache, bigendered, gender-diverse, genderqueer, intergender, pangender, transandrogyny, transgender, transsexual, and two-spirited (see Appendix A for explanation of terms). Each of these gender categories has sublanguages of its own that are relegated to each of its own cultures. Two other terms are important to define when referring to these emergent gender categories: *gender identity* and *gender expression*. *Gender identity* is one’s personal sense of his or her correct gender, which may be reflected as gender expression and *gender expression* is one’s choice and/or manipulation of gender cues. Gender expression may or may not be congruent with or influenced by a person’s biological sex. If we are to have a true pluralistic understanding about gender, we must begin to inform ourselves about the emerging politics and discourse so we can inform our own students with current and accurate information that will prepare them for real world understandings.

Unfortunately, currently there are only two genders—male and female—that have equal protection under the law. We have gradually seen transgender-identified people receiving more basic human rights than in times past but it is far from equivalent to those who claim to be in the male/female binary. Miller (2007c) writes:

The transgender movement seeks to have equal protection for transgender people that prohibits discrimination based on “gender identity or expression” and ensures that all transgender and gender non-conforming people are protected by law. This includes jobs, housing, health care, hate crimes legislation, legislative language, antidiscrimination bills, foster care and adoption, marriage, bathrooms, changing birth certificates to reflect the chosen gender, students in school, and being visible in the mainstream eye.¹ (p. 182)

Another way the transgender movement has gained more visibility is through media portrayals, some of which are accurate, some of which are poor. We see these current transgender characters on TV: Alexis Meade on “Ugly Betty,” Max on the “L Word,” Carmelita on “Dirty Sexy Money,” Zarf on “All My Children,” Alexis Arquette on “The Surreal Life,” and Ava Moore on “Nip/Tuck.” In film, we have seen Tina Washington in *The World’s Fastest Indian*; Bree in *Transamerica*; Asanee Suwan in *Beautiful Boxer*; Roy in *Norma*; Hedwig in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*; Paris in *Paris is Burning*; Lola in *Kinky Boots*; several characters in *The Adventures of*

Priscilla, Queen of the Desert; Noxeema, Vida, and Chi-Chi in *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar*; Robert Eads in *Southern Comfort*; Brandon Teena in *Boys Don't Cry*; Hank in *The Adventures of Sebastian Cole*; Ludovic in *Ma Vie En Rose*; Dil in *The Crying Game*; Gwen in *A Girl Like Me: The Gwen Araujo Story*; Patrick in *Breakfast on Pluto*; and Luis Molina in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*.

The transgender movement for some has been a way to claim a space or a territory that is connected to the mainstream population but which has its own cultural cues. Common pronouns embraced by some transgender people are “zhe,” “hir,” and “per” that correlate to he, her, and person. Such as “zhe is going to the bathroom” or “what is hir name?” or “who is that per?” Such a claiming of space means that we must be mindful about speaking in ways that privileges one gender over the other. We have a social and moral responsibility to ask our students what pronouns we should use, what name they want to be called, and if there is anything that we should be made aware of about their gender identity.

Gender Politics in the Classroom

Conjecturing that when we speak about gender in the classroom most students are oblivious to how binary views of gender affect students or their participation because gender is normalized. In fact, criticism is likely to be more about preferential treatment based on gender or appearance. It is not likely that students during this space and time are critical that their teachers are not using inchoate language about gender. However, once we become conscious of change, it is very difficult to go back into binary definitions. As preservice teachers become schooled in emerging gender definitions, the more change can be effected.

Teachers have a social and moral responsibility to update themselves on emerging sociopolitical issues and how they impact the classroom. Likewise, if a teacher lacks particular knowledge and gender performance, s/he may inadvertently marginalize or even destabilize a student who does not fit into the binary. In fact,

Some students may be hesitant to disclose until they feel safe enough, but unless teachers demonstrate through discourse and behavior that they are an ally, students are likely to assume that they cannot open up. Along similar lines, we must also be concerned about fostering competitions in classrooms albeit they may appear fun; they reinforce power dynamics and binary roles and beliefs about gender. This means eliminating activities and categories of boys versus girls. It means that we are sensitive with our language all the time and we are deliberate in our actions when designing lessons so we do not marginalize nor reinforce sexism on any level. (Miller, 2007c, p. 183)

Although schools are set up to maintain the status quo (the binary) and to reproduce students who then support the principles under any given democracy, every student deserves a fair and equal education regardless of ethnicity, national origin, national language, appearance, social class, ability, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The consequences, however, may be that if a teacher does not affirm student differences (varying identities) the student may shut down, not complete work, feel separate from the classroom, or be hurt, or in the worst case scenario, attempt or complete a suicide. Teachers can therefore interrupt the cycle of student reproduction (Apple, 2002) as they begin to lead by example and invite social change into the classroom space.

When we begin to discuss gender with our students, there are myriad ways to approach it. Broadening the scope of how our students use gendered discourse must be a deliberate act,

and we must therefore also consider our curricular choices, pedagogical stances, and actions so as to reflect the emerging language. Gender is but one aspect within a long continuum of challenging the binary and can and ought to be taught along with ethnicity, national origin, national language, appearance, social class, ability, or sexual orientation. The more inclusive we can be in our teaching, the greater likelihood that it can have a positive efficacy in the lives of students.

The following examples for preservice teachers can be useful in working with their own classroom students.

1. When we speak we must be sure that we explain that all genders should have equal opportunity and that none is privileged over others, although laws are not yet completely equitable or inclusive for all transgender people let alone any of the others. By saying all genders, we mean male, female, transgender, and the other previously referenced genders. The way we also speak about gender, gender identity, and gender expression should be nonbinary because while there are commonly regarded definitions, beliefs, and meanings for gender, there is also a continuum that allows for people to fall outside of what we commonly perceive as binary. As we stay open to a nonbinary understanding of gender, we challenge ourselves to reflect on the changes that occur in our language use every day.
2. Be sure the pedagogy you employ is inclusive, nonbinary, and multidimensional. Examples of such pedagogy include equity pedagogy, critical pedagogy, critical hip-hop pedagogy, liberatory pedagogy, engaging pedagogy, feminist pedagogy, queer pedagogy, and transformative pedagogy.
3. Select texts from all cultures that challenge gender norms and gender identity/expression (see Appendix B).
4. Carefully consider the texts you use and how gender is written about, portrayed, or discussed. Ask questions of your students about texts such as: How is gender portrayed in the text? Describe any variations of gender. What is the gender of the author? How is gender challenged? Affirmed? What do we learn that is new about gender from the text?
5. Use gender-inclusive language in all communications with students, parents, school administrators, and peers. Talk about the broader issues of gender bias, sex-role stereotyping, and discrimination and work to promote gender equity.
6. Create a class library that has a diverse range of texts that embrace differences of culture, class, ethnicity, gender, ability, weight, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, size, gender identity, and gender expression.
7. Place only gender-inclusive posters/placards in the classroom or do not place any at all.

Not all students will be open or receptive to these activities so it is important to assess your classroom students and school environment prior to engaging your students in these gender challenges. In some cases, you may have to solicit parental or principal approval. On the other hand, some students may be ready for this challenge, so you will have to decide how to

incorporate these activities based on your assessment. The following are several ways to open discussions about gender.

Activities to use with classroom students (should be modified to suit grade level):

- Discuss new terms about gender and invite discussion and debate.
- Ask students to provide examples of nonbinary portraits of gender in the media.
- Invite discussion and debate about gender norms.
- Ask students to describe where and how they first developed their concept of their own gender identities. Why did they believe that to be true? Who told them? How were those beliefs socialized?
- Ask students to describe how they express their gender. Is that binary/nonbinary?
- Ask students at what age they began to challenge what they learned about themselves? What made them reconsider those beliefs?
- Discuss gender as performance versus gender as fixed.
- Reflect on if there was there ever a time where they thought their answers did not fit the images society had ingrained into them? How did they respond?
- Research former laws related to gender and have them look for bias. Reflect on current change.
- Review antidiscrimination laws.
- Research Title IX, its past, and its future.
- Research which states have nondiscrimination laws and understand how nondiscrimination policies work by state.
- Research which states have laws that privilege homosexuals and transgender people.
- Research which states discriminate against homosexuals and transgender people.
- Research which state laws exclude homosexuals and transgender people.
- Have a critical discourse analysis of a TV show or film on gendered language use.
- Have a discourse analysis of students' use of gendered language.
- Interview people in the local community who challenge the gender binary.
- Invite guest speakers who challenge the gender binary.
- Rewrite a scene or passage from a film (see Appendix B) or text (poem, play, or short story) and shift the use of gendered language so it affirms the characters.
- Deconstruct how mainstream ads reinforce the gender binary.
- Examine what kinds of TV commercials and TV shows are on at particular times and how that sustains the gender binary.
- Examine different genres of musical lyrics and how they affirm or contest the gender binary. (There are hundreds of musical performers who identify outside of the gender binary, see Appendix C.)
- Review clips in the media about how female politicians are compared to male politicians.
- Examine random pay scales in various professions and look for gender equity.
- Review the history of all human rights and all of the major social movements (civil rights, gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender/two-spirited, women, second-language speakers, bilingual, immigrants, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Latina/o Americans,

veterans, war dissenters, disabled, students with disabilities or special needs, and any other nondominant groups).

- Review the “isms” and unpack how prejudice and oppression manifest in students’ lives (see chapter 7, Miller, 2007c).
- Talk about what it means to be an ally and how students can become allies for others.

The following activities may be more risky, so first consider discussions with the principal, other teachers, and parents/guardians.

- Challenge students to dress outside of the gender norm (gender expression) for a class period or if successful and it is safe, for an entire school day.
- Invite your students to design a nonbinary gender day for the school with speakers, panelists, and poetry.
- Invite students to attend lectures of community presentations at local universities or colleges to expose them to different perspectives about gender

Keep in mind that students may be quite resistant to challenging the ways that they understand gender so try to be patient, not preachy, and continue to provide opportunities for them to engage in experiences that challenge the binary. Whether or not they agree with the nonbinary idea is not essential; it is more important to expose students to the inevitable changes that are emerging in the world.

It is also important to understand, for both your students as well as yourselves, the consequences of not addressing or challenging the gender binary. By introducing a different way of talking about gender, we can challenge some of the forms of gender oppression that exist. Our students will be better prepared for handling sexism, sexual harassment, bullying, self-injury, or even hate crimes. Sexism is the systemic oppression of individuals that privileges one gender over the other, and in the United States that is typically men over women (Miller, 2007c, p. 182). Generally stemming from a history of institutional policies and social values defined by men, this system operates to the advantage of men, and more often white men, and to the disadvantage of women. It is vital that we develop a social consciousness with our students around gender bias issues so as not to perpetuate oppressive gender-based hierarchies that are deeply entrenched in society. As we deepen awareness about gender oppression, we ultimately shift gender dynamics in dominant culture and may thwart attacks on individuals who fall outside of the gender binary.

Wrestling with the Gender Binary Inside and Outside the Classroom

This section draws upon empirical examples from my teaching of preservice teachers and illuminates how they have each been challenged to renegotiate their views about the gender continuum. When I consider how to design my syllabus during a particular semester, I take into account what is happening in my students’ communities, the nation, and the world at large. I try to choose texts and design lessons that best reflect my students’ cultures and values for that particular class or select texts about areas in which we need to enhance our understanding of humanity. When selecting texts, I ask myself what voices I need to have echoed back to my students. The answer often resides in the class itself. As I come to know my students

through the dialogic (Freire, 1970) and understand their issues and home lives, I become more informed so I can select authors who resonate with them and their own stories. I often teach works by authors of color and select authors who have been marginalized by dominant society. I also deliberately select texts that have characters or story lines that point to prejudice and that can help point to deeper sociopolitical issues (see examples in chapter 7, Miller, 2007c).

From day one, I raise examples that help students understand how power, privilege, and oppression have been institutionalized and through examples, essentially conduct a historical analysis of groups and individuals that that have been disenfranchised in hegemony. This scaffolding process fosters a larger context for understanding oppression and aptly prepares us to understand how gender is one form among many kinds of institutional oppression. The pedagogy I embrace, employ, and embody is a combination of liberatory and transformative mixed with the theory of critical literacy.

A liberatory pedagogy is one that seeks to educate students to act on and transform their worlds through acts of cognition first, and action second (Freire, 1970). Freire suggests that when we adopt a liberatory pedagogy, two distinct changes will occur: “when the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation,” and “in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all the people in the process of permanent liberation” (p. 54). In so doing, we help free the oppressed from the oppressor, which then activates the oppressed to become agents capable of acting on and transforming their worlds; thus, we emancipate the oppressed. Although our students are not oppressed per se, they certainly are embedded within a matrix that sustains a hegemonic power and that reinforces particular social values and morals. A liberatory pedagogy prepares them to think critically about their worlds and gives them the tools to be informed citizens so that when they need to act, they know how.

Lewinson et al. (2002) suggest that the field of critical literacy is defined by “disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple view points, focusing on sociopolitical issues and taking action and promoting social justice” through texts (p. 3). Therefore, critical literacy can be a vehicle through which identity is negotiated as texts bump up against the self. Since critical literacy is “political practice influenced by social, cultural and historical factors” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 1995, as in Hagood, 2002, p. 249) and is “committed foremost to the ‘alleviation of human suffering and [to] the formation of a more just world through the critique of existing social and political problems and the posing of alternatives’” (Hagood, 2002, p. 249), texts taught through a poststructuralist lens can be a way to help youth negotiate and affirm their identities as they make meaning of the world in which they live. A poststructuralist reading of texts can be a powerful way to assist youth in holding onto their authentic selves while it teaches them to interact with the world so they may act on it in a fashion that does not perpetuate hegemony or the status quo. Youth, with an affirmed authentic self, can seek to transform the world through a subjective self that does not ascribe to the construction that the school system seeks to impose upon them. Consequently, the world/environment becomes vulnerable to a new subjectivity as it transacts with authentic selves, free of construction.

Hagood (2002) contends that critical literacy should assist students in developing an understanding of how texts “produce particular formations of self” (p. 248). Texts are situated within certain social and cultural groups. For all purposes, texts are imbued by larger

sociopolitical issues of power that are associated in cultural and social groups. Texts reflect the changes in society, such as in how power may change within particular ethnicities, classes, and/or social patterns. In other words, as perceptions of ethnicities change, and as they may each gain access to positions of power and authority, texts reflect those changes. Our identities are impacted by their transactions with those texts, and when the texts shift along with the changes in society, so too do our identities shift. This means that from a poststructuralist perspective identities are constantly in flux.

An experience of one of my former undergraduate students, Matt, has stayed with me now for a couple of years. It emerged from a unit in an undergraduate humanities literature course in which I was teaching *Herland*, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Keep in mind that my students had been schooled in gender-inclusive language so they were quite ready for this activity. The background to the story is as follows. I was teaching a unit about gender normative behavior and doing an activity called the “Gender Box” (see www.glsen.org for more details). Essentially, the words *male* and *female* are placed next to each other in a box that looks like this:

Male	Female
•Breadwinner	•Soft, caring
•Hard working	•Stays home
•Unemotional	•Raises children
•Sports nut	•Committed
•Uncommitted	•Emotional
•Player	•Less educated
•Rugged	•Manipulative

Next, students are asked for words that describe typical gender behaviors or roles played by each. Typically this is quite lively and students tend to challenge each other. Once the box is full, start to have a conversation about what happens to people who don’t fit into these behaviors or roles. Generally students spout negative epithets such as “dyke,” “fag,” “butch,” “queer,” etc. Then, discuss how the binary has reinforced these negative perceptions and the consequences that may befall anyone who does not fit into the binary. Next, tell students that sometimes we fall within both sides of the box and we transcend gender norms and sometimes we don’t fit on either side of the box and we transcend gender norms.

After participating in this activity, Matt raised his hand and said, “Dr. Miller, I have always identified as a male, but now that I see this box, I don’t fit into stereotypical categories of male. Therefore, I must be transgendered.” I stopped and looked at him and didn’t know what to say. After contemplating a supportive answer, I said, “Matt, you can identify however you want.”

A preservice student named Samantha I taught in a methods course had an eye-opening experience in the middle school classroom where she was teaching. I had taught a unit in methods on the possible negative effects of bullying on students if left unattended, such as cutting, self-injury, acting out, depression, attempted suicide or successful suicide, risky behavior, and drug use. We examined statistics that revealed which groups of students were at particularly high risk for bullying (see chapter 3, Miller, 2007a). Prior to this students had, once again, been schooled with emerging terminology about gender.

Samantha decided to teach Tolan's *Plague Year*, a story about Molly and Barn who were harassed for their appearances, physical traits, and personalities. Samantha had to be cautious about what to talk about and bring up because she was teaching with a conservative cooperating teacher and was concerned about redress. She put bullying into a larger context that described why some people are bullied while also carefully introducing some of the emerging terms in Appendix A. At the time she taught this, she was very pleased with the outcome because students took it very seriously and even conducted a whole-school survey on who is bullied and for what reasons. Results were published in the school paper. Unbeknownst to her at the time she was teaching, a young woman who identified as male and who did not fit into the binary was ingesting Samantha's teaching. Two years after she left Samantha's course, she ran into her in the local supermarket. The conversation went something like this:

Girl: "Hi Ms. L. Nice to see you."

Sam: "Great to see you too. How are you doing?"

Girl: "Remember the unit you taught on bullying, well it has given me courage to be who I am."

Sam: "I am very pleased for you—that is so cool."

Girl: "Yeah, in fact, I started a gay/straight alliance at the high school."

Sam: "No way, that's fantastic."

We may not always know the impact we are making in students' lives but we must find the courage in ourselves to open new doors for students to walk through as they struggle to find their sense of place in the world. Samantha, seemed to have a stronger sense of self and even if she has no support in her life, she will always know that a person of credibility validated her sense of belonging. What more can we hope for?

What I realized from both Matt's and Samantha's experiences is that in broadening their awareness about gender norms, depending on where students are in their cognitive, moral, emotional, and psychological development, they will begin to be challenged by or challenge others about gendered offensives. Such awareness can diversify human experience and lead us to places that are still emerging during this and other spaces and times.

(Dis)Embedding Gender: Moving Between Spaces

In our commitment to grow as individuals, we must also stay actively involved in the areas of our lives that can enhance our classroom practice. This could mean staying active by watching all kinds of media, going to popular culture events, attending presentations and lectures, traveling, putting ourselves in situations that challenge our thinking, taking more courses, reading as much as we can (see Appendix D), and conducting research. Not only will we be better

informed but so too will the students whom we teach. I still have students who write me and teach me about new terms and ways they self-define, and I look forward to those letters and e-mails as a way to apply change in my own teaching life. Though it may not always be easy to teach about topics that may make us uncomfortable, if we don't, we are cheating our students out of being informed about the emerging contexts during any space and time.

Appendix A: Terms

Ag / Aggressive*: used to describe a female-bodied and identified person who prefers presenting as masculine. This term is most commonly used in urban communities of color.

Agendered*: person who is internally ungendered or does not have a felt sense of gender identity.

Androgyne/Androgynous*: person appearing and/or identifying as neither man nor woman, presenting as either mixed or gender neutral.

Berdache*: used to refer to a third-gender person (woman-living-man). The term berdache is generally rejected as inappropriate and offensive by Native peoples because it is a term that was assigned by European settlers to differently gendered Native peoples. Appropriate terms vary by tribe and include one-spirit, two-spirit, and wintke.

Bigendered*: person whose gender identity is a combination of male/man and female/woman.

Gender: expressions of masculinity, femininity, or androgyny in words, persons, organisms, or characteristics.

Gender Diverse*: person who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g., transgender, transsexual, intersex, genderqueer, cross-dresser, etc.). Also referred to as gender variant because it does not imply a standard normativity.

Genderqueer*: gender diverse person whose gender identity is neither male nor female, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders. This identity is usually related to or in reaction to the social construction of gender, gender stereotypes, and the gender binary system.

Intergender*: person whose gender identity is between genders or a combination of genders.

Pangender*: person whose gender identity comprises all or many gender expressions.

Sex: medical term designating a certain combination of gonads, chromosomes, external gender organs, secondary sex characteristics, and hormonal balances. Because usually subdivided into male and female, this category does not recognize the existence of intersex bodies.

Transandrogyny*: gender diverse gender expression that does not have a prominent masculine or feminine component.

Transgender: person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex. Sexual orientation varies and is not dependent on gender identity. A transgender person may or may not be pre- or post-operative; if s/he is, the individual is likely to refer to him/herself as transsexual. This has become an umbrella term for nonconforming gender identity and expression. Often associated with this term is FTM/F2M (female to male) and MTF/M2F (male to female).

Transsexual*: person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish to transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex.

Two-Spirited*: Native persons who have attributes of both genders, have distinct gender and social roles in their tribes, and are often involved with mystical rituals (shamans). Their dress is usually a mixture of male and female articles and they are seen as a separate or third gender. The term *two-spirit* is usually considered specific to the Zuni tribe. Similar identity labels vary by tribe and include *one-spirit* and *wintke*.

*terms from *Trans and sexuality terminologies* (Green and Peterson (2004)).

Appendix B: Young Adult Literature

(texts and films taken from pp. 43–44 of Miller, 2007a, *Unpacking the Loaded Teacher Matrix*)

Middle School Texts

Including gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender themes:

Alice Alone, Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

Alice on the Outside, Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

The Eagle Kite, Paula Fox

I Feel a Little Jumpy around You: A Book of Her Poems & His Poems Collected in Pairs, Naomi Shihab Nye and Paul B. Janeczko

From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun, Jacqueline Woodson

The House You Pass on the Way, Jacqueline Woodson

Risky Friends, Julie A. Peters

The Misfits, James Howe

The Skull of Truth, Bruce Coville and Gary A. Lippincott

High School Texts

Heterosexual (*made into a film):

Boys Lie, John Neufeld

Lucky, Alice Sebold

Out of Control, Shannon McKenna

Shattering Glass, Gail Giles
Speak,* Laurie Halse Anderson
To Kill a Mockingbird,* Harper Lee
Unexpected Development, Marlene Perez

Gay/bisexual themes:

Alt Ed, Catherine Atkins
Am I Blue? Marion Dane Bauer and Beck Underwood
The Drowning of Stephan Jones, Bette Greene
Geography Club, Brent Hartinger
The Perks of Being a Wallflower, Stephen Chbosky
Rainbow High, Alex Sanchez
Rainbow Boys, Alex Sanchez
Shattering Glass, Gail Giles
Simon Says, Elaine Marie Alphin
What Happened to Lani Garver?, Carol Plum-Ucci

Lesbian/bisexual themes:

Am I Blue? Marion Dane Bauer and Beck Underwood
Annie on My Mind, Nancy Garden
Color Purple, Alice Walker
Empress of the World, Sara Ryan
Keeping You a Secret, Julie Anne Peters
Kissing Kate, Lauren Myracle
Name Me Nobody, Lois-Ann Yamanaka
Out of the Shadows, Sue Hines

Transgender themes:

Define "Normal," Julie Anne Peters
The Flip Side, Andrew Matthews
Luna, Julie Anne Peters
My Heartbeat, Garret Freymann-Weyr
Standing Naked on the Roof, Francess Lantz
Written on the Body, Jeanette Winterson

Films

We encourage you to have discussions with your cooperating teacher, clinical supervisor, university instructor, and administrator if you intend to use any of these films. Some of these films are better suited for the methods classroom.

A Girl Like Me, *Billy Elliot*, *Boys Don't Cry*, *Beautiful Thing*, *But I'm a Cheerleader*, *Camp*, *Confronting Date Rape: The Girl's Room*, *Date Violence: A Young Woman's Guide*, *It's So Elementary*, *This Boy's Life*, *Ma Vie En Rose*, *Normal*, *School Ties*, *Speak*, *You Ought to Know: Teens Talk about Dating and Abuse*

Appendix C: Bands with Gender-Fluid People

The Cliks
 Rolling Stones
 REM
 New York Dolls
 All the Pretty Horses
 Scissor Sisters
 Girl Friday
 David Bowie
 Grace Jones
 Lipstick Conspiracy
 Lisa Jackson & Girl Friday
 Katastrophe
 Peecoaks
 Storm Florez
 Pepperspray
 Veronica Klaus
 Angel Wayward
 Georgie Jessup
 Harisu
 Bambi Lake
 Bitesize
 Gurlfriendz
 Transisters
 Angela Motter
 Peter Outerbridge
 Imperial Drag

Appendix D: More Resources about Gender and Sex Issues

Binnie, J. (2004). *The globalization of sexuality*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
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Note

1. For more information on transgender rights and current laws see the ACLU, <http://www.aclu.org/getequal/trans.html>; the Human Rights Campaign, <http://www.hrc.org/index.html>; the Transgender Law and Policy Institute, <http://www.transgenderlaw.org/>; the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), <http://www.thetaskforce.org/ourprojects/tcrp/>; and <http://www.mappingourrights.org> for current rulings on discrimination by state.

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