

HE, SHE, AND ME

HE, SHE, AND ME: HOW ELEMENTARY CHILDREN CONSTRUCT GENDER AND
RACE IN THE CONTEXT OF AN ANTI-BIAS CURRICULUM

By

JENNIFER BURKE

A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School - New Brunswick
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Education
Graduate Program in Education

Written under the direction of

Dissertation Chair

Dissertation Committee

Dissertation Committee

New Brunswick, New Jersey

October 2017

Abstract

This qualitative study details two iterations of a Design-Based Study implemented to examine how children construct their understanding of race and gender in the context of their elementary classroom when experiencing an anti-bias curriculum. The study revealed young children have a rigid understanding of the male/female gender binary, with both genders showing a preference for adopting masculine traits as a means of gaining social status. The study revealed that young children are impacted by cultural racism, and that the school community showed a tendency to be a color-mute space (Pollock 2004). Intersectionality in the classroom community of practice was seen in the experiences of Dallas, a third grade black female. Despite the curriculum's focus on exploring inequalities, with an emphasis on stereotypes, the study found that children held firm gender and racial schemas in place, which required the creation of a counterbias to alter.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Rationale for this study	2
Need and Significance.....	2
Literature Review	4
Race	5
Racial Identities.....	7
Race lessons with elementary students	10
Gender.....	12
How children use gender.....	13
Anti-Bias Curriculum.....	15
Literature Concerning Pedagogy.....	19
Theoretical Framework.....	21
Figured Worlds	22
Conclusion Worlds	26
Chapter 2: Methods.....	25
Justification for DBR Study	25
A Note About Racial Language	26
Educational Intervention: Anti-Bias Curriculum	27
Limitations.....	28

Research Questions	28
Setting	30
Participants	31
Data Collection	32
Data Analysis	33
Content Delivered During Data Collection	34
First grade.....	34
Third grade	35
The Role of the Teacher/Researcher	37
Chapter 3: Gender	39
Introduction	39
Part One: Learning Gender	40
Classroom Communities of Practice.....	43
Gender and Identity: Doing Boy Traits and Girl Traits	45
Physical Appearance	48
Play Time: Toys and Recreational Activities.....	51
Very Young Children: Gender Neutral Allowances and Permission for Incorrect Preferences	54
Part Two: Range of Masculinities and Femininities and Hegemonic Masculinity	59
Duality: Constructing Masculinity and Femininity	60
Gender and Power	63
Females Gaining Power by Acting Masculine	65
Tomboy Discussions	68

Tomboys and Feminism.....	76
“I’ve Never Been A Girl In My Life” Tomgirl Discussion	78
Part Three: Falling Outside of the Range-Transgender and Heteronormative	87
Maintaining the Gender Binary	87
Gender Nonconformity and Heteronormativity	95
Conclusions	97
Chapter 4: Race.....	98
Introduction	98
Part One: Cultural Racism: The Smog Kids Breathe	98
Part Two: Colorblind Racism and Colormute Classrooms	105
Conclusion/Implications	110
Chapter 5: Identity and Intersectionality	111
Dallas and Her Identity	112
Intersectionality and Peers.....	116
Ladies and Gentlemen: Who Gets To Be Royal?.....	117
Conclusion	121
Chapter 6: Impact of an Anti-Bias Curriculum	123
ABE Goal 1.....	123
ABE Goal 2	125
ABE Goal 3	129
ABE Goal 4	139
Chapter 7: Limitations, Implications, and Conclusions.....	143
Help! I’m Stuck in the Gender Binary.....	143

Shortcomings of the Curriculum	146
Implications	147
Implications for Anti-Bias Education	147
Implications for Teachers	148
Implications for Educational Research	151
Conclusion	152
References	154

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In Target my child pleaded with me to buy a pink horse drawn carriage that came with a plastic princess and prince figurine.

When you read that first sentence did you assume my child was a boy or a girl? I began this dissertation with an autobiographical sentence to demonstrate how raising children in American society is an act of genderization. As the mother of three young boys, I considered gender daily. On a constant basis, either intentionally or subconsciously, parents and the other adults in children's lives are saying and doing things that shape children's gender identities. Does a parent purchase the pink carriage for a boy, or does the parent tell him, "No, that's for girls"? What types of clothing do they buy for the child? What did they name the child? All of these decisions set children down a path towards creating a gender identity, and usually parents select from the two well trodden paths of male or female.

Adults in young children's lives also create a similar path for children regarding race. Children begin to form their understandings of race based on things that are said, or not said, when they begin noting and asking about physical characteristics like skin tone, eye shape, hair color and hair texture that they have in common with some people and are different from others.

Young children bring these racial and gender understandings with them into the public sphere. One important point of contact between other people with potentially divergent ideas on these critical topics occurs in a school classroom. I quickly became aware that I was going to have to compete with other influential factors in my sons' lives once they entered pre-school. Intellectually, I knew that their teachers and peers would add another complicated layer to the

information I provided at home. However, until my oldest son, who had never seen a Star Wars film in his life, began running around our home with an imaginary lightsaber looking for Darth Vader, I had not realized how impactful a schooling experience could be. When he told me that girls did not like to play Star Wars or Superheroes, he shattered my illusion that I was raising a gender-unbiased son.

As a mother, educator, and researcher I became fascinated with gender and race. I wanted to know more about how children understood race and gender, and how they used that understanding in the context of a classroom. I wanted to know what level of influence classroom teachers had, if any, to impact how students felt about race, gender, and social inequalities. I wanted to explore what would happen if I created an anti-bias educational experience for my students that directly addressed racial and gender stereotypes.

Rationale for this study

Despite decades of desegregation, a half century since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and 45 years after Title IX, racism and sexism are still prevalent factors in U.S. schools. In American society, gaps persist for women and minorities: school achievement gaps, wage earning gaps, incarceration gaps, and gaps in high paying high status professions such as STEM fields and corporate board rooms. It is said that education can change the world. If that adage is true, it is worth examining how children experiencing a public education think about race and gender.

Need and significance

The aim of this study was to learn more about young children's understanding of race and gender when situated in the daily experiences of participating in a classroom community that featured an anti-bias curriculum. This was done through the use of an anti-bias curriculum that

was created to educate children about race, gender, and stereotypes. Recognizing stereotypes is important because increased awareness of stereotyping and prejudice may improve stigmatized children's self- and group-esteem (Bigler & Wright, 2014). Lessons about inter-group biases can promote positive inter-group relations, beginning in early childhood (Hughes & Bigler, 2007). These findings suggest that if teachers are able to get children to be aware of stereotypes and prejudice then they might have better intergroup relationships. Ideally, these children would carry those positive views into adolescence and adulthood, which could positively impact racism and sexism on a societal level. This could be the foundation for large scale changes, when children are capable of thinking positivity about their own racial and gendered identity, and the identities of their diverse classmates.

As both the researcher and the teacher in this design-based study, I was able to gain insight into children's understandings and values regarding race and gender through microethnographic discourse analysis of lessons conducted within two classrooms over a two year period. I hope this study will add to the body of educational research by capturing children's experiences in classrooms with rich detailed descriptions of their discourses around race and gender (Connolly, 1998; Ausdale & Feagin, 2001; Paechter, 2007; Davies, 2003; Barron, 2014; Thorne, 1993).

Literature Review

This literature review will justify the need for this study by examining the available literature on race, gender, and anti-bias education in early childhood classrooms (defined as pre-school to grade 4). It will begin by addressing the relevant literature on young children and race, followed by the literature on gender. Next, the research on anti-bias curricula will be presented.

This chapter will conclude with an explanation of the theoretical framework that helped ground this study.

Race

In this study race is defined as a social construct that is not based in biological differences, but is used as a means of identifying people. It is manifested in society through individuals and institutions, and it has a profound impact on both individuals and society as a whole. (Ausdale & Feagin, 2001; Tatum, 1997; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1994)

Research shows that race and racism are rarely addressed in early childhood education. One reason for this avoidance is that the teaching profession is predominantly white, and research shows white adults are not comfortable talking about race or racism. Copenhagen-Johnson (2006) cites studies done by Hughes and Chen (1997) and Phinney and Chavira (1995), which report black families have discussions about race, privilege, and discrimination in ways white families do not. Copenhagen-Johnson explains that white families do not have similar conversations because they are either uncomfortable talking about race, afraid to say something that might be misconstrued or seen as hurtful, or because they believe the colorblind racist construct that acknowledging race would only “stir things up” and create problems for students.

What lies behind the fear of “stirring things up” is a refusal to acknowledge white privilege. People of color are forced to acknowledge the inequalities in society because they experience them on a persistent basis. White people, who hold the dominant position, are not afflicted by constant oppression, so most lack a desire address the inequity, other wise referred to as “stirring things up” (Bonilla Silva, 2003). Refusal to acknowledge white privilege is either

done out of ignorance or as a means of preserving their privileged status, but whatever the cause the result is a lack of meaningful dialogue occurring in classrooms.

In order to avoid the unpleasantness of modern day racism, schools present racism as an eradicated problem that was fixed by the Civil Rights movement (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006). In a study of a second grade classroom when asked if they saw racism happening today a little white boy responded, “No, because MLK changed everything” (Rogers & Mosley, 2006). When racism is historically situated in the past colorblind racism is allowed to continue, because white children believe that race is no longer relevant in society. Since they do not experience oppression, white children are unlikely to be put into positions where they are forced to think differently. They will never have to consider their own privileged position in society, and will falsely believe they achieved their personal successes solely as a result of their hard work. Thus the meritocratic thinking behind white privilege is continued and colorblind racism is allowed to perpetuate. Children who are not white will receive a confusing mixed message, in school they will learn that race no longer is relevant, but their lived experiences force them to realize the inaccuracy of this lesson. (Polite & Saenger, 2003)

Rogers and Mosley (2006) used critical discourse analysis in a second grade classroom and found that not only do white teachers situate racism in the past, but they also find ways to use language to distance white people from the role they play in institutionalized racism. Rogers and Moley (2006) examined a literacy curriculum centered on the civil rights movement, and discovered that the teacher, students, and even the texts themselves use “white talk.” They define “white talk” as language that serves to insulate white people from examining their/our individual and collective roles in the perpetuation of racism” (Rogers & Mosley 2006). For example, in children’s literature the author often does not explicitly write “black” or “white” in

the text, but the race must be inferred from the illustration. This can contribute to color muteness. Rogers and Mosley say this practice, “this practice reifies a silence around race, including not marking whiteness as racialized. Race-neutral language negates the social, historical, and political contexts and fails to challenge white dominance and privilege.” (p. 475)

Another example Rogers and Mosley (2006) found was a white boy who used the term *they* to refer to people of color; a move they analyzed as functioning to distance “them” from “him.” This same student referred to African Americans as “the blacks,” which functioned to represent African Americans as a group of people having a monolithic identity, rather than as individuals. It is an example of “white talk” when white people refer to members of the white race as individuals, but they place people of color into one large uniform group (McIntyre, 1997). This research reveals is that even when race is the featured topic in a classroom, and even when the goal is a more just society, what is actually said promotes the racist status quo.

Racial identities.

There are several different ways to conceptualized how children understand race, racism, and their own racial identities. This dissertation is aligned with the current work in fields of sociology and anthropology in defining race as a social construct and not a biological difference between various groups of human beings. Although it is a social construct, it has real meaning in society at an individual, institutional, and systemic level. This is true for schools, classrooms, and students (Hinton 2004; Van Ausdale & Feagin 2001; Omi & Winant 1994.)

Developmental psychologists Aboud (2013) and Nesdale et.al (2003) explain children’s awareness of racial and ethnic identities as an internal and individual process relating to notions of egocentrism. They explain that as children gain the ability to ‘decentre’ they can recognize

the perspective of others. They use social identity theory to explore how children react favorably to “in-group” peers and reject or have negative views of “out-group” others.

About’s research is applicable to anti-bias education, because she explored the contradiction between pro-white and anti-black statements made by white children, which seemed to bear no effect on who they chose to play with in mixed ethnicity groupings (About, 2013). About then investigated ways to teach respectful, instead of prejudiced, views of black people to white children (2013). The first attempt was through literature that featured black protagonists who were “friendly, smart, strong, helpful.” These books did little to change the students negative view of Blacks. About had more success when she exposed children to stories that she called “cross-ethnic friendship stories.” Children age 7 developed more positive views towards Blacks, but children ages 5 and 6 did not. They made comments like, “Those children’s can’t be friends because they look different.” or “I don’t like her hair.” (p. 333) About goes on to posit, why is it so easy for children to learn bias, and so hard to unlearn bias and adopt more respectful attitudes. She quotes research done with young children that was unsuccessful at getting young children to change their minds about a racial or ethnic minority group. About’s developmental psychological rationale is that older children, ages 7-8 are less egocentric and have social cognition that is more flexible, which makes them more receptive to anti-bias message.

About calls these new more flexible attitudes, *counter-bias*, which she defines as the ability to make negative associations with one’s in-group and positive evaluations of one’s outgroup (2013). White children continue to prefer their ethnocentric preference for their ingroup, but they are able to proscribe negative qualities to other white people, and make positive evaluations of their outgroups. About sees this counter-bias as being additive, so that

counter-bias is added to a child's thought process, but it does not subtract or erase previously held bias beliefs. Therefore, she thinks the work of schools is not to get children to unlearn bias, but to get them to learn new counter-biases and to seek situations to help strengthen them. In the anti-bias curriculum I created children were encouraged to create counter-biases when I read positive stories from picture books featuring people from many races, ethnicities, and individuals with gender non-conformity. The discussions that children had explored stereotypes, which gave them the opportunity to strengthen their newly developed counter-biases.

Prior research on race in elementary schools and in early childhood educational settings has found evidence that children use race in sophisticated and often discriminatory ways. Van Ausdale & Feagin (2001) witnessed preschool children using derogatory terms, and witnessed white children refusing to allow a black child access to their baby doll. Park (2010) cites prior research (Goodchild & Gloger, 2005; Simpson, 2007) stating that white children show a bias against black people. Nesdale & Flessner (2001) found five year olds in a mixed ethnic community have a developing awareness of which ethnic groups are more financially secure and higher regarded than others. They then compare their standing as a member of one group versus the other ethnic groups in their community. Ryan and Grieshaber (2004) point to a study done by MacNaughton (2001) that used Persona dolls to represent four different racial groups in Australia. Of the one hundred children in the study nearly all of them identified the white Anglo doll as being the "real" Australian instead of the Aboriginal doll. What is even more interesting is when asked to identify which doll was most like them; they also identified the Anglo-doll even if they had a non-Anglo background. Ryan and Grieshaber (2004) use this study as evidence that children have an understanding of the racial power relations within their culture.

Race lessons with elementary students.

A review of the literature finds a small collection of case studies done at the elementary level within classroom settings (Allen, 1997; Marriott, 2003; Hollingworth, 2009). Most feature white teachers engaging with students in an anti-racist or anti-bias curriculum, and the focus of most of the studies are the teacher's pedagogical choices and ethical tensions that arose for the teachers based on their choice to include racial discussions in their classrooms. All the studies found the work was, at least initially, difficult to engage in. In some cases this was due to the discomfort of the white teachers to discuss race (Marriott, 2003), while in other cases the limitation stemmed from trying to adjust the school's mandated curriculum to fit their anti-bias/anti-racist aims (Allen, 1997). Others, like the teacher in Hollingworth's case study, did not want to address white privilege and issues of power, because she felt those were inappropriate topics for elementary students (2009). All of the teachers felt their choice to include racial discussions in their curriculum provided rich learning opportunities for their students to examine issues related to fairness, but none of the studies examined the precise ways their students' understanding grew or changed. Most of these case studies describe their curricular work in great detail, and provide antecedal insights that the students gained while experiencing this curriculum. It is the aim of this study to focus on the student's discussions to examine their emerging understanding of race in society.

Hughes, Bigler, & Levy (2007) conducted a significant research project on elementary students and race. These psychologists attempted to assess how children's racial attitudes were mediated by their cognitive and affective responses to racial lessons using quantitative psychological assessments. The students in this study were put into two different groups, and exposed to two different biographies. One group received lessons utilizing biographies that focused overcoming racial conditions, while the other group heard biographies that made no

reference to racial discrimination. These “history lessons” done in this study were conducted over 6 days. The students were read the text and asked to respond to pre-determined interview questions. The researchers did a regression analysis to determine that exposure to information about racism was associated with higher levels of valuing of racial fairness and higher levels of racial guilt in European American children.

As an educator, I have some serious concerns about the methods used in this study. The first concern is the researcher's understanding of a lesson. They use a 20 minute book reading as a their “lesson”. Educators know that the selection of a text is the first step in constructing a meaningful lesson, but how the text is used is critical to student’s understanding. The discussions that are allowed to occur during and after the reading of the text provide opportunities for students to fit information into their existing schema and to build new schema. This is where knowledge is constructed. It is also a time for researchers to watch students’ cognitive and affective responses occur authentically. I argue that the non-classroom sterile conditions for this psychological experiment yielded results that could potentially be very different if administered in a classroom that utilized an anti-bias curriculum fostered around inquiry and discussion. I hope that the qualitative approach taken by my study yields further useful insights into how children cognitively and affectively respond to racial lessons.

Gender

“I’m not really scared of dolls. I just think they are gross.”

-Kwame , male first grade student 2015

Few things in society have more influence over an individual’s life than their gender. Even before a child is born, people want to know what the child’s gender will be. With this knowledge, a name can be selected, nurseries can be decorated, and clothing and toys can be

purchased in accordance with society's acceptable norms. This serves as a tiny baby's first indoctrination into the appropriate socially constructed understanding of their gender. While adults are the ones inflicting gender on newborns, even extremely young babies begin to take in cues from their surroundings. They internalize and interpret these messages, thus beginning the process of becoming their own social agents (Davies 2003, Paechter 2007). Many of these socially received ideas concern gender. What begins as pink frills and blue sneakers builds into a more complex understanding of gendered behavior. These norms become entrenched and normalized, so that a six-year-old boy does not hesitate before declaring to his classmates his conviction that dolls are gross.

Davies (2003) explains the difference in using the term gender instead of sex. She asserts that there is a conceptual difference between the term "sex role" which usually refers to a biological self and a "gender role" which is associated with a social self. This dissertation focuses on the social aspect of how children construct their gender identities. This paper is consistent with other research in the field that does not assume that gender differences are results of biological differences between bodies that are labeled as male and female, but instead are differences that result from the way individuals actively construct their gender identity within the confines of their figured world (Connell 2005; Davies 2003; Paechter 2007). Further gender specific conceptual theories and definition will be defined in Chapter 4.

Connell (1996) applies Foucault's theoretical framework of creating hegemony to gender. Historians and anthropologists agree that there are multiple masculinities in any given society depending on time period, social class, and ethnicity. However, usually there is one form of masculinity that is the most highly regarded in a particular society. Connell labels this most prized form of male gender expression, *hegemonic masculinity* (1996). In Western society the

hegemonic masculinity that is valued is aggressive, heterosexual, and largely tied to athletic prowess (Pascoe, 2007).

How children use gender.

Connell (2010; 2005) contends that masculinities do not exist prior to social behavior. It is not a biological predetermined factor. It stands in sharp contrast to the popular idea that young boys are inherently different from young girls. Connell refutes this concept, which stems from the biological belief that children's anatomy manifests itself in behavioral differences between the sexes. Connell cites evidence that hormones such as testosterone cannot be solely blamed for any behavior. In fact, social structures have been shown to cause bodies to produce hormones, therefore society inflicts masculinity onto male bodies instead of the other way around (Connell, 2005).

Another popular explanation of children's behavior is that boys and girls are part of different cultures, an idea refuted by Thorne as a result of an ethnographic study done during the 1976-77 school year with fourth and fifth grade students (Thorne; 1993). Thorne instead examined the way school activities are structured to do "borderwork," in essence separating "boys and girls" into "the boys" and "the girls." This reifies the necessity of a gender distinction, where it does not inherently need to exist and did not exist prior to the school creating it. This is done through classroom practices like boy's lines and girl's and "boys against girls" contests.

The literature asserts that gender comes into existence as people construct it in their everyday lives (Connell, 1996; Davies, 2003; Paechter, 2007). In the mid 1980's, Davies explored how young children enact their "correct" gender in preschool settings. Young children choose certain behaviors and adopt particular beliefs because are trapped in society's gendered

binary. *Gender binary* is a term used to explain the duality of gender, as every individual must either be one or the other. Davies explains that children who “do” their gender incorrectly, for example-if a boy wanted to wear a dress; they are ridiculed by their peers. Davies considers this practice of shaming anyone who deviates from his or her gendered norm as *category maintenance* work. This practice reaffirms the normative gendered expectations and therefore firmly entrenches the gender binary.

Thanks to category maintenance, young boys work hard to create an appropriate masculinity, in accordance with the hegemonic masculinity valued by their society. In this study I found evidence to suggest that the girls in my classes were also working hard to achieve some variation of this masculinity as well. They realized that they gained social status amongst their peers by taking up masculine preferences, for example by stating how much they liked video games and sports instead of dolls. The reverse is not desirable, whereas boys do not gain any social standing by demonstrating favor for feminine things. This concept is explored further in Chapter 3.

Several books address how elementary students construct masculinity and femininity, (Connell, 1996; Davies, 2003; Paechter, 2007; Thorne, 1993), but there is a need for this study because much of the work that has been done explored how children learn gender in elementary classrooms through social processes and school based practices. It does not examine how teachers may impact this process with a specifically designed curriculum aimed at fostering critical thinking about gender with children. Much of the contemporary work on gender and curriculum in classrooms deals with LGBT issues (Blaise, 2005; Rice, 2002). Not much is done with how teachers impact gender understanding through curriculum. One notable exception is a cases studies done by Ryan, Patraw & Bednar (2013) which focused on one elementary teachers

experience educating cisgender children about transgender youths to preventing bullying and create allies.

Anti-Bias Curriculum

This section will explain what an anti-bias curriculum is and justify its use in this study. The anti-bias curriculum I created and implemented was built using Freire's critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy focuses on questioning the established order of society so that education does not contribute to the reproduction of inequality, but instead can lead to social change (Gadotti 1994, Darder 2002). This curriculum was designed with the Freirean intention of liberation from oppression, which is why I chose to focus on students lived experiences with stereotypes. This was an attempt at applying Freire's concept of *conscientization*, in which the new technique is learned which contains a critique of present circumstances and an attempt to overcome these circumstances (Gadotti 1994). By examining racial and gender stereotypes, the students would undergo a "liberation process" where they would be able to recognize and rid themselves of the influences of the dominate consciousness.

Two examples of critical pedagogy commonly used with young children are a multicultural curriculum and an anti-biased curriculum. Most multicultural and anti-biased curricula aim to address racial and ethnic discrimination (Pelo 2008, Banks 1994).

Exposing children to multiracial and multiethnic curriculums to increase their acceptance of other races is not a new concept. In his book, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education*, (1994) James A. Banks outlines a brief history of studies done on curriculum interventions done with young children in the hopes of altering their attitudes about race relations. Banks writes that in 1952 a study by Trager and Yarrow, done using a democratic curriculum on racial attitudes, resulted in a positive effect on the attitudes of both first and second grade students as well as their teacher (1994). Litcher and Johnson did a study in 1969 that showed second graders' attitudes were altered positively as a result of a multicultural curriculum.

Studies have been done on the effects of simulation with children to foster their understanding of discrimination. One study done by Weiner and Wright in 1973 where students wore armbands and experienced discrimination as a result of their colored arm band. Two weeks after this simulation the children expressed less prejudiced attitudes. Another simulation that has been so highly publicized it has “attained the status of classic” (Banks 1994) was done by Jane Elliott with her all white class the day after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In her simulation with third grade white students, she discriminates against them on the basis of eye color. In the 1970s and 1980 multicultural education focused on studying holidays and cultures from around the world. This historical outline illustrates that the goal of instilling racial acceptance in young children is not new.

In a true multicultural curriculum other cultures are not add-ons to a pre-established Eurocentric curriculum, but instead are the main focus (Banks, 1994). However, one critique of a multicultural curriculum is that it too often becomes a “tourist curriculum” (Derman-Sparks, 2008). A “tourist curriculum” highlights the “strange” and “exotic” features and holidays of various ethnicities. For example, a class will study Cinco de Mayo as part of their study of the Mexican culture. They will dress up in sombreros and ponchos. Critics argue that while this practice is often fun and exciting for young children, they are not taught Anglo holidays- Christmas for example- in this manner. Derman-Sparks explains how this practice of “visiting” other cultures before “going home” to an Anglo culture frames the cultures being visited as the exotic “other” while Anglo traditions are allowed to dominate (2008). This practice also does not account for individual differences within a cultural group nor the contemporary lived experiences of people of these cultures living within America today.

For this reason, I chose to create an anti-bias curriculum based on the work of Derman-Sparks. She grounded her work in early childhood classrooms around Freire’s pedagogical principles, and entitled it *anti-bias education* (1989). Derman-Sparks points out that from a very

young age children are aware that color, language, gender, and physical ability are connected to privilege and power. Derman-Sparks notes that all children are harmed when spoken and unspoken messages about difference are allowed to be absorbed, without ever being considered and questioned.

Anti-bias education is an educational approach that was create by Derman Sparks (2008, 2010) to help teachers combat the biases their students experience and provide them with a framework for intervening then they witness biased behavior in their own early childhood classrooms. Anti-bias education is not a formalized curriculum, with prescriptive modules or pre-written lesson plans and teacher scripts. Instead, it is an educational approach that teachers are invited to adopt and embed into every aspect of their classroom discourse and practice. Perhaps the best way to define the entire approach is through its four foundational goals.

ABE Goal 1: Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.
ABE Goal 2: Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.
ABE Goal 3: Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.
ABE Goal 4: Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions (Derman-Sparks & Edwards 2010).

I use the term anti-bias curriculum to describe the educational experience I created for my students. This is intentional, because the anti-bias curriculum I created for this study contained a

set of targeted skills: the Anti-Bias Educational Goals created by Derman-Sparks (2010). I worked to embed these goals into social studies content that was pre-established by the school district I worked in. Since this unit contained specific learning standards, lessons, assignments, and materials used to organize and teach I deemed it a “curriculum,” as opposed to the broad term “education” that Derman-Sparks outlines, which is more of an educational framework. The distinction is important because some parts of this dissertation focus on things the children said as part of their year long experiences with me as their teacher (a woman who believes in the principals of anti-bias education), but some elements are a direct result of the specific anti-bias curriculum I created.

Literature concerning pedagogy.

I am not aware of any quantitative research on the effectiveness of an anti-bias curriculum, but some qualitative articles have examined its use in various settings. One such does was done on an anti-bias curriculum that was infused into a second grade language arts unit as demonstrated by Andrew Allen in his 1997 article, *Creating Space for Discussion about Social Justice and Equity in an Elementary Classroom*. Allen introduced the unit with a discussion of what it means to be “fair.” The class then listened to different accounts of an event that happened on the playground. They use this experience to create definition of bias and equity. Allen built on this foundation of biased with the class by having them examine how characters are depicted in various works of literature. The class sorted books into categories to find patterns. The class then read stories from villain’s point of view, such as *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka. Next, the class re-wrote and drew stories with different type of character inserted in the plot. All of these activities were built around the anti-bias goal of recognizing unfairness and appreciating various perspectives.

Allen's work was inspirational for my study, because many of the instructional approaches Allen used were supported by research to be strong educational practice. For instance, when teaching children about race many researchers suggest using children's literature. (Copenhaver-Johnson (2006) Hinton (2004) Schieble (2012) Boutte, Lopez-Robertson, Powers-Costello (2011). There are many ways teachers utilize children's literature in the classroom. One method is through whole class read alouds. Morgan (2009) advocates using read alouds because culturally authentic children's books contain difficult subjects that might be best examined with the guidance of an adult. As teachers interact with students during read-alouds, they can lead discussion on concepts like race, culture, and discrimination. Focusing on these concepts can make them meaningful for young students Banks (1994). Adults can model respectful ways to discuss these challenging topics, and can serve as moderator between students to facilitate meaningful dialogue. When using literature it is recommend that a combination of works of fiction and nonfiction be used to ensure that issues are not presented and viewed as unreal and to provide concrete and authentic information. Teachers should pay attention the sources of their selections and seek multiple perspectives on topics Boutte, et al. (2011)

Educational researchers Brookfield & Preskill (1999) and Rubin (2011) advocate discussion as an important pedagogical method that is essential to democratic citizenship. Discussion was a key element of this anti-bias curriculum. The students were expected to verbalize their ideas. This skill was developed as children listened to their classmates and considered their perspectives while forming their own thoughts and opinions.

Regardless of specific content or the method of instruction, researchers agree that the best lessons are those that are relevant to students because they are connected to their own experiences (Lee, Ramsey, & Sweeney 2008, Brown & Brown 2011). Children should be the

ones leading the discussions. Teachers engage the children in dialogue and provide information when appropriate, or lead the children to places they can gather the information for themselves. As a result of this research, literature and child centered discussions became the foundation of my anti-bias curriculum.

Theoretical Framework

This study challenges the hegemonic assumption that young children are innocent beings lacking agency. Despite a growing body of research to the contrary, some adults consider young children “blank slates” or “empty vessels” that need to be filled by more knowledgeable adults. Contemporary researchers reject this tendency because they acknowledge that young children have their own agency, and they are not empty vessels into which adults put their own ideas, concepts, and attitudes (Ausdale & Feagin, 2001; Thorne, 1993; Davies, 2003; Greishaber, 2008; Paeschter, 2007; Renold, 2005).

There is a growing body of qualitative researchers who explore how children construct their understanding of the world from their daily interactions (Ausdale & Feagin, 2001; Thorne, 1993; Davies, 2003; Greishaber, 2008; Connolly, 2003; Paeschter, (2007, 2010), Ryan, Patraw & Bednar, 2013; Reay, 2001) In this research, children are seen as their own social actors. They are not incomplete beings who need to be trained by complete adults (Thorne, 1993; VanAusdale & Feagin, 2001). This empowered view of childhood gives children agency in their learning and in their own construction of reality. It departs from the socialization framework where adults, such as parents and teachers, are seen to have the power because they are the ones who do the act of socializing on the passive and less powerful children (Thorne, 1993).

These developmental psychology assumes children can or cannot truly know or do something based on their cognitive and psychological capabilities. Piaget and other early

developmental theorists assumed children were incapable of certain understandings, such as having non-egocentric thought prior to age seven (Andersen & Andersen 2009). In the past, egocentrism has been used to avoid discussion on social justice issues, such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequities. If one assumes a young learner is incapable of having non-egocentric thought, then it is pointless to have classroom discussions focused on complex societal problems, because the level of empathy required to have the conversation is above their developmental level.

Egocentrism diminishes with age. Aboud (2013) found that 7-9 year olds were more willing than 5-6 year olds to develop counter-bias thoughts. This study was done with a first grade class (ages 6-7) and a third grade class (ages 8-10). The children were heading out of the preoperational stage of development and into the concrete operational phase which begins around age 7. They were therefore capable of non-egocentric thinking that would facilitate the creation of counter-bias thoughts and the ability to develop empathy.

Figured worlds.

This study employed the socio-cultural “figured worlds approach” as its theoretical framework. Figured worlds is useful because it rejects egocentrism in favor of looking at societal levels of identity construction. It is not an individual process, but a societal one that individuals participate in. Barron defines identity as, “being shaped by the opportunities (or lack of them) offered to individuals to participate as accepted or novice members, supported by ‘old timers’ on the road to becoming ‘full member of the identity communities they encounter.’” (p. 253) He then applies this definition to Holland’s figured world’s conceptualization using the premise that identity is constructed in a figured world where meaning is negotiated, dependant on one’s positionality (determined by social divisions such as race, gender, economic status) and

emergent as one comes into contact with and responds to discourse and practice in their world. (Barron 2014, Urrieta 2007, Holland et al 1998,).

The four characteristics of figured worlds are as follows:

(1) Figured worlds are cultural phenomenon to which people are recruited, or into which people enter, and that develop through the work of their participants.

(2) Figured worlds function as contexts of meaning within which social encounters have significance and people's positions matter. Activities relevant to these worlds take meaning from them and are situated in particular times and places.

(3) Figured worlds are socially organized and reproduced, which means that in them people are sorted and learn to relate to each other in different ways.

(4) Figured worlds distribute people by relating them to landscapes of action; thus activities related to the worlds are populated by familiar social types and host to individual senses of self. (Urrieta, 2007, p.108)

Using these characteristics, my classroom is considered a figured world the children enter into each September. Each year, the students in the class come together to create a unique classroom community. The student's personalities are constructed prior to coming into my classroom, but also evolve and change as a result of the dialogue and interactions we collectively experience together throughout the year. My classroom is situated in a preschool to fifth grade school building, within a specific central New Jersey suburban town. Within my classroom the children are actively constructing their own unique positionality as males, females, tomboys, whites, blacks, immigrants, Guatemalan-Americans, Algerian-Americans, etc using the language

and discourse available to them. My classroom does not float free of the society, but it is not merely at the whim of larger societal forces. This is where figured worlds diverges from social construction theory. In this theory, the individuals within the figured world, through their discourse and practice, are actively creating new ways of being and new identities for themselves. This is an exciting theory for an anti-bias educator, because it supposes that teachers can add anti-bias messages to the discourse and perhaps alter how children participate in classroom practices. This can alter how children view both themselves and others.

Figured worlds is consistent with the work of critical race theorists like Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) who use the postmodernist concept that norms are not objective truths, but are instead relational to other factors such as race, gender, and socioeconomic level, and that they are in “in flux under conditions of power.” This is helpful because it takes into account the fact that children are limited in the ways they can express their identity because of the options available to them. When critical race theory is combined with figured worlds it forces one to consider the role of power within the classroom. Who has power and what identities do children taken on because they are more powerful than others? What role does the teacher play in the uneven power structure between children and adults?

Figured world’s approach is helpful for this study, because it allowed for the exploration of children’s prior racial identities and racial thoughts, which allowed me to consider if they were altered by experiencing the anti-bias curriculum. Because my students were racially and ethnically diverse, this theory was a more useful way of viewing my students than Aboud and Nesdale et. al’s in-group and out-group framework. Logistically, in-group and out-group was impractical, because in my classroom there might be only one student who is from a particular ethnicity. Would this child have no “in-group” peers? Would everyone be their “out-group?”

Another large problem with the in-group and out-group framework is that this method presupposes what a student's racial identity is and does not take into account the children's agency when constructing their own racial identities. It also supposes their racial identity is fixed, and not a dynamic identity in flux.

Figured worlds is an agentic view of childhood that presupposes students actively construct their identities while situated in the context of their classrooms (Holland et al, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Children bring into the classroom their own unique experiences, which coalesce in the collective classroom into a new unique situated identity. It is a specific identity unique to that setting. It is this unique position that this study was able to study. Assumptions about who the children are and how they identify outside of the classroom are not available because this research was done in the context of a shared learning environment, the classroom and school where I taught. These identities could also be considered in flux, in light of the new anti-bias education they were receiving. The hope is that children experiencing critical pedagogy become alert to injustices around them. This is a relevant framework for this study because new found knowledge of racial and gender inequities might change student's personal assumption about their identities. Change could indicate the curriculum was effectively pushing children towards the four goals of anti-bias education (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010).

Conclusion

This study is grounded in research that suggests young children are capable of learning about racial and gender inequalities. The next chapter presents the methods used in this study to explore children's understanding of race and gender when situated in the daily experiences of participating in a classroom community that featured an anti-bias curriculum. Chapter 3 presents

the findings on gender. They suggest that children in first and third grade see gender as a fixed binary, but that individuals have the freedom to chose how they perform their gender. The findings also suggest a preference for masculine things, even among female students. The findings on race in Chapter 4 demonstrate that children have a preference for whiteness, and that they are limited by color muteness. Chapter 5 provides information on the children's intersectional identities. Chapter 6 evaluates the effectiveness of the anti-bias curriculum in meeting the ABE Goals. This dissertation concludes with potential implications of this study.

CHAPTER 2 METHODS

After the daily hectic whirlwind that is teaching in an elementary classroom, my love of learning drove me back to graduate school for my doctoral degree. While I enjoyed my evenings engaged in theoretical discussions, I was often frustrated that the theory and research I was readings had little relevance to the boisterous commotion I just experienced in my classroom. This disconnect led me to explore educational research methods that would enable me to marry theory and practice, in the pursuit of creating new pragmatic theory teachers could use in their classrooms. My academic advisor provided the solution to this conundrum, when she introduced me to Design Based Research (DBR). This chapter will begin with an explanation of the basic tenets of DBR that were used to form this study, along with the research questions used to frame it. The chapter will then go into detail about the methods of data collection and analysis, as well as the participants and setting.

Justification for DBR Study

DBR was first described by learning science researcher Ann Brown in 1992 (Rubin 2016) as a method of studying education in context, and not divorced from actual schools in laboratory setting as was common at the time.

DBR starts with an assessment of a problem, or identifies a need for improvement (Barab & Squire 2004). My experience as a teacher and my graduate course work made me realize the plethora of problems that occur in elementary classrooms when it comes to teaching race and gender. Social studies topics receive very little attention in the context of early childhood class (Fitchett & Heafner, 2010; Good et al, 2010; Pascopella, 2005; VanFossen, 2005), and even less time is devoted to exploring race and gender, even though they form the foundation of children's

personal identities. (Marriott, 2003; Allen, 1997; Hollingworth, 2009). When race and gender are taught they are done in superficial ways that often do a disservice to the actual lived experiences of the students in the classroom. At the time of my study racial tensions were very high, with the widely spread issue of police brutality and the growth of the Black Lives Matters movement receiving national media attention. Gender issues were also salient due to the 2016 presidential election between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

With these issues in mind I identified the problem for my study as the children's inability to talk about race and gender because they lacked both the language and experience to do so. Nor did they have the ability to recognize potentially harmful stereotypes they encountered. This curriculum was necessary because gender and race are two large components of students' intersectional identities. Race and gender are also two factors that impact the level of oppression individuals confront (Crenshaw 1989). Research has suggested that an increased awareness of stereotyping and prejudice may improve stigmatized children's self- and group-esteem (Bigler & Wright, 2014). It has also suggested that lessons about inter-group biases can promote positive intergroup relations, beginning in early childhood (Hughes & Bigler, 2007)

A Note About Racial Language

Reading Tatum's book "*Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting together in the Cafeteria?*" *And Other Conversations About Race* (1997) was a life changing experience for me. In this dissertation, and in my classroom, I used the terms for racial groups defined in Tatum's book. *White* is used to refer to people of European descent. The term *people of color* is used to refer to groups that have historically been targets of racism. That includes people from African descent, Asian descent, Latin American descent, and indigenous peoples. *Black* is used instead of African American, because as Tatum points out the term is more inclusive since it refers to

people who are targeted by racism and referred to as black who are not descents from Africa, for example Afro-Caribbeans or Afro-Canadians (p. 15) When I refer to people's ethnicities, and I try to use the terms the students used to self-identify. For example, Christina was a first generation American citizen who self identified as "Costa Rican" and sometimes as "Spanish."

Educational Intervention: Anti-Bias Curriculum

Like all design based studies, this study sought to determine if the educational intervention I created was beneficial to the learners and produced a desired outcome. In this study, the educational intervention was the anti-bias curriculum. The four goals of an anti-bias education are used as the measure of effectiveness for both iterations of my curriculum done in the first grade and third grade classrooms. In Chapter 7, I provide examples of student discourse as qualitative data from both the first and third grade classrooms as evidence of students achieving (and failing to achieve) these goals. Using DBR, once a problem is identified an educational intervention needs to be applied.

A key difference between DBR and other methods of research done in classrooms is the end goal of a formation of new knowledge. (Barab & Squire, 2004) Through this curriculum I was able to engage students in dialogue that allowed me gain insight into how children think. I was able to access what they value and how those value are translated into their identities. Through this method I was able to collect rich ethnographic information. The descriptions of the student's experiences with this curriculum and the theories that I propose based on their experiences were specific to those students in the two classrooms where I provided instruction, but through the two iterations of the curriculum I was able to come up with some assertions about the anti bias curriculum I created and about how my students understand race and gender. I believe these findings have larger implications for the field of early childhood education.

Limitations

As with many DBR projects, I have generated rich descriptions, but not statistical proof (Anderson & Shattuck 2012; Rubin 2016) While this is a limitation of this work, it does not mean that this project does make many potential contributions to the field.

Research Questions

The follow two research questions informed this study: 1) to what extent and in which ways do elementary students understand and describe racial and gender differences between individuals; 2) how does participating in an anti-bias curriculum shape student's views on race and gender?

Questions focusing on students' experiences with race and gender.

Research sub-questions about students' experiences with race, gender and the anti-bias curriculum further focused this study. :

Gender Identification	How do students live their gendered identities in a school setting?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What terms do children used to speak about their own gender and the genders of others? -Who (or what) do the children believe selects an individual's gender? -Do children view gender as a fixed category? -Are there times when gender does not matter?
Gender Binary	Do children ascribe to the duality of gender?

	<p>-How do the children explain the gender binary?</p> <p>To put it in children's terms, how do they explain</p> <p>"What makes a girl a girl and a boy a boy?"</p> <p>-Is either gender more highly regarded than the other?</p>
Daily implications of gender	What meaning do children assign to gender?
	<p>-In what ways does gender enable or limit their experiences?</p> <p>-In what ways does gender matter in the context of the school day?</p> <p>-Do the children see gender discrimination as a daily concern?</p>
Racial Identification	What terms do children used to speak about their own race and the races of others?
	<p>-Is race a fixed concept?</p> <p>-When the children act, do they show fluidity in their understanding of race?</p> <p>-Who (or what) do the children believe selects an individual's race?</p>
Daily implications of race	What meaning do children assign to race?
	<p>-Is any race more highly regarded than the other?</p> <p>-In what ways does race enable or limit their experiences?</p>

	<p>-In what ways does race matter in the context of the school day?</p> <p>-Do the children see racial discrimination as a daily concern?</p>
--	---

Questions about instruction.

This study explored the following aspects of anti-bias curriculum implementation:

Usefulness of anti-bias curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do students and teachers interact in an anti-bias curriculum?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent and in which ways an anti-bias curriculum a useful instructional strategy for addressing issues of racism and discrimination in an elementary classroom?
Impact of pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do students learn, and what mechanisms are responsible for that learning?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What instructional tools and pedagogical strategies are effective in fostering discussions and building understanding of racial and gender discrimination?

Setting

This study occurred at Stuyvesant Elementary School (all names of places and people have been changed for anonymity) a central New Jersey school that is racially and socioeconomically diverse. According to the 2010 census, the suburban town has a population of 12,165. The median household income was \$70,643, with 6.4% of the population in poverty. 23.67% of the population was foreign born. 14.7% of the population under 65 years of age was without health insurance. The elementary school's population is 37% is Hispanic, 35% white, 12% Asian, 12% black, 4% labeled as two or more races, 1% Pacific Islander, and 1% American

Indian. 38% of the students receive free or reduced lunches. (National Center for Education Statistics 2015).

Stuyvesant Elementary School is the only elementary school in the town, serving approximately 900 students from preschool to fifth grade. The class sizes fluctuate each year, with typically 20 students per classroom. There are usually between 5-7 classes at each grade level from kindergarten through fifth grade. The large brick buildings sits on a sizeable grass lot, flanked by a playground on both sides and soccer and baseball fields in the rear. The building has had numerous expansions since it was built in 1957 to accommodate the growing population of the town.

Participants

In the first grade classroom there were seventeen students, seven girls and ten boys. Nine students qualify for free or reduced lunches, and at the time of the study the school district identified one of the students as homeless. Four of the students qualified for special education services. In addition to having socio-economic diversity the children are racially and ethnically diverse. Four of the students are Hispanic, four white, three black, three from mixed racial families, two Indian, and one student from the Philippines. The general education teacher in this classroom was a white woman in her late twenties.

Consistent with the population of Stuyvesant Elementary, the third grade class is also extremely diverse. There were twenty-one students in the third grade class, 12 girls and 9 boys. 11 students qualified for free or reduced lunches. As with the first grade classroom, there was both socio-economic diversity as well as racial and ethnically diverse. Six of the students were Hispanic, eight white, five black, one from a mixed racial family, and one student was from Algeria. Both the general education co-teacher and I are white females in our thirties. These

diverse perspectives created a fertile ground for discussions about differences, which will be presented in the following chapters on gender, race, and intersectional identities.

Data Collection

Data was collected over two years in classrooms where I was a part of a co-teaching team. The bulk of the study was conducted during the implementation of a six-week anti-bias curriculum that I created initially for first graders, and then modified the following year for third graders. This equaled approximately 30 video taped lessons in first grade and another 30 lessons in third grade. The curriculum was divided into two units, one focusing on gender and the other on race. The lessons were taught for forty-five minutes each day in a general education classroom with special needs students. I was the special education teacher in the classrooms with a general education co-teacher. Due to my interest in social studies education, both years I delivered all of the social studies instruction throughout the year, and my co-teachers facilitated.

The Board of Education in my district granted me permission to do this study. I then obtained written consent forms from every student's family to participate and have their students filmed. In total roughly 60 lessons were video recorded. The videos of instruction were transcribed and later coded.

In addition to the videotapes, I collected work the students completed. I also took field notes throughout the study. These were useful to help me mold and shift the curriculum and to record moments when any of the topics we were addressing in the anti- bias curriculum came up organically as salient concern to the students when the video camera was not rolling, such as during language arts instruction or while walking in the hallways.

Data collected from first iteration	Data collected from second iteration
Videos (later transcribed and coded) Self-Portraits	Videos (later transcribed and coded) Drawings of gender stereotypes

Students drawings of royalty Student drawings of their perception of “cool” Field Notes Memos created while transcribing	Students drawings of royalty Field Notes Memos created while transcribing
---	---

Data Analysis

Discourse analysis is appropriate for this study due to its power to expose language as a tool for the active discursive reproduction of oppressions (Fairclough 2003, DeLeon 2007). However, the literature revealed that discourse analysis is unreliable for ethnographic work, since most ethnography relies on field notes instead of verbatim conversations. A notable exception is one specific type of discourse analysis called *micoethnography*. Atkinson, Okada, and Talmy (2011) provide this definition, “ethnographic microanalysis of audiovisual recordings is a means of specifying the learning environments and processes of social influence as they occur in face-to-face interaction” (p. 91). This method was selected because it allowed me to serve as both the teacher during the lessons and the qualitative research as I analyze the discourse used in the classroom.

The first level of data analysis occurred while watching the recorded lessons and making memos of my observations. I then went through these memos and my field notes to create initial inductive codes (Wolcott, 2003). I coded for stereotypical gender thinking, flexible thought processes, racial bias, gender bias, and personal examples for when the students used their home lives as evidence in a conversation. Videos that contained pertinent codes were then re-watched and meticulously coded by the author applying the principles of microethnography that is done through “intensive, repetitive, rigorous and fine-grained micro-analysis of video-recorded data.” (Atkinson, Okada, & Talmy 2011) This style relies on a narrow focus that examines a specific “slice of life”, in the case of my study a single line of dialogue, within a larger discussion, embedded in a lesson, within an anti-bias unit.

Combing through the video a second time along with the video transcriptions allowed for a second level of axial coding, where the original inductive codes were again applied and newer inductive codes emerged that were relevant to both the data and research questions (Saldaña, 2013).

Content Delivered During Data Collection

First grade.

The first activity in this unit I labeled the “Pick-a-Friend” activity. In this activity I had a field of 20 pictures of children and I asked them to pick which ones they would go up to on a playground to play with. Their selections and discussions they had with peers to discuss their selections was used as an initial assessment of their comfort level using racial and gender terms. I later had the students pick which student from the good looked the most like themselves. We discussed the pros and cons of picking people who are either similar to yourself, verse selecting peers who are different.

The lessons done with the first graders began with the intention of familiarizing them with racial/ethnic vocabulary (white, black, Hispanic, Filipino, Indian). To do this we used the poetic 1973 book by Arnold Adoff, *Black is Brown is Tan*. I emphasised the point that people are usually labeled as either white or black, but that their skin is never really actually the color white or black. These lessons were aligned with ABE Goal 2: Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.

I then read the book *The Colors of Us*, by Karen Katz, (1999) in order to begining to work towards ABE Goal 1: Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities. The students did the same activity as the book’s protagonist,

mixing paints together until they were able to create their own unique shade. They named their shade before using it to create a self-portrait.

We then began to address ABE Goal 3: Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts. This was done by readings *Courtney's Birthday Party* by Loretta Long (1998). In this book a girl who is white and a girl who is black are best friends at school, but when it came time to inviting people over for a birthday party the white girl's mother does not include her daughter's black best friend. This book was used to demonstrate discrimination using language and a scenario familiar to young students.

We then began to look at gender roles, by readings Robert Munsch's *The Paperbag Princess* (1980). We discussed their thoughts on how they believed a prince and princess should act, compared to how the characters acted in the story. Then we discussed toys and activities, and what sorts of children engaged in various recreational activities. I asked the children to draw a picture of what they thought was cool, in order to see what types of things they personally valued.

I concluded the unit by readings *10,000 Dresses* by Marcus Ewert (2008) to get the children to reconsider the gender binary and the role of gender in their daily lives.

Third grade.

The unit for the third graders began by having them compare the differences between the Richard Scarry's 1985 original *Best Word Book Ever* and the 1999 remake. We discussed the differences, and why the author/illustrator would make those changes.

The class compared a photo I found of a classroom in 1960 to our class's photo. The discussion during this activity led us to explore the clothing males and females wore during the 1960s,

which made the teacher realize how all the images we found were of white people. We discussed how that is unfair, and how things around us like TV and the internet can discriminate.

The unit then focused on gender stereotypes. The class watched a video of three year olds giving stereotypical gendered responses to various questions. In the video, an adult held up a Barbie doll (female) and a Ken doll (male) and asked the children a series of questions. “Which one likes to clean the house?” The children in the video pointed to the Barbie. “Which one goes to work?” The children pointed to the Ken. “Which one takes care of babies?” The three-year-olds pointed to the Barbie. This was to gauge whether the third grade students would see these three year olds’ responses as outdated stereotypes. Next, Disney videos were used to demonstrate gendered behavior in movies.

We explored gender stereotypes through the use of continuum discussions. The class was asked to stand on a continuum according to how much they agreed with the statement: women should do the cleaning. We explored many stereotypes, such as: men are lazy, only men can do sports, only women take care of babies, and dancing is for girls.

Next, classic fairy tales and contemporary fairy tales were read for the children. They made a list of character traits for the male and female characters to notice patterns in gendered behavior in the fictional characters. The children then drew their own images of royalty.

The children did the same Pick a Friend activity that was done with the first graders. The tendency for selecting a peer with a similar race and gender was discussed.

Next, I read aloud *10,000 Dresses* and *My Princess Boy*, by Cherly Kilodavis (2010) to foster discussions about multiple ways to enact gender and to get children to consider options for gender outside of the male/female gender binary.

The unit concluded with students drawing or writing everything they knew about stereotypes.

The Role of Teacher/Researcher

It is important that I acknowledge my own background and how it will impact this study as I collect and analyze data. I am a married, cisgender, middle class, white woman in her mid 30s raising three young white sons. For the past twelve years I have been a special education teacher at Stuyvesant Elementary School where this study took place. (all names of places and people have been changed for anonymity).

Child centered researchers often advocate that research ought to be done *with* children rather than on children. (Barker & Weller, 2003) To achieve this result I discussed the intention of my research with the students. I told them I needed their help to understand what they think about important issues like stereotypes, discrimination, and fairness. I told them that I wanted to pay close attention to how they were thinking about themselves and their classmates as we discuss race and gender and I wanted to hear how their thoughts and feelings change throughout the course of the unit.

This design-based study provided me with valuable insight, because I served as the designer, the researcher, and the teacher (Collins, Joseph, & Bielaczyc, 2004). As such I had the control to alter the design of the instruction to best meet the goals of this study. I benefited from a pre-established relationship with the students, which enabled me to design my instruction to best fit their individualized learning styles and maximize our class discussions.

This role is not without some drawbacks. Davies (2003) and Van Ausdale (2001) gained access children's world by positioning themselves as "non sanctioning" adults. They achieved this by avoiding involvement in children's disputes on the playground, and not scolding children

for any reason. The researchers played with the children only when the children initiated the interaction. Although these adults could not fully immerse themselves in the world of children, they did the best they could to align themselves with the children they studied, instead of the adults, in the school environment.

Due to my position as their teacher, I could not achieve this non-sanctioning status. As a teacher I had unavoidable duties and responsibilities, which limited how my students behaved in my presence. This became clear to me during the portion of the study I ran in the first grade classroom. I asked one boy to help me understand which one of the pictures from a set of several images he thought looked like a baby. Although the camera clearly recorded him the day before calling one of the pictures a baby, the student adamantly insisted he never said that. Age brings social status, and thus calling someone a baby is very degrading to first graders. I believe he denied what he thought was an allegation because he believed it was rude to call someone a baby and feared that he would get in trouble if he confessed.

This episode led me to realize that as a teacher there were things that my students would not reveal to me, but thankfully they did not demonstrate the same restraint around the video camera. It only took three lessons before the students completely ignored the camera. The conversations they had amongst themselves, when only the camera was in earshot, revealed really important information about how they understand the role of race, gender, and status in society.

CHAPTER 3 GENDER

Introduction

Qualitative researchers reveal their personal positions in order to account for inherent bias (Creswell 1998), so I must disclose that this chapter was selfishly written. It was conceived out of my deep insecurity as a female raising three boys under the age of five. I was nagged by the gender issues in my own home, and I found myself constantly questioning my parenting choices. Were my husband and I actively constructing our son's gender identities for them when we bought them sporting equipment? How about trucks and trains? How many items did I need to purchase for my boys off the pink shelves in the toy department to counteract their masculine toy collection that kept growing with every birthday and holiday? How much do I encourage behavior that society labels as feminine such as crying and ballet dancing?

As a mother, I was searching for validation of my parenting choices. Which led me to question: how do young children construct their gender identities? Outlined in this chapter are the answers I found to this initial question, which lead me to understand gender as a socially constructed, participatory practice that is historically situated. But how exactly does a child “do” masculinity and femininity today? What is the range of acceptable practices? And what happens to children if they perform their gender contrary to societal norms, outside of this acceptable range of behavior? Luckily, I didn’t have to look very far to find help answering these complex questions. I had over twenty “experts” in my elementary classroom.

Analysis of both first and third grade students’ interaction with an anti-bias curriculum provided deep insight into how children understand the concept of gender and their own gendered identities. Much has already been written on children and gender, so this chapter will begin with the theories on how children learn gender that were used to inform this study. First,

this chapter will explore how children use this knowledge to actively construct their gender through their daily selection of behaviors into the dualistic binary of masculine and feminine. In the next section of the chapter, I explore the multiple masculinities and femininities that the children in my classes displayed. I argue that these ranges of behaviors reinforced the gender binary even though they favored androcentrism. In the third section of the chapter I assert that children engage in category maintenance work when children fail to conform to the heteronormative gender binary.

Part One: Learning Gender

Social learning theory asserts that through observation and modeling children learn and then demonstrate behavior. These behaviors are either reinforced directly through rewards and/or punishments. Social learning theorists apply this concept to gender. They assert that young children learn from adult's responses to their behavior what characteristics are feminine and masculine. A classic example is if a young boy is reprimanded or ignored for crying instead of being held and comforted he will learn not to respond with tears to future similar situations. He will learn that showing weakness and crying is not a masculine behavior (Wharton 2012).

But in this example, how does the boy learn that crying is feminine, and not just a bad thing for anyone to do? What makes it a gendered behavior? Cognitive theorists would say that the young boy employed *gender schema theory* (Wharton 2012, Bem 1993). In a society, like America, where gender distinctions are strong a child will learn to use gender as a means of making sense of their daily lived experiences. Gender becomes a way to process information. Bem (1993) explains that children use gender as a lens to make sense of their experiences and to process new information (Wharton 2012, Bem 1993). Gender schema theory is a system of sorting social reality based on the cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity. Everything

can be sorted using gender schema, people, behaviors, attitudes, and objects. Bem asserts, “American culture is so gender polarizing in its discourse and its social institutions, children come to be gender schematic (or gender polarizing) themselves without even realizing it.” (p.125) Upon reflection, I realized that I often got the student’s attention by loudly saying, “ladies and gentlemen” or sometimes “ok, boys and girls.” Even my habitual way of addressing a crowd of students reinforced the polarity of gender.

The children in my study often exhibited signs of applying their gender schema. For example, when decorating for Halloween, Christina, a third grade student, started referring to the spider she was assembling as a she. I was curious about her choice to label the seemingly androgynous spider as female and she confidently explained it was a girl because girls have eyelashes. A closer inspection of the spider indicated it was indeed drawn with a slight curl on the outside corner of the eyes that Christina considered an eyelash. This example is evidence of the lens of gender that children view the world through. Christina has developed her gender schema to include the idea that eyelashes equates to femininity, and therefore everything, even personified arachnids could be sorted for gender by their physical appearance.

The labeling of the spider as “she” is useful to deconstruct the gender discourse in which children engage. Using her gender schema, Christina cited the existence of eyelashes as “natural evidence” of femininity. In Christina’s mind it is a feminine traits to have curled eyelashes. This is an example of how children use particular discourse as a regulatory “truths” about gender. It is how children create certain gendered expressions as “normal” or “natural” (Renold 2005).

Gender construction has much larger societal implications than Halloween crafts. When I began teaching the anti-bias unit, I showed the third grade students a brief video where three

year old children exhibited gendered stereotypical thinking. In the video, an adult held up a Barbie doll (female) and a Ken doll (male) and asked the children a series of questions. “Which one likes to clean the house?” The children in the video pointed to the Barbie. “Which one goes to work?” The children pointed to the Ken. “Which one takes care of babies?” The three-year-olds pointed to the Barbie.

I wondered whether the third grade students would see these three year olds’ responses as outdated stereotypes. Would they see them as problematic or accurate? Immediately after the video many students looked surprised, so I asked them what they thought of the three year old’s responses. Christina exclaimed, “They learn fast!” Many heads around the room nodded in agreement. Riley raised her hand and when called on said, “Like, like, like they all got it correct.” Michael confirmed Riley’s thoughts using similar language, “I think the kids were saying the right things.”

Christopher, one of the six students in the third grade class who received special education services, was the first to offer a more detailed explanation, “The girl was there to see and dress the baby.” I tried to clarify his response by asking, “So you think the kids were right? Girls usually take care of babies?” He nodded in agreement, adding “and clean the houses. The boys were working a lot.” For Christopher, these young children’s answers matched his gender schema. Females take care of children and tend to the housework, men leave the home and go to work.

The children used the binary language of schooling, where answers are either right or wrong and the binary language of gender, where characteristics and behaviors are either masculine or feminine. In the views of Christina, Riley, Michael, Christopher and about half of their classmates who nodded in agreement, these three year olds had defined gender correctly. In

this way my students were assimilating prior gendered knowledge into their pre-existing gender schemas. In the language of poststructuralists, the children in the video were performing their gender, and then the students in my class interpreted this normative gendered performance as correct.

Classroom Communities of Practice

But how do children develop these schema? My first graders provided some examples of this process. Young children are constantly assimilating new knowledge into their existing schema. This process is not done in isolation, but is influenced by their community of practice (Paechter 2007). In the case of a classroom community, this often means learning from peers the legitimate behaviors of how to participate in the community. My co-teacher and I watched this process unfold for a new student in our classroom. A new boy to our room, Adrian, selected a pink piece of paper for his center work. Deepa, who had also joined our class mid-year, but before Adrian, offered him what she viewed as a useful bit of information on how to do gender appropriate behavior in our classroom community. She told him not to use pink because it was for girls. Without comment, Adrian accepted this new information and was about to throw the pink paper away. My co-teacher stopped him and said that anyone could use any color paper. Adrian did not throw the paper away, because he did not want to disobey his teacher, but a few days later when I intentionally laid out a stack of blue paper and a stack of pink paper every single student selected their paper according to gender, including Adrian. All the girls chose pink and the boys chose blue. Not a single student chose the paper that was associated with a gender other than their own. Adrian had learned that in this classroom community, despite the teacher's view, pink was a female color. His gender schema now contained this information and led him to select blue, along with his male peers.

In this first grade classroom, the insistence on gendering color continued despite the efforts of the teachers. Brandon protested when I hand him a purple crayon. When I asked him why he was upset he told me, “Because that’s a girl’s color.” When I played naive and asked him, “What do you mean girls color?” He calmly explained, “Purple is a girl’s color.” I continued to play ignorant, “ That doesn’t make sense to me. If that’s a girl’s color, then what is a boy’s color?”

Brandon was ready to share his gender schema with me. “You know, like orange. Or blue.” He gestured to the colored pencils I gave the other boys in my group. I had assigned these colors completely randomly, based on a handful that I had grabbed hastily from the bin. I tried to take this opportunity to teach an anti-bias mini-lesson to Brandon, because I wanted to get him to question his gender schema. I said, “Oh, but I really like orange and blue and I’m not a boy.” Brandon huffed, then sighed and declared, “Forget it!” He used the purple pencil out of obedience, but his tone of voice and slouched shoulders indicated he was clearly not happy about it.

Teachers play an interesting role in a classroom community and in gender schema construction. Sometimes they have little power over what the rest of the collective community views as legitimate participation (Wenger 1998, Paechter 2007). Brandon had strictly constructed schema for gender, that I as an adult outside of his peer group was not allowed to alter. I did not realize it at the time, but I was not really a legitimate member of Brandon’s community of practice, in the same way that Mrs. Foote was not in Adrian’s when she told him anyone could use any color.

Sometimes, however, an adult could be used as justification for operating outside the strict gender rules. For example, the entire class was painting spring flowers for our bulletin

board. I was assigning various students spring colors, so that a wide range of pastel shades would make the display visually appealing. I had a pale orange, yellow, pink, purple, and blue. I assigned Angelo pink. Although he spoke little English, he immediately questioned my assignment by asking, “You have to do all the colors?” Angelo knew that in his classroom community pink was a girl color. It matched his schema for a female behavior. When he asked me if the class **had** to do every color it was his way of seeking confirmation to perform his gender incorrectly. It was only after I asserted we as a class were responsible for every color, that he accepted it was ok to be “girly” in this particular instance and use pink. After I gave him permission to cross the gender binary by using the other gender’s color, vindicating his action by explaining that I needed all the lovely shades on the board, he complied and painted his flower pink.

Gender Identity: Doing Boy Traits and Girl Traits

Children’s gender schemas go far beyond color. It is my assertion that children define their gender identity, utilizing their own gender schema, as a series of personal preferences for traditionally masculine or feminine things. This gendering process happens so early that children view it as natural and are unaware that it is occurring. In my classroom, the children indicated that individual preferences determine if a person selects masculine or feminine items and activities. Examples of this would include a girl who may show a preference for the “boy trait” of getting dirty, or a boy may show a “girl interest” in ballet. Part Two of this chapter addresses what the children constructed as the acceptable ranges of gendered behavior, and in Part Three discusses children who fell outside of this range. This section focuses on how the children used their binary gender schema when making personal decisions, such as selecting play activities to engage in, and how this was part of forming their gender identities.

The process of developing a gender identity is an ongoing practice in which children continuously engage. For instance, while experiencing the anti-bias curriculum, the children used their gender schema to categorize traits as either “boy” traits or “girl” traits. Their analysis of feminine and masculine came down to a series of personal preferences. For my analysis, it was critical to note that children continually perform their gender. It is something that they “do” through their everyday social relations. (Davies 2003, Walkerdine 1989, Renold 2005, Paechter 2007, West & Zimmerman 1987). The selection of preferences, such as style of dress, toy selection, and recreational activities are ways of doing their gender.

This idea of “doing” one’s gender stems from the feminist poststructuralist perspective. Much like gender schema theory, poststructuralist theory does not assume gender is biological, and it is not a socialization process done to young children by more knowledgeable adults (Davies 2003, Walkerdine 1989, Renold 2005, Paechter 2007). Instead it is a process that occurs, and the children themselves are actively involved in it through their **discourse** (socially organized frameworks of knowledge and meaning) (Renold 2005). Applying the feminist poststructuralist perspective, the students in this study construct their concept of gender within their society, and are therefore limited by the discourse available to them. This discourse limits how they understand what it means to be masculine or feminine, in the context of creating their own gendered identities.

Feminist poststructuralist perspective explains that people in a society are limited by the discourse available to them (Davies 1991). As previously stated, in the third grade class I began my exploration into gender stereotypes with a brief video of three year olds giving stereotypic responses to questions. The pedagogical justification for this video was to open a discussion on

gender stereotypes. But the fact that the children in the video were making a selection between two dolls reified the gender binary.

As an educator, I found myself struggling with ways to get the students to challenge this binary, because I did not have many available options for operating outside of it. The English language is limiting when it comes to pronouns. For instance, when I read them a book featuring a transgender protagonist, we all struggled to use the proper gender pronoun. Jovan tried so hard to summarize what was happening in the story when he said, “No, he’s dreaming that, no she’s dreaming that she’s a no, he’s dreaming that he’s no-she that-but he’s a she. NO. He’s dreaming that he’s a she.” Jovan attempted to say that the main character had dreams where “he” was able to be a “she” and wear beautiful dresses. While Jovan was cognitively capable of understanding this concept, he struggled to express it clearly because of the gender pronouns.

Gender discourse goes much deeper than pronouns. For instance, the children often used the terms “boy things” and “girl things,” as they did not yet have a full understanding of the more adult terms “masculine” and “feminine.” The remainder of this section features examples of children’s gendered discourse actively classifying their world and themselves through the lens of masculine or feminine. When I attempted to interrupt this binary through a picture book read aloud in which the protagonist’s gender was undefined, the children struggled to understand the book and became frustrated with it. In the story, the main character wanted to identify as a girl, but everyone in his family kept asserting that he was a boy. As you will see later in this chapter that activity confused children more than it expanded their thinking. This reification of the gender binary is an example of the post-structuralists limitations of available discourse.

This binary gender discourse is not confined to my classroom, but it is constantly occurring throughout society on a global, regional, and local level (Connell & Messerschmidt

2005). For these students, the language their families spoke at home was gendered, as was the discourse of the shows, movies, and songs that streamed directly into their existence from their televisions, tablets, and smartphones. They hear it, filter it through their gender schema, attach meaning to it, then they embody it. They bring these understanding with them into the classroom and construct with their peers their own local community of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991, Paechter 2007) By doing this they become a part of that same process that reifies gender- both for themselves and for others.

The next part of this chapter features the children's understanding of gender identities as a series of choices including how individuals dress and what they chose to do. The children in the study demonstrated how these preferences came with social consequences.

Physical appearance

Gender is not just a cognitive, but an embodied experience. It is something the children understand through their bodily experiences. One way that an individual embodies their own gender identity is through their physical appearance. Throughout my study, children looked for physical clues to assign individuals the "correct" gender. They took these physical cues and check them against their gender schema. This was done in the first grade classroom when we welcomed Tanvey, a new female student with a very short hair cut. Angelo look at Tanvey, and then looked at me. "She a boy?," he queried. The language Angelo used is indicative of this limited discourse. He recognized Tanvey's pink backpack and skirt as feminine, so he selected the feminine pronoun: she. However, Tanvey's closely cropped pixie cut did not fit with his existing gender schema for female, so he has to ask me if Tanvey is a boy.

Not wanting the newcomer to feel bad, Mrs. Foote used this teachable moment for a brief story about how when she was younger she had very short hair. Because Mrs. Foote is now

grown, with long straight blonde hair, this story confused some of the students, causing someone within earshot to call over, “Wait, you were a boy?” Mrs. Foote had to explain, “no I was a little girl with short hair, shorter than Tanvey’s.” The children accepted her explanation and went about their daily morning routines. Mrs. Foote continued welcoming Tanvey into the classroom by showing her where to put her things.

This story is an illustration of the power of gender schema, and the limitations of students’ discourse. The discourse is not limited because they are children, but because American discourse is so gendered that it is impossible to welcome a new student without having a conversation regarding their gender. Children feel a strong need to sort their new peer into the appropriate category of the gender binary, and to do this they utilize their gender schema concerning physical appearance.

When doing a class read aloud of *10,000 Dresses*, a picture book that features a transgender individual, the third grade children also used hair length as way of determining gender.

Maria: um probably it might be a girl because she might just have short hair
JB: but then why would her parents think she was a boy?

Maria tried to suggest that the main character was really a girl, but that she had a short haircut. This was inconsistent with the book, because the book said several times that the protagonist, Bailey, was a boy. Maria tried to explain the gender confusion as a mistake in hair length. It made more sense to Maria that Bailey would make a “mistake” as a female having short hair then to be actually want to be the opposite gender. This illustrates the power hair length has in the gendering process.

Clothing selection is another important aspect of physical appearance that is gendered. As previously stated, gender is historically situated. I wanted the students to explore this

concept, so I had the third grade students compare and contrast a class photo from 1961 with their own, taken in 2016. The children first noticed that the children's clothing looked dressier, some even used the word "formal," to describe the slacks, button down shirts, and dresses worn in the 1961 image. One student noted how the children were lined up by gender in 1961 while the current class was instead organized by height. When I asked the students why they thought we did not do that, Taylor was quick to point out that parents would think it was unfair. I think it is worth noting that gender was not the only difference the students picked up on. They also pointed to the lack of racial diversity, the large number of students with fewer teachers, and the fact that the students in the photograph appeared not to be smiling. However, the gendered physical clothing choice was among the first things noticed by most students. When I split the class into groups and asked them to come to a consensus on what the most important difference was between the 1960's class photo and our 2016 picture, Riley provided this answer:

Riley: like they they don't have clothes like what we have, like they all don't have clothes that are the same. And the girls have to wear dresses and the boys have to wear pants

JB: so why do you think that was so important?

Riley: because like it's a big difference from our group because girls have to wear dresses every day.

The wearing of dresses was a significant difference for Riley. Riley is active in many sports programs in her town and only chose to wear a dress to school once the entire year. Being forced to wear a dress every day would be a very large change for Riley, and thus she considered it a significant difference in how she was able to express her femininity in 2016 compared to children in 1961.

The gendering of bodies based on clothing selection was one important way children read the gender of others and construct their own gender. As the following section will show, the selection of toys and recreational activities was another important process.

Play Time: Toys and Recreational Activities

Jackson: My sister used to have lots of Barbies

JB: Ok, and did you play with them?

Jackson: No. 'Cause I had different toys

From the point of view of the children who participated in my studies, very few things were gender neutral. For instance, a toy was typically either a “boy toy” or a “girl toy.” A style of dressing was categorized as boyish or girlish. An activity was either a masculine one (playing football) or a feminine one (playing with makeup). As in the quote from Jackson above, boy toys and girl toys were just “different.” This difference was viewed by the children as both intrinsic and self-evident.

The contemporary gendering of toys was evident in discussions the children had when I read the first graders the 1972 book *William's Doll* by Charlotte Zolotow. When I asked the class to explain what William's dad was doing when he bought him a train set and basketball Janiya offered this explanation “He just buy him regular boy things.” Janiya's use of the word “regular” implies that not much has changed in how toys are gendered by children. Although Janiya identified these toys as “boy” toys, she was one of several students in the class that indicated William, or my young son, should be allowed to play with a doll if he wants to, “You should let him play with it.” The children in this study indicated a high level of acceptance of children who wanted to play with toys. When I asked a small group of students if I should allow my then three year old son to play with a doll they decided to put it to a vote. Only two of the seven decided I should ban my sons from playing with dolls. Although many students favored allowing both genders to play with certain toys that were not traditionally associated with their gender, but at the same time they reified the notion that a toy or behavior belonged more to one gender than the other.

Sports was one example of an activity that all children usually defined as masculine. “I’m a girl and I do girl stuff but I also like to play sports alot.” Taya’s assertion that she is “a girl who does girls stuff”, would indicate that she does not believe her desire to play sports is a feminine characteristic.

Sports came up often in both classrooms, and most children think of sports as a male activity.

Ariel: um I think it’s gender neutral.

JB: gender neutral alright how come?

Ariel: because girls and boys can play basketball and it’s really about that’s why I think it’s gender neutral.

JB: okay does anyone feel differently? Taylor

Taylor: I think it’s for boys

JB: why?

Taylor: cause most boys are really into sports

JB: okay. Jonathan that’s what you were going to say?

Joseph: I was going to say boys because boys are more interested in basketball except for Luisa

JB: okay. And Riley

Riley: um I think it’s um gender neutral because um because because like I play rec basketball and there is NBA girls basketball so yeah.

Ariel and Riley both considered sports to be gender neutral, but even Riley had to use gender language to cite the existence of a “girls NBA” as proof of sports being gender neutral.

Taylor and Jonathan both believe that sports are for boys. Taylor states it as a nature fact, “cause most boys are really into sports” and Jonathan can only think of one peer, Luisa, who is the exception to his schema, thus providing him with no need to accommodate his gender schema for sports.

This is an examples of how children apply their gender schema, and how it limits their understanding of gender and their own ways of creating their gendered identities. Christina, who self identified as “sort of a tomboy” said:

I chose both (genders) because when I- I usually don't like- I usually don't always wear boy clothes or something like that. But um, I don't act like a boy. I act like both because I'm like, I play with Legos and that kind of stuff and Shopkins.

This statement indicates that Christina prefers things that she considers to be both masculine (boys clothes and Legos) and feminine (non-boy clothes, and Shopkins). Shopkins are small plastic toys depicting random objects. For instance, a birthday pack of shopkins contains a slice of cake, party hat, birthday crown, and juice box. All these items are personified through the addition of eyes and sometimes arms. These toys are packaged in pink and purple, and they are traditionally found in the "girl" section of the toy department. For Christina, the option to chose both existed for her, but seen in Part Two, she was not comfortable wearing the label "tomboy." Several times she used the term "normal" when referring to her gender identity. There is a strong desire for children to conform to gender norms, and to be considered "normal" in their classroom communities. This would include exhibiting behaviors that are considered appropriate for their gender, including their selection of toys.

I had initiated the toy discussion with the third graders with the intention of getting them to problematize the gendering of toys. Instead, the third graders reaffirmed the idea toy preferences were either masculine or feminine. Even when the children appeared to think an item was gender neutral, they provided gendered justification for their thought process. This is illustrated by Phil's comments when I asked if wooden trains were for boys, girls, or gender neutral:

JB: Alright let's see. I would like to get a couple of opinions on this. Um Phil, you seem to have pretty strong opinions go ahead

Phil: I think it's for both because I think it's also for babies and like older kids because some kids don't actually get electrical trains so they have to like use other toys and this is why I think it's for like both because like both there's both boy characters and girl characters and lots of people like trains so...

While Phil asserted repeatedly that trains are for both genders, regardless of age, he was not able to justify his decisions without gendering the trains. He used the gender of the personified trains (like the characters from Thomas the Tank Engine or Chuggington) as justification for their ability to be enjoyed by all.

Very Young Children: Gender Neutral Allowances and Permission for Incorrect Preferences

According to the children in this study, an individual could chose masculine things, or feminine things regardless of their gender, but there were very few things that were “gender neutral” to the students. Children view almost everything through the lens of gender. Color preference, clothing choice, toys, and recreational activities all carried an assumption of masculine or feminine. The only allowance for gender neutrality was for young children. When the class was asked to analyze children’s toys and label them as “boy toys,” “girl toys” or “gender neutral” the objects they most often put into that gender neutral category were for babies as seen in Taylor’s statement below:

Taylor: when we were talking about babies it would probably be for both, because babies do like noises. And this one (points to Sophie-a rubber toy giraffe with a squeaker) would probably be for both cause they do like noises.

In this comment, Taylor put rattles and the Sophie toy into the gender neutral category, because she realized all babies like noises. The only things Taylor considered gender neutral were baby toys. She believed cars were masculine or feminine, depending on their style and color. She believed sports toys were for boys, but girls could use them too.

My intention with this activity was for the students to challenge some of their peers’ assumptions about who was allowed to play with certain toys. I hoped this activity would reveal

the limitations of toy marketing. The success of this activity in meeting the 4 goals of an anti-bias curriculum will be discussed in a later chapter, but the conversations around toys provided powerful insight into the ways the third graders constructed gender. The quote from Taylor above is one in a series of comments that students made regarding young children. The following is another example:

Malik: it's like a boy playing with Barbie Dolls but little kids don't count. Little kids don't count.

Student call out: what about three year olds? what about three year olds?

JB: Woah woah woah. Okay, this is a lot of rules. So three and younger don't count?

Taylor: For any of them tom boy or tom girl

Christina: Or 4 because my cousin is one, but he doesn't know what it is still.

JB: Okay so four year olds don't count?

Leeann: Or lower.

Although the students varied in how they defined a "little kid" they were consistent in that they gave young children more leeway for doing their gender contrary to gender norms than were older children, presumably because they had not yet been able to create firm gender schema. Although they didn't articulate it this way, the data showed the students were forgiving towards young children who did their gender "incorrectly," because their gender schemas were not developed yet.

This became clear when I read the first grade students the book *William's Doll* (1973) by Charlotte Zolotow. I read this book to the class in two small groups and then asked them to help me with a hypothetical problem I was having. I showed them two pictures of my three year olds son, and said, "I have two sons, and my oldest son is three now and here are two pictures of him." In one photograph he is playing cars, the other he is kissing a Cabbage Patch baby doll.

The student's initial reactions showed they struggled with placing my son within their existing gender schema. Jovan pointed to the pictures and asked, "This one's a he, this is a she?" I clarified by saying, "Those are both him."

The images must have caused a lot of cognitive dissonance, because this answer was still not enough to clear up the fact that both images were of the same person. Angelo asked, "What's his name?" I told him it is Vincent. Angelo then pointed to the other picture and again asked, "What's his name?" Again I clarified, "Still Vincent, that's my son. These are two pictures of him." This caused Angelo to call out, "He a doll! He got a doll."

Angelo set me up perfectly to ask my hypothetical question, "He does have a doll. SO what do you think? Should I let him play with this doll or should I take it away?"

One little girl asserted aloud "You should let him play with it." A male and female classmate nodded their heads in approval. Jovan also agreed, but for a different reasons. He thought my son should be allowed to keep it because, as Jovan put it, "He's a baby."

Although several of the children in the group disagreed with Jovan's line of thinking and argued the Vincent should be allowed to keep the doll regardless of how old he was, Jovan's line of thinking repeatedly came up in the data analysis of this study. Both the first and third graders seemed to think that younger children were given a pass on doing their gender incorrectly because they were inexperienced in the world.

Brandon: He's 3 years old right now!

JB He's only 3, so does that matter?

Brandon: yeah, if he's four, then...

JB If he's four then I should take it away

LaNess and Claire say no

Brandon: If he's four, or five, or six then you should take it away. Only, not when he's five. When he's a bigger age.

JB When he's a bigger age. But a baby can have a doll?

Toshani: Maybe. Some people like dolls because they look because of their look, but they don't know it's a doll, but they should just have fun and play with it.

JB What if he was in first grade?

LaNess: NO, take it away!

Toshani: Maybe keep it as a memory? As when he was a baby.

The dialogue revealed the idea that only very young males are permitted to incorrectly do their gender by choosing the feminine activity of playing with baby dolls. LaNess in particular was emphatic in her reaction. She believed my son could keep the doll at age 4, but in first grade she screamed, "No, take it away!" In his communicative impaired, accented English Angelo expressed this idea clearly:

Angelo: I a little boy, I hug a doll.

JB: When you were a little boy you hug a doll?

Angelo: Yeah

JB: What about now? Would you play with a doll now?

Angelo: Yeah, a Sonic doll

JB: You will play with a Sonic doll, but not a baby doll?

Angelo: Nope

JB: How come?

Angelo: My baby sister play with.

JB: So sister can play with dolls, but you wouldn't?

Angelo: No, I like Sonic.

Angelo felt comfortable sharing that he too used to have a doll, much like my son in the picture, but he was very emphatic in sharing that now he prefers the socially acceptable boy toy, Sonic, instead of the baby doll. The doll is for sisters (females).

For the children in this study, young boys enjoying dolls was evidence that little boys had yet to maturely alter their gender schema to understand what "big boy toys" would be more appropriate to select. The children believed it to be kind to allow the little ones to engage in this youthful folly, and natural that these "mistakes" should occur. They viewed this as part of the maturation process. This was seen in both the first and third graders conversations. When I

asked the third grade class if pretend vacuums were for boys or girls, the following conversation unfolded:

Christina: um I think they're for both because little kids sometimes don't understand that they're for girls and sometimes they're for girls cause boys and girls because I have a little cousin my mom bought this girl thing it's a toy and my cousin doesn't understand that it's for a girl cause they don't really understand if it's for a girl or a boy.

JB: how old is your cousin?

Christina: he's like 1.

JB: So Christina, do you think that when he's like 3 he'll stop playing with it?

Christina: yea or not.

Random call out: Well, he likes it.

JB: So Christina, I have an important question. Actually boys and girls this question is for everyone. So if Christina's cousin is one, and likes playing with a pink vacuum and the cousin gets older and still likes the pink vacuum should he be allowed to keep playing with it?

(There are many call outs of both no and yes)

Leeann: no but yes

Sidney: he can keep on using it

Brandon : no it's for babies

Dominique: my friends brother he's 6 and he still uses it and his sister is 5. When you asked the question- if like boys when they grow up if they can still have it- I'm gonna say they can if they still want it, but if they like don't like it they could give it away to like and hand-me-down to their sister, if they have a little sister, cause boys can still like boys like can still have girls toys- but like it would be like it would be like-let them go.

This conversation revealed the expected maturation processes the children believed to be appropriate when selected gendered toys. Initially, they think little children should be given a pass on not doing their gender correctly, because as Christina points out, "my cousin doesn't understand that it's for a girl cause they don't really understand if it's for a girl or a boy." But when I asked if young boys should be allowed to keep the feminine toys as they age, the reaction was a bit mixed. There was a choruses of nos and the call out of "Well, he likes it." These shout outs demonstrated two key concepts. The first concept, is that children should select more gender appropriate toys as they mature. The second is that many students in both classes indicated that

children ought to have the freedom to make autonomous choices about toys they select, even if that toy does not correspond with their assigned gender. This illustrates that individual gender identity is viewed by the students as a choice that individuals make, and children have the right to gender cross if they chose. This choice is not without social consequences.

Dominique's responded to the vacuum issue, "boys like can still have girls toys- but like it would be like it would be like- let them go. " Her response revealed the idea that a boy *could* keep using a girl's toy as he ages, but it really would be preferable for him to relinquish it to a younger female relative. This conversation revealed the way that Dominique and her classmates maintain the rigid gender binary through the selection of gendered toys, but suggests that if an individual did not want to conform to the gender norms, they are free to to do so. This idea of individual freedom, within limits, is discussed in the following section, along with an explanation of how the boy/girl gender binary is maintained in a community of practice.

Part Two: Range of Masculinities and Femininities and Hegemonic Masculinity

The students in my classroom only had two gender options available to them: boy or girl. Based on school medical records and conversations throughout the year, all of the students in this study self identified as the gender they were assigned at birth. How they chose to do their gender varied. This chapter will begin by exploring how the children reified the gender binary as they constructed what it meant to be male and female in the context of our classroom. The chapter will then focus on how the range of female traits contained a preference for androcentric behaviors in an effort to achieve higher social status.

Duality: Constructing Masculines and Femininities

In American society, there is a co-dependence between femininities and masculinities which means that neither can be fully understood in isolation from the other (Davis 2003, Reay 2001, Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). Male and female are two sides of a coin, and any first grader can tell you that a one sided coin does not exist.

This concept of oppositional duality is illustrated by the first graders, when I questioned what their favorite thing to do was. I asked them to raise their hand if they liked to play with Barbies. Deepa's hand shot up in the air and she called out "Me!" All of the girls hands went up except Leeann and Riley's. Leeann initially raised her hand, but then put it back down. Some girls were so excited they hopped and wiggled around.

The boys had a very different reaction to my questions. There was a chorus of "ews" from boys. Jackson and Gavin physically jumped back in disgust. Gavin declared, "Torture." Angelo said, "Yuck." These response baffled his classmate LaNeiss, "Why is it yuck?" she asked, "All it is is Barbies?" shaking both her hands out in the air to indicate her bewilderment.

Although the response baffled LaNeiss, this was not terribly surprising behavior. By saying "ew" and "yuck" the boys distanced themselves from something they considered feminine. These very deliberate acts by the males students were a means of constructing their masculine identity (Pascoe 2007). Due to the duality of gender, by strongly asserted their opposition to the feminine doll, they are positioning themselves as males.

They were also expressing that being masculine made them superior, by suggesting that playing the Barbies makes an individual feminine, and therefore lame. The boys went to great lengths to frame themselves as anti-doll. Through their conversation, the boy used different strategies to distance themselves from feminine Barbies:

JB: So hold on, what's wrong with a Barbie doll? Gavin?

Gavin: I'm scared of them.

LaNeiss: All they are is Barbie's that don't talk. You can fake talk them and they don't move at all.

Aiden: I'm a scared. I'm a scared of dolls.

JB: Wait, you watch *Night at Freddy's*?

Aiden: Yeah

JB: You play killing games? But you are afraid of a little Barbie doll?

Several boys say yeah.

Through this conversation, the boys were trying to distance themselves from the feminine dolls by stating they were afraid of them, paradoxically these same boys previously asserted their masculinity by stating they were not afraid of scary or violent video games, such as the video game *Five Nights at Freddy's*, which is rated by the Entertainment Software Rating Board as T for teen. Yet dolls were something they were comfortable stating they were afraid of. This is because violent video games were highly regarded by their peers, and thus brought social status. Aligning themselves with these games proved their bravado, and therefore their masculinity. The conversation continued when I pushed the issue further,

JB: So to all the kids who say ew. I don't usually say ew when I am scared of something. I don't really understand?

Brandon: Because...

JB: Help me Brandon, I don't understand.

Leeann: I like Barbies.

Jovan: I'm not really scared of Barbie dolls. I just think their gross.

JB: thank you for being honest.

Riley: I don't see what's so gross about dolls.

JB: Nothing gross about them, nothing gross at all.

It is interesting to note that although Leeann and Riley were the two girls who did not raise their hands initially to indicate they liked Barbies, here they are either admitting they like them, or at the least not distancing themselves from them, in the same manner that their male classmates are. By affirming that they like Barbies and by questioning "what is so gross about

babies?” these female students are defending girlhood in the presence of anti-girl attacks from their classmates.

For Jovan, Gavin, Aiden, and the other boys saying dolls were scary or gross was one way they separated themselves from the feminine toy, while constructing their masculinity as both opposite and superior to femininity. Another instance of this desire to separate themselves from feminine things occurred in the third grade classroom, when during a brief video showing a Barbies Josiah covered his face with his hands so he didn’t have to even look at the feminine toys. To prove his masculinity Aiden made a public display during snack time of throwing his YoGurt in the trash because it had Elsa, the Queen from the Disney movie *Frozen*, on the wrapper. He declared “Ew, this this girl yogurt.” Aiden demonstrated his masculinity by literally trashing an object he considered feminine.

The duality of gender is used by children as a way to maintain gender categories and thus preserve the status quo. This is known as **category maintenance** work (Davis 1991). Category maintenance is done when a boy’s masculinity is not displayed in a manner that aligns with gender norms. A boy will have his masculinity called into question by being called “a girl.” Children are familiar with this pattern of behavior, and identified it when I read *William’s Doll* to the class.

JB: So, why do you think they are calling him a sissy?

Leeann: They are teasing him.

JB: Oh, they are teasing him?

Deepa: Yes

Jovan: they are calling him a girl

Leeann, Deepa, and Jovan’s analysis of this text revealed that they all understood the plot, and were familiar with this pattern of child behavior. Although “sissy” was not a really common insult I had heard children use in the school (I had heard many others) it was easy for

Jovan to translate “sissy” to “calling him a girl” because this was style of insult my students were familiar with.

Category maintenance is done by both genders to both genders, as was evident when some boys revealed they had tried to play Barbies in the past with female relatives. Adrian said, “I was playing with my cousins and my sister and I was playing someone, so they didn’t want me in and they didn’t want me to play with them. So I played with my brother.” By having his female relatives eject him from their Barbie game, Adrian learned he was doing his gender incorrectly. Luis also received this message from his older sister.

Luis: My sister used to get a hundred Barbie baby dolls. Her used to have a hundred of them

JB: Wow, did you play with her?

A: Yeah but, she kicked me out

JB: She kicked you out! Why?

A: And my brother used to have like GameStop Playstation

JB: Hold on, I want to know why your sister kicked you out of the Barbie dolls?

A: Because her a, her a not for boys. For girls.

In both instances the boys revealed that female family members would not let them participate in their feminine play. This is one way that gender category maintenance works, gendered activities like dolls, becomes policed by the females. They do not allow males to incorrectly do their gender and engage in their feminine play. As a result of being excluded, the boys in both these vignettes took up what the children would define as the more appropriate boy role of playing with other males. Thus the gender binary was reified.

Gender and Power

Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony is the foundation for much of the literature on children and gender identities (Davies 1991; Walkerdine, Lucey, & Melody 2001; Renold 2005.). Hegemony is a Marxist concept where one group in a society is elevated above the

others. This elevation is not maintained through force, but is instead maintained through the collective agreement that this elevation is right and ought to be maintained. In the case of my students, the more students aged, the more they elevated their status. The third graders had more social capital than the first graders, but not as much as the fourth and fifth graders. No one questioned of this system was just of fair, and no force was used to physically or emotionally harm the younger students. This juvenile social system was maintained through hegemony.

Hegemony is relevant to this study not just because of age, but because of the idea of hegemonic masculinity. This term is based on Gramsci's concept of power held by expressed consent, in any patriarchal society, all its members (male and female) construct **hegemonic masculinity** as the position of dominance. It is a method of structuring society so that some males, and all females, are subordinated (Connell 2005). Hegemonic masculinity was understood as the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Prior research has found that the socially highest-ranking form of masculinity varies from school to school and is informed by the local community (Skelton, 1997; Connolly, 1998, Pascoe 2007). Much like Pascoe (2007) found in a study of high school students, these young students saw a constellation of behaviors as masculine, whether or not the person doing the behaviors was a boy or a girl. In this first grade classroom, masculinity was constructed by showing an interest in scary and violent video games.

When we were discussing girls not allowing brothers to play dolls with them one first graders, Janiya said she permitted her older brother to play dolls with her. Janiya, who initially

did not raise her hand to indicate she liked Barbies, shared later in the conversation that she and her older brother played dolls together.

Janiya: My brother played dolls with me.

JB: That's very nice.

Janiya: JoJaxon (her fourth grade brother)

Jovan: Your brother does?

Jovan questioned Janiya's statement, presumably because he knew Janiya's brother JoJaxon to be a tough masculine "older" male. Hearing that JoJaxon played with dolls shocked Jovan, because it fell outside of Jovan's range of expected male behavior. Jovan had previously expressed that young boys could be allowed to play with dolls, but hearing that Janiya's older brother, who Jovan held in high regard, also played with dolls confounded him. This was because JoJaxon held qualities of hegemonic masculinity as understood in that school community. JoJaxon was a black fourth grade male student who was considered tall, strong, good at sports, and "tough" by the standards constructed in the school. Playing with dolls, was paradoxical behavior, because to Jovan and his first grade classmates, the feminine act of engaging with dolls made him less masculine.

Females Gaining Power by Acting Masculine

The analysis of the children's language revealed that they had collectively constructed a high ranking form of masculinity, that even the girls in both the first and third grade classes tried to achieve. This could be considered **androcentrism**, the privilege of male experience and the "othering" of female experience (Bem 1993). In the first grade classroom this was largely seen through video games, an example was when Janiya chose *Grand Theft Auto* as her favorite activity. Although Janiya said she played with Barbies and other dolls, when called upon she was really deliberate in her choice of favorite activity.

Janiya: I like to play my brother's video games

JB: Which ones?

Janiya: Grand Theft Auto.

Jovan: (shouting) GRAND THEFT AUTOOOOOO. I should have said my favorite fighting game!

Throughout the course of the conversation, Janiya eventually showed an interest in both feminine activities (dolls and Barbies) and masculine activities (video games). What is interesting in that when initially asked if she liked Barbies her hand went up, but then she chose to put it back down. With just a quick glance around the classroom, Janiya realized affiliating herself with a feminine toy, even if she did play with it at home, was not going to elevate her social status in the classroom. Instead, when asked what her favorite activity was she chose to state video games as her favorite. Jovan's excited response was just the reaction she was aiming for. The video game she selected as her favorite, *Grand Theft Auto*, is a particularly violent driving game, marketed towards mature male audiences. Her deliberate selection of this video game was a means of achieving higher social status among her classroom community.

Several of her male classmates, and one female classmate, had also asserted they also liked video games. The following conversation occurred when they were asked what they like to do at home:

Angelo: Sonic game.

Aiden: Night of the Freddies.

Jovan: What?

Brandon: He said Night of Freddies, I don't like that.

JB: Usually I don't either, but for this I'm going to write it down.

Gavin: That's a scary game.

Jovan: It's called *Five Nights of Freddies*. I love that game.

Adrian: I don't like that game. I don't even know what that is.

Gavin: I know what it is.

MiKayla: Oooooo, Play my video games!

Why do video games rank higher than Barbies? When Davies (2003) examined male and female gendered identities in a preschool classroom she defined masculinity (at least in part) as

“the oppressive acts of domination and control of their environment and non-masculine others” (Davies 2003 p. 92). Davies also states that “play and fantasy are powerful mediators of reality- what is imaginably possible the that ‘unreal’ world becomes also possible in the “real’ world” (p 113). These quotes explain why children valued violent and scary video games. These games were a means of demonstrating power and control, albeit in a cyber world. Feminist discourse associates power in a patriarchy with masculinity, the desire for power has historically been a masculine traits (Davies 2003, Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, Walkerdine, Lucey, & Melody 2001)

The selection of video games, and particularly scary or violent video games, was a means of displaying masculinity. Being brave enough to play a frightening video game was evidence of maturity and masculinity, two highly regarded traits to the first graders. Babies and dolls are considered domestic toys, and the domestic sphere has historically been seen as a legitimate space for females to control, but not something males want access to (Walkerdine & Lucey 1989, Davies 2003). Although many of the girls in this classroom indicated they enjoyed playing with dolls, there was no evidence of a connection between the potential to elevated one’s social status or power through likings dolls. In fact, only Luis and Adrian admitted to playing with dolls, and neither one of these boys held a position of high ranking masculinity within the classroom. Adrian was new to the class, and a prior vignette showcased his ability to be controlled by Deepa’s suggestion of gender appropriate paper selection. In an upcoming section, Luis will be featured as trying to achieve status by being comical, and not by asserting himself in traditionally masculine ways.

In the third grade classroom hegemonic masculinity was largely contingent upon participation in sports. Even the females in the class tried to achieve this status by identifying themselves as a “tomboy” which is explained in detail in the next section.

Tomboy Discussions

Androcentrism is the idea that males, and the male experience, are treated as a neutral standard or norm for the culture and females and the female experience are treated as a sex-specific deviation from that allegedly universal standard. (Bem 1993 p. 41). This was seen in the third grade classroom when we discussed the term “tomboy.”

In the rich body of research on children and gender, the study of tomboys as a gender identity has gained in popularity in the past two decades, most notably in the works of Paechter 2010, Halberstam 1998, Reay 2001, Renold 2005. The term ‘tomboy’ has been reported to be used by some children about themselves (Reay 2001, Renold, 2005,) while some assert adults use the the term more frequently as a way of labeling children. (Paechter 2010) Pascoe’s work with high school students indicate that many teenage females have a romanticized memory of tomboy childhood behavior, which they abandoned as they matured for more traditionally restrictive feminine behavior. These fond memories include the freedom to run around in loose fitting clothing and play football before abandoning those behaviors for classically feminine ones, like cheerleading and wearing tight fitting clothing with makeup and jewelry.

In my classroom the children began using the term “tomboy” as means of labeling characters in books, movies and TV shows, labeling classmates, or themselves; so I decided to explore this term with them. I positioned the third grade students as “the experts” and asked them to help me understand this term. They were very eager to help.

I began by writing the word “tomboy” on the board. I had heard the students use it repeatedly and I chose to explore their definition of it. Immediately there was buzz about the classroom. Michael called out, “I know that word.” Other students remarked, “oh that word,” and oh I know what a tomboy means.”

Not everyone seemed clear on the term. There was some initial confusion between the term “tomboy” and the term “tomgirl”. Early in the discussion this conversation occurred when I asked what a tomboy was.

Dallas: no a boy that acts like a girl

Random call out: no

Dallas: that's a tom girl

JB: wait wait wait one concept at a time

Taylor: oh no it's a girl that acts like a boy

JB: a girl that acts like a boy okay.

Michael: a tom girl.

Dallas augmented her original comment, and provided the new definition of a tomgirl as a boy that acts like a girl. However, her original comment seemed to be backed up by Taya who provide this definition and personal example:

Taya: um like what, Taylor said it but um when someone was there when they grow up like and they wanted to be a boy and they were a girl that's like my cousin when she was a little girl she had to dress like girls and be like girly and then when she grew up she started to play lots of sports and she used to be like a tomgirl

I provide these vignettes as evidence of the shifting vocabulary society and children use, but the basic concept is similar. There are terms created for children who are not conforming to the rigid gender binary's stereotypical patterns of behavior. This was the exact behavior and gendered identity that I wanted my students to explore. I asked the class to help me understand the term. Taylor's hand shot up in the air and she exclaimed, “oh oh oh oh-I know what a tomboy means!” I could not resist that level of enthusiasm, so I called on her.

JB: Taylor since your hand shot up in the air, help me understand this word.

Taylor: everybody calls me and a girl in Ms. Sheconskins class (another third grade classroom next door to ours) um a tomboy. Because we act like boys. It's basically a girl that acts like a boy.

I decided to feign naivety in the hopes the class would unpack their understanding of the term for me. I asked them to tell me what sorts of things a tomboy would do. Dominique provided this answer:

JB: so here's what I'm confused about. What does that look like? What would a tomboy do?

Dominique: a tomboy does what boys like to do. Like they do um like some boys like to do love to play Legos some boys like love and also some boys like to dress like boys

JB: oh okay hold on so they play like a boy is that what you're saying?

Dominique: yes

This was interesting to me because both Dominique and Taylor chose to self identify as tomboys. Both girls often played among majority girl groups during recess and free time and both had worn dresses, skirts, pink, sparkles, and other traditionally feminine clothing to school on more than one occasion. This stood in sharp contrast to the element of dress that Riley added to the conversation, "They don't like to wear dresses."

At this point in the conversation Malik correctly pointed out a discrepancy in my teaching practice, "Why are only the girls getting called on?" I was interested in hearing if the girls would self identify as tomboys, so I was only calling on female students. At the time of the lesson, I didn't hear Malik's comment, but my first instinct when reviewing the data was to be proud of him for standing up for my gender biased calling scheme, which is a goal of an anti-bias curriculum. A member of my dissertation committee drew my attention to the fact that perhaps Malik was actually policing the boundary of masculine hegemony. His comment could be seen as an attempt to draw attention back to the boys and thwart the female focus of our discussion.

Marshall furthered the discussion, offering more activities, “Um, they like to go hunting and they also like to get muddy.” Madelyn provided another layer or what tomboys like to do. “um it’s kinda like a girl that only likes playing with boys and she likes being rough and playing lot of sports, “ Which prompted Taylor to call out, “oh that’s me!” Her desire to self identify with a tomboy occurred several times in this discussion.

Leeann provided a solid definition: “What a tomboy does and looks like? They dress like a boy. And how they act- like how they say boys act like boys, instead girls act like boys instead of girls.” Leeann’s discourse utilized her gender schema to define a tomboy. To Leeann, there are boy expectations for behavior which are in contrast to girl expectations for behavior. A tomboy is a girl who choses to exhibit the expected behaviors of a boy. This is an application of Leeann’s gender schema.

Malia went on to define her gender schema:

Malia : um also like they dress kind of like in sweats and stuff like that and also if there are games that like boys usually just like to play tomboys they also kind of like to play you know it’s not just boys but most girls don’t like to play.

JB: can you give me like an example of a game Malia ?

Random call out: football

JB: I hear people saying football

Malia : Yea football. There are some girls who aren’t tomboys and do like to play football.

Malia ’s answer indicates that sweats, sports and football fall into their gender schema for male behavior because they are thing that “most girls don’t like.” What is interesting is that Malia didn’t want to say that all girls don’t like football, and her final comment, “There are some girls who aren’t tomboys and do like to play football” indicate the flexibility of her schema. Malia ’s flexible thinking allows for girls who do not want to consider themselves tomboys to also like football.

So far the students were once again using personal preference for activities and clothing as means of expressing the gendered identities of tomboys. Clothing preferences were viewed as boyish, which they defined as athletic apparel, and not dresses. Activity preferences included sports, Legos, hunting, getting muddy, and playing with boys instead of girls. Once again, the children were reifying the gender binary by attributing specific preferences and characteristics to one gender, in this case males. This was seen in the conversations they had while drawing images of tomboys and through their drawing.



Children's drawing of tomboys: Ariel (top left), Madelyn (top right), Malik (bottom left), Taylor (bottom right).

Malik: Boys like space.

Michael: I'm adding some other things, like smoking.

Co-Teacher: You think that tomboys smoke?

Michael starts erasing because he thought he was "caught" drawing something

inappropriate. He altered his answer slightly to, "Boys play hard and boys do sports. Stuff like

that. And that's tomboy." To Michael, to be masculine was to be "tough". He revealed that when he included the "inappropriate activity" of smoking. It is also reflected in his use of the term "play hard." Michael's masculinity was defined by freedom, "boys always do boy things like they hang up like they hang out whenever they wanna feel like doing" and recklessness, such as smoking and being able to burn stuff down."

As I walked around the room I heard people using the term "girlie girl." They were constructing this as the hyper-feminine opposite to the masculine behavior they were told to draw. I decided to unpack this term, so I told the class I wasn't sure what "girlie girl" meant so they provided these definitions:

Leeann: It's a girl that acts like a girl

Leeann: Yea, it's a girl that still acts like a girl

Christina: (twirls her hair and used a high pitched voice) and go hah hah.

JB: So raise your hand if you think it's fair to say that is the opposite of a tomboy

Taya: yup

Leeann: yea

We now had the making of a continuum. On one side we used the term "tomboy", the opposite being "girlie girl" with room for lots of variation in between. At this point in the activity I was eager to see how the females in the classroom chose to self identify. We did a variation of the continuum activity we had done previously in the classroom when examining stereotypes. Christina didn't like my use of terms and asked, "Can you just write girl for normal?" I told her, No because if you think you're a super girly girl go over here. If you are 100% tomboy you're going to go over here. But you need to think and think well maybe I'm a little bit girly but maybe I like some boy things so I'm going to stand somewhere in the middle. So it matters where you stand in this group. If you're closer to this side you're more girly if you're closer to this side you consider yourself more tomboyish." Christina still objected, "Just write girl." She had a strong desire to label herself *correctly*. A few sections later, as the girls

decided on their positions Christina chanted, “I’m normal. I’m normal”. Taylor ran to the extreme left, where the tomboys were positions. Every single girl (with the exception of Kimberly who elected not to pick a position) positioned themselves in the middle or to the left near the tomboy side. No one identified as girlie.

I gave the girls a chance to explain their thought process. Taya, who stood near the middle said, “because I’m a girl and I do girl stuff but I also like to play sports a lot.” Her response is androcentric (Bem 1993). Taya, and several of her classmates, separate girl stuff as a sex-specific deviation from an allegedly universal standard. She likes to play sports, which she considers both a male behavior and something that is a deviation from doing femininity properly.

Many of the girls also indicated they also enjoyed engaging in behaviors they considered masculine.

Madelyn (middle): because not all the time I’m always wearing dresses so I go here because sometimes I like wearing like t-shirts.

Maria: um I’m in both because usually in the summer I have I wear dresses sometimes and um... I do sports.

Malia (Near the middle): I picked um this spot because um I don’t always like to like wear dresses and all that stuff sometimes I also like to do sports and um stuff like that

Dominique (near the middle): I picked this spot because I normally like to wear both. I like wearing dresses and I also like wearing boy stuff. My brother always does uh hand-me-downs so if something doesn’t fit him he gives it to me so I normally wear them as pajamas but...I also like Legos.

These students used their occasional desire to wear dresses as evidence of their femininity, but they still indicated they preferred male things. Gender is a tricky thing for students to navigate. By choosing to identify as both feminine and masculine these girls wear trying to reap the benefits of both genders. They realized as girls they were expected to correctly do their gender, which included occasionally liking “girl” things like dresses and playing with

other females. By not fully identifying as a tomboy these girls got partial credit for doing femininity properly, or “normally” as seen in Christina’s quote:

Christina (middle): I chose both because when I, I usually don’t like, I usually don’t always wear boy clothes or something like that but um I don’t act like a boy I act like both because I’m like...and I play with Legos and that kind of stuff and shopkins

Christina’s response was interesting, in light of the fact that she strongly wanted to be considered as doing her gender correctly, and thus labeled herself “normal.” In her view, it was normal for a girl to occasionally selected assorted “male” patterns of behavior, namely playing with legos.

According her the continuum stance, Ariel was the most extreme girl, but even she was just slightly right of center. When given the chance to explain her justification. “Um because I’m a little bit of both but I’m a little more like a girlier- like a little bit.” Ariel often wore dresses to school and frequently talked about engaging in activities the children considered feminine, such as playing with dolls and doing crafts. Her desired to not label herself as only a “little bit more like a girlier” is evidence of the power of androcentrism in this classroom. There is no social status to be gained by strongly asserting femininity.

On the contrary, selecting male items as a preference is a way for girls to achieve a higher level of status. They too are striving for their locally constructed version of hegemonic masculinity, which can be seen in these students justifications of identify as all or partially “tomboy”:

Cheyenne (in between middle and tomboy side): I’m over here is ‘cause when I’m at home I always dress like boys and go out and play in the mud. I like to do that out of school.

Dallas (next to Taylor on extreme tomboys side): because when I’m at my dad’s house and when I’m at my cousin’s house I play with their basket... they have basketballs so we go to the basketball court across the street and we play there because and we sometimes we um always play we always get in the mud...

These responses used clothing, sports, desire to get dirty, and toy selection as justification of their chosen spots to self identify. Once again, these selections are evidence that children believe it is their personal choices that makes up their individual gender identities, but selecting male items was a means of gaining status.

This was seen most strongly through Taylor's behavior. When I asked the class to draw a tomboy she called out, "hint hint me me!" When drawing a tomboy Taylor commented, "this is what I wear I wear uh basketball shorts and Michael Taylor sneakers." She was the first one out of her seat to head over to the extreme tomboy side of the continuum. Taylor's justification for her stance was brief, "because I am very crazy and I love sports." To her, being considered masculine was both desirable and freeing. She took up this persona because it allowed her to be "crazy." She was not the only student to use the term crazy as a male behavior and justification for identifying as a tomboy.

Riley (almost all the way over near tomboy): the reason why I am like a tomboy is because like like sometimes my brother hands me hand-me-downs and I'm crazy and I like and I don't and because um sometimes it like I play a lot of sports like I play basketball.

The use of the term "crazy" implies a wildness that males are permitted to engage in and females are not. To be feminine is to show restraint, but to be wild and therefore "crazy" is a privilege only males are afforded, and therefore it is desirable for girls.

Tomboys and Feminism

In *Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales* (2003), Davies presents Kristeva's 3 tiers of the Women's Movement (1981, 1986). This feminist political framework is seen as a three-tier struggle, which both Davies and Kristeva see as simultaneous, necessary, and ongoing work. The first tier is a demand for access, which is the struggle for equality. The second is the need to

use and subvert the male symbolic order (ie: education and legal system). The third is to transcend the need for a rigid gender binary, in which there are multiple possibilities of existing.

Davies argues that the lack of progress in the third tier is due to the constant societal reification of the gender binary. It is tempting to say that the existence of tomboys is the beginning of this process. Through taking up the identities as tomboys, some might argue that the girls are trying to achieve that third tier, where multiple means of expressing themselves are possible. But a closer examination of their language reveals this is not the case. Tomboys are not operating outside of the patriarchal structure, but instead attempting to gain access to it by adopting male preferences. Gaining access is Kristeva's tier one. Tier one is still important for equity, because every individual should have access to whatever recreational activities they desire. However, the concern is that females are trying to achieve status by adopting patriarchal practices, for instance in this classroom it was access to sports and the adopting a series of male preference that led to the tomboy identity. This is not expanding access and creating multiple possibilities-but is instead the spreadings of male patterns of behavior. It is everyone's attempt at achieving status through striving for hegemonic masculinity. It is trying to "act male." This is operating within the patriarchy, and not actively dismantling it.

Kimberly added a further level of complication to this gender identification discussion when she asked, "What if you have no clue." I hadn't considered alternatives to the gender continuum we created, but I didn't want to press Kimberly into assuming an identity she didn't feel comfortable with. I said, "Good point, " and suggested, "if you really have no clue then take a seat." In hindsight I am concerned that my hasty solution was exclusionary. I did not intend to isolate children who wanted to possibly function outside of this binary. In fact this might have

been Kreteva's third tier (1981, 1986) and I should have celebrated it, but I was locked in this binary thinking myself.

“I've Never Been A Girl In My Life”: Tomgirl Discussion

I provided the tomboy discussion as evidence of females trying to take up male identities in an effort to access power. When I tried to flip the conversation, and explore the possibility of boys taking up a female personality the conversation unfolded rather differently. For starters, we needed to construct language to use, because we didn't have terms available in our current discourse. The folding suggestions were shouted out:

Taylor: tom girl and boy-y boy
 Leeann: boyly boy
 Marshall: boys acting like boys
 Kimberly: boyly boys
 Christina: Straight up boy
 Leeann: Crazy boy.
 Michael: manly boys
 Dominique: yea it's kinda like the same thing as tomboy
 Christina: it's boys acting like girls

We struggled with the discourse, because there is no current cultural narrative with which to frame this discussion. Tomboy is a term that is understood, the opposite is rarely identified or discussed.

The class decided on the following definition, “it's a boy who acts like a girl” and decided to use the term “tomgirl” because it would be the opposite of a tomboy. When I asked them what a tomgirl would do they provided clarification:

Michael: it's a boy who dresses up like a girl
 Brandon: um it probably means dressing like a girl that basically is being crazy and wearing dresses and heels and crazy stuff.
 Leeann: I saw Cops and a boy was dressed like a girl
 Malik: It's like a boy playing with Barbie Dolls

At this point in the conversation the children became emphatic that little kids did not count, for either tomboy or tomgirls. They decided that four year olds and lower should be excused from doing their gender incorrectly, much like we had seen previously in Part One of this chapter.

Michael offered this explanation, “um it’s a boy who dresses up like a girl and wears dresses and makeup and nail stuff” This really confused Marshall, “why would a boy wear makeup?” Leeann tried to explain, “ It’s called tomgirl.” Marshall understood the definition, but not the motivation. He just shook his head and puzzled, “Still?”

Marshall’s bewilderment is telling. No one questioned why a girl would want to be tomboy and gain access to masculine things, but there was explanation as why would a male in a patriarchy give up his access to power and privilege by acting feminine. Marshall, and several of his classmates found the notion of a tomgirl so bizarre that they questioned if it even existed. Ben ran to the class set of dictionaries, and when he could not find the term he used it as evidence that tomgirls could not really exist. The idea of a man giving up his power by donning a feminine persona was for some students was untenable.

I asked the third graders to draw what a tomgirl would look like, in order to help me understand the term. Just as the tomboy conversation revealed interesting definitions of young masculinity, this conversation provided insight into the students construction of femininity. The following discussions were recorded while the students created their drawings:

Joseph: Have you ever seen a tom girl?

JB to Michael: You think he cries a lot?

Malik: I don’t think that I’ll do color this time.

Random: Wait, can I see yours?

Joseph: It’s so weird

Student: I don’t know how to explain it.

Dan: I’m doing a boy doing cheerleading, or a boy doing a sport bad.

Dan: lipstick is there. My sister once asked me if she could put makeup on me. I was like, (shrugged) I always wondered what it felt like.

Ricardo: Tomgirls are weird. I put a weirdo.

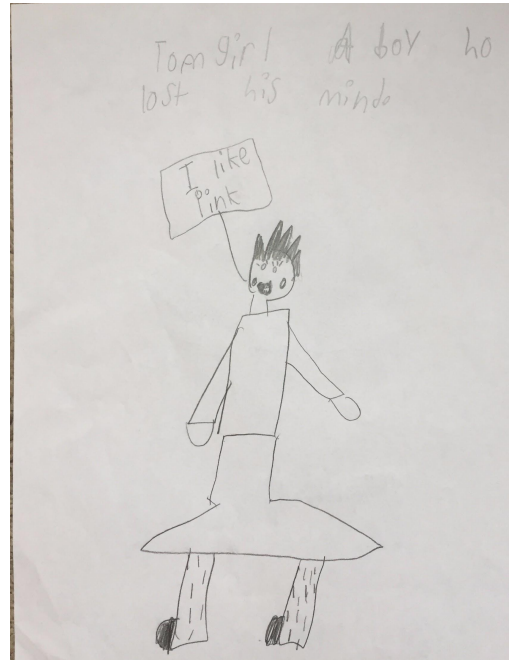
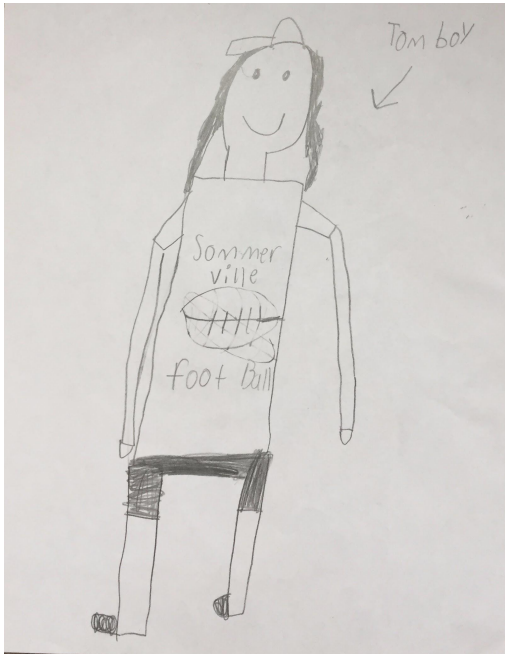
Michael: Look! A boy dressed up as a girl and having a baby

To these students feminine traits are crying, cheerleading, doing sports poorly, wearing makeup, wearing dresses, and having babies. Most of these stand in sharp contrast to way the classroom constructed their understanding of masculinity, which largely focuses on playing sports, playing legos, wearing masculine clothing like basketball shorts and sneakers, and getting dirty. Male behaviors were self selected actions and preferences, viewed by all the students in a positive light. In contrast, the two of the feminine characteristics are signs of weakness, poor sporting ability and crying. Make-up and dress wearing have the potential to objectify women and merely targets of physical attraction. Having babies is a biological function. Cheerleadings stood alone as a choice and an activity.

Instead of referring to the tomgirls are he or she, several students used the pronoun *it*. Joseph said, "It's so weird" and another student said, "I don't know how to explain it." This was a marked difference in their conversations about tomboy. When discussing tendencies of girls who chose to act masculine, the pronoun *she* was still used. Girls who appropriated masculinity were still able to be labeled as girls with the pronoun *she*. This did not apply to the converse. A boy who chose to appropriate feminine behaviors was no longer even referred to by a male pronoun. In this way masculinity was constructed as an all nothing. If a boy did not want to embody masculinity in his choice of toys or his physical appearance he lost his ability to be labeled as a human, and *he* transformed into an object with the pronoun *it*.

No one in the class negatively judged the tomboys for their desire to be masculine. However, the tomgirls were objects of ridicule. Ricardo demonstrated this when we walked around the room and showed off his picture, "Tomgirls are weird. I put a weirdo." This is also

seen in Jonathan's caption, "Tomgirl, a boy who lost his mind." Males go to great lengths to distance themselves from femininity, and often use jokes and ridicule as a means of reasserting their own masculinity (Pascoe 2007).



Both pictures are by Jonathan, a third grader. The left image is of a tomboy. The right image is of a tomgirl. The caption he wrote states: Tomgirl A boy who lost his mind.

After the drawing I wanted to give the boys a chance to line up in a continuum, as I had done for the girls when we lined up with tomboys on one side and girlie girlies on the other. This caused an issue right away, because our limited discourse didn't allow us to easily come up with a term that was the opposite of tomgirl. The following options were presented:

Marshall: boyly boy

Michael: no manly boy

Leeann: I just put boy

Christina: boyly boy

Malik: manly boy

JB: alright hold on, so Malik is proposing manly boy, is that okay with everyone?

Madelyn: yea

Kimberly: no, boyly boy

Michael: yea, boyly boy
Dan: no manly is better
JB: what if I just said boy?
Student: yea just do boy

What is interesting is when the girls selected terms, Christina wanted to use “girl” as the opposite of tomgirl. I was reluctant to allow this to occur, because I thought that might limit the range of femininity I wanted her classmates to be able to display. I didn’t want the girls to feel like they were doing something bizarre if they stood away from the label, girl. However, when it was the boys turn, the socially acceptable range of behaviors felt much more limited. Even I felt victim to this, as I was tempted to allowed them to use the term “boy” as the opposite of tomgirl. This then set up an awful position where a boy was either doing his gender correctly, or some variation of wrong. We kept searching for an appropriate term:

Joseph: old boy
Instructional Assistant: boyly boy?
Co-Teacher: manly boy?
JB: the boys were saying that boyly boy doesn’t sound right, so...
Taylor: how about fancy man?
Leeann: fancy man?
Malia : girly-girl is kinda fancy so why don’t boys be fancy man
JB: I don’t think that, I don’t think they mean boys are fancy at all, so...
Malik: manly man
JB: uh, Malik proposed manly man or manly boy
Christina: but they’re boyly boys
Dan: I don’t want to be boiled
JB: Yea, they don’t want to be boiled.

The principal interrupted our conversation with her dismissal announcements, so we never agreed on a term, rather we just went the vague notion of opposites. I told the boys to line up. All but one went right for the opposite of tomgirl. Only Phil put himself a few steps towards the middle, but still on the side of boy. We didn’t have time to discuss it, since it was dismissal time, but Malia , a thoughtful student, approached me and asked why the boys were acting

differently than when they girls did the activity. I decided to pose this question to the class the following day. I asked, “How come so many boys were all the way over on the boy side and one was in the middle? Nobody really made a big fuss about being a tomboy but being a tom girl was a bad thing. We (Malia and I) were just curious about that. So does anyone have anything that they want to share about that before we get started with today’s lesson?”

Several students raised their hands to explain their thinking. I was eager to hear from Phil, since he was the only male student to not select the extreme end of masculinity. First Phil objected to my terms. He wanted to clarify, “I thought we decided on just boy for that one.” By doing this he was trying to assert his claim at doing his gender correctly. He went on to explain, “ um I was in the middle because um when I was younger I didn’t really know that there was separate things so I usually played with my sister’s stuff and I used to collect Shopkins and stuff. Nobody make a big fuss!” Phil contrasted this youthful encounter with the experiences today. When he was younger he was able to say he didn’t know better, his gender scheme was not firmly in place. His family didn’t make a fuss because he was young and didn’t think it was a problem.

In response to Phil’s story Taylor showed evidence of accepting Phil’s feminine preferences, she thought Phil had said, “Nobody make a fuss”, as a directive, instead of an explanation of his families prior behavior. So she said, “ I won’t it’s fine.” Her comment revealed an eagerness to allow males a wider range of behaviors. This was not echoed in Damian’s call out of, “What?!?” Damian ’s exclamation indicated he did not think that playing with Shopkin’s was acceptable male behavior for his classmate. It also was a public reaffirmed his own masculinity.

I pushed the issue and allowed students to further explain why they think people do not “make a fuss” over tomboys but do for tomgirls.

Taylor: maybe boys don’t want to show that their actually a tom girl.

Damian : A little bit.

JB: Why do you think that is? Taylor.

Taylor: because boys think in school that they're supposed to be boys. Play sports, be more dressed like boys, act like boys, and they just maybe they got shy.

Through this interaction Taylor and Damian demonstrate the limited range of acceptable male behaviour. This limitation is not a problem for girls trying to be tomboys, but it is for males who do not ‘do’ their gender correctly according to the narrow construction of appropriate masculine behavior. Ariel astutely applied her newfound knowledge of stereotypes to this conversation when she said, “ um I think that maybe because a lot of stereotypes say that boys only do boy stuff that’s why it’s so weird that Phil was in the middle. Maybe that’s why a lot of people think that’s wrong.”

Dominique offered this explanation for why people would “make a fuss” about males choosing to act feminine:

Dominique: It’s because normally people don’t make a fuss about tomboys because like normally people see tomboys kind of and then normally people don’t really see tom girls

JB: So it’s more rare you think?

Dominique: Yea.

Dominique was accurate in saying that tomgirls were rare. With the exception of Phil, all the boys physically positioned themselves in the most hegemonic masculine position possible on the continuum. Rarity is not a coincidence, it is a result of males choosing to not position themselves as feminine, because that would be mitigating their potential for power. It would also assuredly result in to social ridicule for a young boy, which was not necessarily true for girls choosing to act masculine (Pascoe 2007).

Malik's justification for standing on the extreme male side revealed androcentric thinking. "I actually chose the boy side it's because I never have been girly in my life." To be male is to be normal, and femininity is constructed as an other, which Malik had no desire to be affiliated with. He made this clear when he stated that at no point in his entire life did he desire to identify as a girl. This is a very different reaction to the girls, who all wanted to identify in some way as partially masculine tomboy. Since male behavior is the socially desirable higher status position, even females try to identify with it. In contrast, males do not want access to femininity. It is the privilege of his male experience and the "othering" of female experience (Bem 1993) that makes this behavior androcentric. Josiah echoed this statement when he said, "I chose the boy side is because I play with boys and I always act like a boy." His use of the term "always" indicated his desire to distance himself completely from undesirable femininity.

Females in this class were quick to apply Kristeva's first tier of feminism (Davies 2003) and demand access to male activities. The boys used sports and science as marker of masculinity, but several girls in the class were quick to point out this out as stereotypical thinking and not actual truth, because girls liked those things as well.

Ben: I chose the boy side cause I'm always like a boy I mean I like to play sports I like science I like to do lots of things that a boy usually does.

Dallas: Girls do that stuff too

This happened again when Michael said, "okay so the reason why I'm on the boy's side is because I do lots of boy stuff I play football. Leeann declared, "girls can play football" and was backed up by Dallas's "Yeah!" By demanding the boys recognize that females also like sports, the girls were trying to assert themselves as equal to the males.

Madelyn offered another element to the conversation when she brought up the issue of feelings.

Madelyn: I was going to say it's not just how they act and how they dress it's kinda how they feel and how sensitive they are and how they talk sometimes that's kinda like in the middle like how they talk and how they feel.

JB: that's an interesting word Madelyn. Sensitive. So if a boy was sensitive where would he have stood yesterday?

Madelyn: middle

This definition seems to provide a new element to the discussion, the level of feelings.

Up until now gender was defined as a series of preferences that manifested itself in various behaviors. This was the first time feelings were being gendered. According to Madelyn, being sensitive would place male in the middle of the continuum. Placement in the middle of the continuum is positioned away from hegemonic masculinity, therefore it is a lower ranking masculinity. Using Madelyn's definition, for a male to be sensitive, he would actually make himself less masculine.

We further explored the issue of feelings. Christina said, "Um well-being honestly- um if I were a boy I would pick medium because every single boy cries. Every. And they could be scared of something. I know that, but I'm being honest." Here Christina is introducing the idea of male vulnerability. Males showing a weakness by allowing themselves to be scared, but not all males were willing to show this fragility.

Michael: I'm not scared of nothing

Joseph: I'm scared of some things.

Janiya: I'm scared of clowns

Jonathan and Janiya admitted they were scared of various things. Jonathan took this opportunity to show male vulnerability. In contrast, Michael used this moment to reaffirm his bravery and thus his masculinity.

This conversation highlighted the limitations of masculinity. Males are permitted the ability to be crazy and are elevated to the highest levels of social status in the classroom, but they are not permitted to have access to the full range of human emotions. Showing fear or sensitivity

makes a boy less masculine. Kimberly summed up the social consequences of a male who deviates from the narrow version of appropriate male behavior, “Maybe a boy won’t say it because maybe the other kids would make fun of him and they would say like make fun of him and say stuff secret about them.” This is another example of category maintenance. If a male deviates from hegemonic masculinity he risks social ramifications such as taunting and gossip. This ramifications for children who perform their gender outside of the narrow constructed socially acceptable ranges is the focus of the next section.

Part Three: Falling outside of the range-transgender and heteronormative

The previous sections focused on how the first and third graders developed their understanding of gender through the creation of gender schema. This paper then explored how children apply that schema in their daily lives, to both individuals, objects, and behaviors while constructing their own embodied gender identity. This chapter will focus on what happens when the children are confronted with situations that do not fall neatly into their gender schema.

Maintaining the gender binary

If a child witnesses a behavior that is incongruent with their gender schema, the child will experience a cognitive dissonance. Instead of making an accommodation and expanding their idea of appropriate gender behavior, they push back against this behavior in an effort to eradicate both dissonance and the behavior that caused it. This is done through mockery, insults, and violence. This is known as **category maintenance** work (Davis 1991) and can be seen in the following quote from Ricardo:

I think it’s for girls because it’s Minnie- and Minnie is for girls. Like why would? Because boys don’t like to see her...like they shouldn’t still have it. They have to grow

up and they like have to stop acting like a baby. And plus but it's girls, and it's for girls anyways.

Children give younger children a pass on doing gender incorrectly, but if an older child chooses to not conform to the the gender categories they are ridiculed for being a baby. (Davies 1991) Through this mockery, the taunter is assuming they are more knowledgeable in doing the practice of gender and they are trying to educate the less knowledgeable child. It is always a mean of stripping a student of access to social status, which is attended via maturity and hegemonic masculinity, which is why the worst possible insult first grader Aiden could muster when explaining to Luis on why he and Angelo were not going to be his friend was, "He thinks you a baby and a girl."

The children used other insulting language when describing situations where individuals did not conform to gender norms. When the class was discussing the stereotype of dancing being a girl activity we discussed boys choosing to do ballet. Ricardo made a silly little noise, mockingly waved his arms in the air and said, "Imagine a boy with a dress on!?" When this did not elicit laughter, because the teachers and his classmates did not this join in on this category maintenance work, Ricardo tried another tactic, "I just realized-why would they want to hold somebody by the waist and see their private space?" In saying this Ricardo was now trying to make a male dancer into a sexual pervert. By positioning males who do ballet as either weird or perverted Ricardo is maintaining that ballet is a feminine activity. He furthered his point when I showed a video of Mikhail Baryshnikov, the famous male ballet dancer:

Leeann: That looks weird. It looks like he's naked.

JB: That's the tights.

Ricardo: See what I mean? Tights are for girls

Dominique: They can be for anybody

Malik: That's so stupid

JB: Ta-da, okay. (the video had ended)

Leeann: I don't like it, it's disturbing.

My intent was to show students a strong and world renowned male dancer. Instead it had the opposite impact, and Ricardo was able to get more of his classmates to engage in category maintenance.

Another method of category maintenance was demonstrated by Josiah when I was reading *10,000 Dresses* (Ewert 2008), a book that features a transgender protagonist.

Josiah: um that would be a boy I would never be friends with if that is a boy

JB: okay, how come?

Josiah: um because um because because I like proper boys.

In this quote Josiah expressed a desire to exclude anyone from his social circle that he did not define as a "proper boy." Many of the males in the classroom expressed a similar desire to situate their masculinity properly.

Ben: Um, my thought is well, I do know that boys do do ballet and dancing classes but I actually don't know how many so that's why I just chose the maybe.

JB: Okay that's fair um it seems like, are you guys all like coming over towards the maybes or are you guys still yes's

Random Call out: yes

JB: okay, um Malia go ahead

Malia : um I think like dance are like for boys and girls because I've seen a lot of boys um who like are in ballet classes because they actually like it, not because they were forced to.

Malik: I think maybe cause some boys like do ballet but if somebody asks me I would have smashed my face into the wall

JB: So you personally would not want to do ballet?

Malik: yes

JB: At all? But you think that some boys might.

Malik: yea

Even when it appeared they were being open minded about other's ability to choose behaviors that expand the normative gender expectation, they actually reaffirmed their own gender identity to conform the not only the strict gender binary, but to construct themselves as a high ranking male in accordance with the local construction of hegemonic masculinity. Both

Ben and Malik were adamant that they were in no way interested in being considered a dancer, because such a label would diminish their ranking in the social hierarchy of the classroom.

In the first grade classroom Gavin and Janiya introduced an interesting element to our gender discussion.

Janiya: You can be a boy and a girl. A tomboy.

Gavin I know a word and it's from Philippines and it's called fa'afafine.

JB: And what does that mean?

G That means a boy that wears, tries to be a girl, and wears girls' stuff.

JB Ok. Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

G I'd say that for my opinion I won't do that at all.

Here Gavin used a term from the Samoan culture to describe what many considered a third gender. It is a term for children who are born male, but embody both male and female characteristics. Gavin was able to provide a simple definition of this term, and he was also able to reaffirm his own correct local version of masculinity when he stated, "I won't do that at all."

Not all children were able to apply prior knowledge of gender nonconformity to our classroom discussion. This was evident when I read Marcus Ewert's 10,000 (2008). The conversations that occurred after reading 10,000 Dresses contained several elements of category maintenance and cognitive dissonance that resulted from the limited duality of the children's gender schema.

While reading the book the third graders could not come to terms with the fact that the protagonist did not fall neatly into their gender schema. They tried multiple means to determine their gender, using hair, clothing, and first name as attempts at locating gender clues. In this extreme struggle to fit Bailey into existing gender schema. Taylor called out, "I'm so confused! Is it a boy or a girl?" Many others expressed equal confusion. One student even called out, "Oh

my gosh! This is a dream.” thinking that he could eliminate this gender inconsistency by writing it off as a dream.

The following conversation unfolded at the book’s conclusion:

Christina: Is she a boy or a girl?

Student: Tell us!

Janiya: When are you going to tell us?

JB: The End

Many call outs: What?!? (exasperated) Shouting and upset.

Sphax: This is horrible!

Maria: But I’m confused?!

Christina: I just can’t!

Dallas: It’s a girl it’s a girl it’s a girl it’s definitely a girl!

The children’s confusion and annoyance was palpable. This book did not conform to their gender binary, and contrary to most of the informative books we read in that classroom it created more questions than it answered. I tried to get the students to understand the fluidity of gender, and that children might not always feel comfortable with the gender they were assigned at birth. Some students began to show signs of understanding, because they gave examples of gender nonconforming relatives. Others were still totally baffled.

Kimberly: Was she adopted?

JB: No. Bailey’s not adopted, I’ll tell you that much. Bailey was not adopted.

Marshall: Is there a second part to this book?

Aside from the total confusion this book caused, it was disturbing to hear the level of acceptable violence the children’s discourse contained. When readings 10,000 Dresses the protagonist’s brother says that he is going to kick the main character. I asked the students about this:

JB: So but here’s my question. He said has going to kick him. Why do you think has going to kick him?

Kimberly: to wake him up

JB: To wake him up? Why do you think Madelyn?

Madelyn : Cause he's acting silly
JB: because he thinks has acting silly.

When I asked why they thought Bailey liked dresses so much Damian called out, “They got knocked in the head with a brick.”

This first graders had a similar reaction. As I always did, I introduced the book by showing the children the cover. Immediately, brows furrowed, heads tilted, and some children pursed their lips, as they struggled to understand the image on the cover. Most students found the character on the cover, with short spiked blonde hair and a long sparkly dress on to be too contradictory to comprehend. How could the two paradoxical things exist at the same time? Even before I began reading, the students were struggling to fit this image into their neatly defined gender binary.

While some students were initially confused others smirked, suppressed laughter, or giggled openly. When I asked them “what is so funny?” they pointed to the cover, “He is wearing a dress.” Another student curled his lip and said “Ew!”

As usual when I read books, I stopped often to ask the students questions and to field questions and comments from students. A petite boy named Luis enthusiastically shot his hand into the air. I called on him. “This book is delorious.”

“Delorious?” I asked.

Luis nodded and went on to explain with a straight face, “Like you laugh.” I grinned when I realized what he was intending to say. “Oh, hilarious!” but then I too went straight face, “Why? Is it funny?”

Luis shook his hand at me as he carefully explained, “Cause when a boy wants a dress - that’s hilarious.” Now he began to smirk. Some students nodded their head in agreement. Although Luis was claiming the book was funny, he wasn’t actually laughing. I chose to

question him on this, in an effort to get him to realize that boys wearing dresses is not intrinsically funny. I said, “But you guys aren’t laughing. How come?”

Aiden a boy sitting next to Luis called out, “Because we don’t like dresses.” Aiden gestured with his hand to indicate that he was speaking for the group of three boys sitting near him. Another boy near Aiden, Angelo, who spoke limited English chimed in, “I’m a boy!” Luis shook his head in agreement with Angelo. “It makes no sense.”

Here the children were actively maintaining the rigid gender binary by doing category maintenance work. Luis’s straight face indicated he did not outwardly appear to find the story humorous, yet he was verbally stating that he did. In doing so, Ricardo affirmed his own correct masculinity while labeling any boy who likes dresses as incorrect and therefore worthy of ridicule, thus reifying the gender binary through gender category maintenance work. The other boys followed his lead when they assert they don’t like dresses and they too were real boys.

Some of the students tried to come to Bailey’s aid, but they only did so by offering traditionally masculine solutions to his problems. One student noticed the soccer ball in an illustrated and suggested, “I think he is going to kick the ball and his brother will kick the ball back.” Another student said, “He should just play soccer and stop thinking about dresses.” When I finished the book, I asked the class what they thought. Several students said the book was funny, silly, or weird. Aiden simply said, “Bad.”

When asked why he stated emphatically, “Cause I don’t like dresses. And Angelo doesn’t like dresses.”, Luis, called “I like dresses!” The group broke out into a chorus of laughter mixed with “ewwww”.

Aiden started screeching and pointing at Luis, “You’re a girl! You’re a girl Ricardo! You like dresses!” Luis’s whole body shook and his eyes sparkled mischievously as he laughed

hysterically. I tried to bring the children back to a calm conversation about gender by asking Aiden, “So, is it ok if I like dresses?” He said yes. I then asked if it was ok for Mr. S, our male instructional assistant, to like dresses. Aiden’s eyes got wide, his mouth dropped open and he shrieked “NO!” Again he and the group burst into laughter. At this point Luis drew the attention back to himself by again stating, “I like dresses.”

Aiden was now nearly wild. He grabbed Luis’s arm and started shaking him while shouting, “You’re a girl! You’re still a girl Luis? Luis, you’re still a girl!” It seemed like Aiden was trying to “shake the girl” out of Luis in an attempt to save him from doing his gender incorrectly and realign him with his masculinity. At this point I intervened by reminding Aiden of our classroom rule of keeping our hands to ourselves, but he persisted in screaming, “You’re still a girl? You’re going! NO girls allowed.” At this point, the gender category maintenance work of Aiden had become too dominant, aggressive, and loud to allow for a calm rational discussion. Aiden’s assertion of his masculinity was taking over the classroom, and so I transitioned the students into our usual dismissal routine.

It was painful to witness boys in my classrooms resort to violence dialogue in an effort to maintain the previously established hegemonic masculinity. Malik said he would, “probably to kick some sense into him” and Damian said, “I need to knock some sense into him.” Schwalbe (1992) asserts the maintenance of power is likely to involve a dehumanizing of other groups and a corresponding withering of empathy and emotional relatedness within the self.” This was seen in both Malik and Damian’s statements. These were two males in my classroom who has previously shown signs of compassion and kindness, but now their desire for maintaining the gender categories had eroded their empathy as they were now discussing engaging in violent acts towards the transgender protagonist.

Children go to great lengths to maintain the rigid gender binary through category maintenance work. More ominously still was a conversation with the first graders about whether or not I should take away my two year old son's doll.

JB When should I take it away?

Ethan: never

LaNess: He can keep it so, if you keep it for him when he dies you can put it next to him

JB: Oh my goodness, I hope he doesn't die when I'm alive

LaNess : He will, and then you'll have to put his doll in his grave.

Here LaNess seems to be suggesting that gender nonconformity comes at a severe price, in this instance she is saying that my son would pay for it with his life. Although disturbing for a mother to hear, this quote is the ultimate example of category maintenance. It implies the risk of not performing one's gender correctly could cost a person their life.

Gender Nonconformity and Heteronormativity

When I read 10,000 Dresses first grader Janiya tried to communicate what type of male she believed would wear a dress. She tried to tell me about it by saying, "If a teenager are gonna wear it then I think its kinda both. And I don't wanna say it." This totally confused me so I asked, "You don't want to say it? What don't you want to say?" Janiya replied, "It's kind of a bad word, but it's not." This further perplexed me. I thought she was using the term teengager because she believe the character in the story was using "mature" language that might be inappropriate for school. I told her, "OK, then let's not use it." And continued reading the narrative. But at the conclusion of the book Janiya brought it up again.

Janiya: Its kinda a bad word

JB: It's kinda of a bad what honey?

Janiya: Kind of a bad word.

JB: oh?

Janiya: the same thing as him (points to the book)

JB: Do you want to maybe whisper it to me, because I'm dying to know what word you're thinking of, if it's really a bad word or not. But I don't want you to get in trouble for saying it.....Janiya considers this

Gavin: Please say it!

JB No no no, come whisper. (She comes to the front of the group and whispers "gay" into my ear.)

JB OH! It's not a bad word.

Jackson: Kick?

JB Janiya said a word to describe people who are like in love with people who are the same...

Gavin: Gay!

JB: Yeah

Jovan: Gay is not a bad word

JB It's not a bad word. It's what some people are.

Gavin: Uh huh.

The children had no additional response to this, so after waiting a few seconds for additional comments I thanked them for discussing the book with me and transitioned them to their next activity.

It was impossible to have a discussion in either classroom about gender nonconformity that didn't turn into a discussion on sexuality. Schools in the USA are largely heteronormative in nature, which means they privilege heterosexual practices and assume students identify as heterosexual (Blackburn and Smith 2010; Cohen 2005, Dinkins and Englert 2015). Janiya's reluctance to use the word gay in school was evidence of this behavior. She never heard the term gay used appropriately in school, so she assumed it was a negative term that was forbidden.

In the third grade classroom gay was shouted out as an explanation for the character Bailey's desire to wear dresses, but so many other relevant comments were blurted out that I do not recall hearing it at the time I was teaching. This was a missed opportunity to interrupt the heteronormative discourse that is prevalent in schools. For the first graders, three of the students verbally expressed familiarity with the term gay, and it seems all of the students emerged from

the discussion with the understanding that gay was a normal condition. In this way it is possible that this brief dialogue was able to provide a scant interruption of the heteronormative narratives that constantly occur in elementary classrooms.

Conclusion

Elementary students come to school with firmly entrenched gender schema that they used to help them make sense of their world. To the students, many choices they made each day were gendered, such as how to dress and what activities to engage in. All students verbalized a high level of comfort in females choosing to engage in activities they constructed as masculine, but there was hardly reciprocity with males being accepted for showing any feminine preference. Even when male students said it was ok to do, they expressed that they themselves would not select a feminine behavior. This dissertation contends that females are attempting to gain social status and thus access to more powerful positions within the classroom community by situating themselves as a bit more masculine than feminine. This is done through selecting behaviors that are associated with masculinity and through their choice to self-identity as a tomboy. The experiences of the students when reading literature about a child who is transgender indicated strong category maintenance work done by the students which reified the strict gender binary.

CHAPTER 4 RACE

Introduction

“Race? You mean like a race car?”

-First grade student 2015

This quote comes from the first day of the anti-bias curriculum during the introductory activity from this unit. Some adults would smile and coo that this student’s quote was proof that young children lack a strong notion of race or ethnicity. Research shows most early childhood educators in particular (and most white adults in general) are rather reluctant to bring up issues of race and ethnicity with young children (Copenhaver -Johnson 2006, Van Ausdale & Feagin 2001). Unfortunately, race still plays a relevant and powerful role in society, and therefore in the daily lives of young children. This chapter focuses on how children make sense of race and racism in the figured world of my classroom.

I’ll begin by defining cultural racism and exploring how it impacts children. Then the chapter will address the prevalence of colorblind racism in society and in my classroom. It will address the tendency for classrooms to become color-mute spaces. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the individual students’ identities and the intersectionality of children, in regards to race and gender when engaging in the anti-bias curriculum.

Part One: Cultural Racism- The Smog Kids Breathe

Using a figured worlds approach, this study examined how the children in my first and third grade classrooms constructed and internalized race as part of their identities shaped by the world in which they lived. On a micro-level I define that world as my classroom. But that figured world is embedded within a school, and that school is a part of a larger society that is

also shaped by several societal factors, one of which is cultural racism. For this study I use Tatum's (1997) definition of *cultural racism* "the cultural images and meaning that assumed superiority of Whites and the assumed inferiority of people of color." She uses the metaphor of smog to explain cultural racism present in American society. The smog in her metaphor consists of all the cultural images and messages to which children and adults are exposed. This smog could be the characters they see in books, movies, and television shows. It could be the toys they have at home, at school, or see on the toy store shelves. She explains, "sometimes it is so thick it is visible, other times it is less apparent, but always, day in and day out, we are breathing it in" (pg. 6). The findings of my study revealed that although children are not aware of the smog, it is shaped their identities and their daily practices.

One example of cultural racism occurred early in the school year. Leeann's (white third grader) self proclaimed best friend was a little girl in another class named Caroline (black third grader). During writer's workshop, while Leeann was writing a personal narrative featuring her and her best friend, she selected an image from the internet to illustrate her writing. The picture was of two scantily clad white teenage girls. Darius (black third grader) declared, "Caroline is black." Leeann said, "I know!" I asked her why she chose to make the girls all white and she replied. "I didn't want to hurt feelings." The image Leeann selected was important, because it showed what she thought was attractive and held value among her peers. The fact that the girls were older indicated that advanced age brought social capital. The revealing clothing was a specific way of performing femininity, in which girls flaunt their sexuality. Leeann's selection of this image meant she realized that using sexuality is a means for females to gain power and status. The last thing to consider is race. By selecting two white girls to represent both herself and her black friend, Leeann showed that she had internalized the message that it was better to be

white than to be black. Her rationale - that she “didn’t want to hurt her feelings” indicates that she thought it would be more sensitive to her friend's emotional well being to pretend she was white, than to select an image of a black girl and a white girl together. This was a manifestation of cultural racism. This is not to say that Leeann was a white supremacist. She loved her black friend. Her financially unstable family received support services from a predominately black church in town. Leeann had a deep desire to not be racist, as was indicated by her constant shouting out to others “that’s racist” whenever white or black was brought up in the classroom. But Leeann was a product of the cultural racism she experienced from society, and therefore had internalized the message that it was better to be white than to be black.

This situation, combined with her exclamations of “that’s racist” are indicators that Leann possessed inadequate language for discussing and thinking about race. This could be because she has picked up on adults uneasiness with discussing race, and there are societal avoidance of discussing blackness or whiteness. (Allen 1997, Brown & Brown 2011, Boutte, Lopez-Robertson & Powers-Costello 2011, DeLeon 2006, Hinton 2004, Lee, Ramsey, & Sweeney 2008, Park 2011) Without directly challenging contemporary cultural racism, it is allowed to perpetuate.

This was not the only incident of cultural racism I witnessed throughout the study. At the beginning of the anti-bias curriculum with the first graders, and in the middle of the curriculum with the third graders, I did an activity I called “Pick A Friend.” This was done to explore who students would befriend if given a field of 20 students of various races and ethnicities representing both genders. The students were directed to pretend they were all alone on a playground. They were asked to select and privately write down two friends they would approach to play. In groups of 3 or 4, students came up to examine the images and make their choices. Then these choices were shared, tallied, and discussed aloud as a whole class activity.



Figure 1: Images for "Pick a Friend" Activity

The post conversation discussion lead to the following exchange. I have included the children's race or ethnicity because it is relevant to their selection of the friend image. This biographical information is known because the students shared this information as a part of the anti-bias unit and it can be found on school documents filled out by their parents. The picture I am referring to is to the right.

JB: I don't think anybody picked this friend and I was wondering why?

Jovan (biracial): Aw!

Angelo (Mexican): Boo! *thumbs down gesture*

Michelle (Latina) *sticks her tongue out and grimaces.*

JB: What do you think Aiden?

Aiden (Costa Rican): Cause he's mean

Brandon (biracial): No he's not.

Gavin (Filipino): Common on, he's smiling.

Aiden: *(shakes his head no)* His...his hair. It's not like the same as us.

Picture Two



Image not selected by class.

This conversation occurred in the presence of the entire class, and two teachers. Both of the teachers are white females, but as explained earlier, the class consists of students from many

races and ethnicities, yet Aiden still felt justified in saying that the little boy with cornrows was not like “us.” Here Aiden’s use of the word “us” is a marker of how he has constructed whiteness as normative. It also marks children like the one in the photo as opposite to “us,” a vilified “them.”

The reactions of the two children who grimaced and booed are indicative of the way the cultural racist “smog” has impacted first generation immigrant children. Both of these children were second generation Americans from Latin American countries; their negative reactions indicate they are not immune to the racist viewpoint that black males are undesirable, particularly black males who wear their hair in cornrows, since several children in the study indicated they would befriend the lighter skinned black boy with a closely cropped hair cut wearing glasses and a collared shirt. The boy in cornrows aligns with the images they have seen in the media where black males are constructed as wild, deviant and criminal (DeLeon 2006).

Two of the biracial students appeared to identify with the little boy. Jovan did so by saying “aw” when he heard this child was not selected. Brandon came to the boy’s defense and gave the boy’s smile as evidence that the boy really was not mean. Their reactions could be explained by their personal experiences with diversity in their families. These prior experiences lead them to construct a different understanding of black males, as fathers and caregivers. They knew first hand that black males did not deserve the criminalized racial stereotypes their classmates constructed.

The following day I interviewed Aiden individually about his idea that the little boy with cornrows was mean.

JB: So Aiden, yesterday you said one of these kids looked mean. Which one did you say looked mean to you? (*He points to the boy with cornrows*)

Aiden: I saw him in the house throwing stuff at me.

JB: Oh, in your house?

Aiden: Yeah.

JB: So you have a friend that looks like this?

Aiden: No, he's not my friend. He's a stranger, he was throwing things at me from outside.

This excerpt from the interview demonstrates how Aiden created an entirely fictitious story involving a violent act. To be clear, these images were assembled from Google searches, these were not images of children from the community. Also, Aiden's mother and I were in constant contact because of an IEP required communication log. If a traumatic incident, like the break in of a stranger, had occurred in their home I am confident that she would have notified me. Aiden's creation of a fictitious juvenile criminal offense for this image of a young black male, is further evidence that Aiden has used the culturally racist discourse available to him in society to construct black males as powerful, violent, and criminal.

To extend Tatum's metaphor, at time the smog is thick and obvious. In my classroom this occurred in overt acts of racist language. Tatum calls this *active racism*. One morning during reading instruction, I gave Aiden two books to choose from before momentarily turning my attention to another student. I heard Aiden say, "I don't want Indian apple picking books." One of the two books I had given him featured a pair of children with tan skin picking apples; it was possible that they were Indian. When I asked him what he had said Aiden replied, "I don't want apple picking books." Aiden was a Hispanic student who had Attention Deficit Disorder. His initial impulsive comment revealed his true feelings: that he did not want to read an entire book featuring an Indian family, because they were undesirable to him. Leaving out the word "Indian" in his answer to me demonstrated Aiden's ability to self-monitor his racist language in my presence, but it did not alter his negative feelings towards people from India. The Indian population in the community was steadily increasing. Although there were four first generation

students from India in Aiden's class. During the time of the study the school's population was approximately 12% Asian, with the majority of those students coming from India.

Another example of active racism came from Darius, a black third grader with communication impairments, who often spoke about race. Sometimes it was in reference to himself, which was encouraged according to anti-bias educational goals, but other times it was to express racist feelings towards non-black people of color, particularly people from India. When doing a google search on the computer, several images of people from India came up, Darius exclaimed, "I hate Indians." Later, when I was introducing a new online program the school was using where children could select any language they were interest in to learn, Darius declared "I'm not learning Indian. I'm never being Indian. I don't like Indian." Even after I had explained to Darius that saying you do not like people from a particular country is an unfair stereotype I watched him lean over towards a classmate to ask, "Do you like Indians? I don't like Indians."

The racist comments made by Darius and Aiden about the growing Indian population were concerning. They occurred despite the anti-bias curriculum, and direct reminders about the unfairness of making stereotypical assumptions about people. Darius remained actively racist towards other minority groups as well. As the class was presenting projects on other countries' winter celebrations Darius said, "I don't like Mexico." This struck me as odd, because one of Darius's closest friends in the classroom was Justin, a first generation student from Mexico who often talked about his Mexican heritage. Darius's anti-Mexico comment was overheard by Ariel, who had just completed her project on Mexican Christmas traditions. She replied with an angry, "Humph." Darius said to Ariel, "I don't have to." I told Darius, "That might hurt Ariel's feelings." But Darius remained firm, "I don't like Mexico."

This is an example of Darius showing active racism, but it is also evidence of the inability of words from peers and teachers to alter racist beliefs. Simple telling Darius that it hurt Ariel's feelings to insult Mexico did not sufficiently persuade him to change his mind. He had no chance to learn a counterbias (Aboud 2013) that would challenge his anti-Mexico stance. In contrast, Ariel's project raised her interest in Mexico. She was actively voicing her pro-Mexican opinion. When she enthusiastically showed her project to our instructional assistant, Ariel was able to make comparisons to her Guatemalan heritage and the contemporary American Christmas celebrations she participates in.

This shows that when children explore other cultures they can form positive opinions about cultural group that differ from their own. This has important implications for how educators address bias and racism in classrooms. It is not enough to say it is not nice, a teacher has to provide educational experiences that replace the bias with positive information.

Part Two: Colorblind Racism and Color Mute Classrooms

At an early point in the anti-bias curriculum, I asked the third graders to brainstorm all the ways a person could be different. While the students were writing, my co-teacher and I circulated around the room. At one point she leaned in and whispered to me, "Isn't it nice that they don't use race." This was not the first time I had heard this comment from a fellow educator. Many adults would like to operate under the assumption that children are colorblind individuals. It fits the image of children as innocent little empty vessels, yet to be filled up with hate and racism from the vile adult world. Perhaps this is one of the justifications adults have for not talking to children about race. Research shows most early childhood educators in particular (and most white adults in general) are rather reluctant to bring up issues of race and ethnicity with young children (Copenhaver -Johnson 2006, Van Ausdale & Feagin 2001). However, the

examples of children discussing race and being racist in Part One of this chapter are proof that children discuss race. In the first grade classrooms I overheard students debating if a black Santa could be real. I was pulled into a conversation between two students who were eager to engage their classmates in a discussion on the recent murder of Tamir Rice, a 12 year old boy who was shot and killed in Cleveland on November 22, 2014 while holding a toy gun that shot plastic pellets. Adults may not be discussing race with children, but clearly children are having such discussions without them.

The anti-bias unit I created intentionally started with children's current experiences before exploring the historical context of race. This was done to avoid situating racism in the past, which contributes to color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2003). *Color-blind racism* is the term created by Bonilla-Silva and used to explain the racism that is prevalent in America today. In color-blind racism, some people (particularly white people) claim that America is a post racial society where everyone is allegedly treated the same, without any regard for race or ethnicity. They use language that minimizes racism and situates it as a thing of the past. Differences that exist between the races today are considered "cultural" or "natural" therefore they are no one's fault and little can be done to change the status quo. Color-blind racism today is not simply a prejudiced preconceived notion steeped in ignorance and held by individuals, instead Bonilla-Silva uses Foucault's concept of power to explain that color-blind racism is a systemic problem that allows white people to maintain a privileged position of power in society.

In the "Pick A Friend Activity," the refusal of children to refer to race was an example of colorblind racism. Students referenced many physical characteristics, such as eyes, glasses, smiles, hair, and accessories- but never skin. When asked in the whole group why they chose a specific friend, the answers were "cool," "pretty," or "looked nice." The students valued things

the children possessed, such as a “cool shirt,” “pretty bow,” or nice necklace.” Occasionally the student directly referenced the student's physical appearance, a friend was selected because he or she had “nice hair,” “neat hair,” or a “nice smile.” No student said they used skin tone as a means of selection.

However, students did not pick friends based solely on superficial characteristics. Several days later the students were individually asked to select which image they thought looked most like them. Every student selected an image they had previously selected as one of their friends. When asked why that student selected this image nearly every student referenced skin tone that they thought was similar to theirs. (In actuality, I think some of them selected a friend who's skin was a bit lighter than their own, indicating a preference to self-identify as lighter than they actually were.) Analysis of the conversations revealed the students selected a friend who they felt they could identify with, and they used race as the key component.

The children revealed that what they really valued in a peer was someone who was both the same gender and similar to them racially. This selection was anything but “colorblind.” In a way their discourse was “colormute” a term coined by Pollock to describe the lack of an available form of public discourse about racial topics or issues.

My anti-bias unit used discussion as a pedagogical strategy to teach children to use racially sensitive language and give them a space to explore the role race plays when selecting peers. In this way it aimed to combat both color-blindness and colormuteness (Pollock 2004). Pollock uses colormute to describe the lack of an available form of public discourse about racial topics or issues. This is problematic, because instead of addressing racial issues head on teachers and school administrators actively avoid racial discussions. This leads to the perpetuation of inequalities (Pollock 2004). An example of this was when I overheard a fourth grade teacher

talking to two students in the hallway about an altercation that happened at lunch. A white girl and a black boy had gotten into a disagreement, and I overheard the white girl complain, "He said he hates all white people." The teacher replied, "I think Ma'ki is upset because you told him he couldn't sit at your table." By doing this the teacher deliberately avoided the issue of race. Ma'ki did not deny the allegation of hating all white people. At that moment, perhaps he really did hate all white people, and based on this brief encounter, it appeared his hate was not going to be explored, mitigated, or even discussed. By taking race out of the equation, the teacher was demonstrating colormuteness, and because he was an authority figure to these two children, he may have encouraged them to also avoid racial discussions in the future. While it is unclear exactly how this white female student interpreted this experience because a racial conversation wasn't allowed to unfold productively, she may have been left with the idea that black boys are angry and allowed to hate white people. This could be the perpetuation of both colormuteness, and colorblind racism-if she internalizes the idea that all black males feel this way. It is a concern Tatum expressed when she wrote, "Children who have been silenced often enough learn not to talk about race publicly. Their questions don't go away, they just go unasked." (1997).

A teacher trained in anti-bias educational practices would use such an opportunity to explore the basis of the boy's statement. What about this experience made him say he hated all white people? Was he harboring other resentment from prior encounters with racism. How might his classmates help him deal with these intense feelings. This sort of a discussion would mark an important change in how most schools currently address race (Polite & Saenger 2003). In order to avoid the unpleasantness of modern day racism, schools present racism as an eradicated problem that was fixed by the Civil Rights movement (Copenhaver-Johnson 2006). Color-blind racism is spread in schools when teachers send children the message that race is no

longer relevant in society (Swindler Boutte, Lopez-Robertson & Powers-Costello 2011). For example, in a study done in a second grade classroom the students were asked if they saw racism happening today. A little white boy responded, “No, because MLK changed everything” (Rogers & Mosley 2006).

In Stuyvesant Elementary School, the first grade children seem to have been taught to use the terms “peach” and “brown” to describe skin color by their kindergarten teachers. This was confirmed by two different kindergarten teachers as their practice as part of their lessons that celebrated diversity. They avoid using the racial categories “white” and “black”. The teachers explained that since all the children were not actually the colors white or black, those terms were inaccurate labels.

I agree with the sentiment that focusing on the beautiful variations of skin tone with young students is an important way to build individual children’s self esteem. This activity is so valuable, I included it in my anti-bias curriculum when the children read *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz and mixed paint to create self portraits (INCLUDE IMAGE). The kindergarten teacher’s rationale for avoiding the racial terms “white” and “black” appears on the surface to be reasonable, but a deeper examination shows this is another example of Bonilla-Silva’s colorblind racism. This line of thinking becomes problematic because these terms have very real societal implications. Teaching about skin, and not addressing what the labels white and black mean in contemporary society is doing the children a disservice. The students need to learn that many people in America are judged because of their skin tone, and ignoring this fact contributes to colorblind racism. It is actively ignoring the lived experiences of people of color as different than white people’s experiences.

An example of my own students showing colormuteness occurred when the school year began, Leeann, a third grade white girl with ADHD would loudly blurt out “That’s racist!” whenever anyone would use the terms white or black in her presence. For instance, I had sent the classroom helper on an errand to deliver a note to Ms. Williams, one of the two secretaries who worked in the school’s main office. The classroom helper came back empty handed, but was not confident he had given the paper to the proper person. When I asked the classroom helper if he delivered the note to the black women or the white women Leeann shouted, “That’s racist!” I had heard her do this a handful of times, so I took a moment to explained to Leeann, in front of the entire class, that in our society some people are labeled as black and others are labeled as white. I explained that talking about those racial differences is not racist, but it is racist to use those terms to hurt somebody or to make assumptions and judgments about them.

Conclusion/Implications

Children are part of society and as individuals in a society they are subject to the exact same societal forces as adults, namely cultural racism and colormuteness. Although it seems sad that such young children could have already developed their own deeply held constructions of race, this study revealed that some children need much more than a five week anti bias curriculum to alter deeply held beliefs on race. The following chapter will explore how children used their racial understanding to construct their own racial identities as one element of their intersectional identity in the context of their classroom community.

CHAPTER 5

IDENTITY AND INTERSECTIONALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

On its most basic level, the concept of intersectionality describes how a person fits into more than one category at any given time. The intersection of those categories creates a unique experience that is not shared by people who are not also both co-existing categories. For instance, I am a white, middle-class, cisgender heterosexual female. As such, although my personal experiences differ from other individual white, middle-class, cisgender heterosexual females, collectively we have many experiences in common.

An important feature of the term intersectionality is the idea of oppression (Crenshaw 1989). In American society certain groups experience oppression, such as people of color, women, people in poverty, and the LGBTQ community. Black feminist thought explains the intersections of multiple oppression that result in a specific set of experiences (Collins 2009). For instance, a black female has a very different lived experience than someone who is not a black female. Her experience is unique from a white women because of the intersectionality of oppression she faces due to her race and gender.

This relates to my classroom and this study, because although my classroom is a unique classroom community of practice, it does not exist in an impenetrable bubble. Previous chapters have addressed how society impacts children's construction of their gender identity (Chapter 4) and how they discuss (and do not discuss) race (Chapter 5), but what remains to be explored is the level in which race and gender intersect for young children.

Scholars who have explored intersectionality have determined It is nearly impossible to divorce race from social class (Morris 2016, Collins 2009, Pascoe 2007, Fordham 2016)). Class and race both play a role in constraining and creating options for performing a child's gender.

(Pyke 1996, Reay 2001). A legacy of slavery and segregation has resulted in vast inequalities in socio-economic status in America, as well as in the two classrooms in this study. In both the first and third grade classes the majority of black students were from families living below the poverty line.

Dallas and Her Identity

The best way to illustrate how intersectionality impacted my students is by focusing on Dallas. Dallas is a black female, who receives free school lunches. Her identity is shaped in a larger societal context of race, class, and gender oppression (Collins 2009). Dallas was in my third grade class. She had big round brown eyes, and like many eight year olds her large newly grown adult teeth barely fit in her mouth. She was extremely slender. She usually wore leggings or skinny jeans to school with a sweatshirt or t-shirt. She almost always wore sneakers. Her hair changed, sometimes she wore long braided extensions, and other times she wore a simple combed back ponytail.

During the year I worked with Dallas, she was sent to the principal's office by several other teachings in the building due to inappropriate or rude behavior towards both adults and peers. She was described by others children as "rude" and "loud." Adults called her "defiant." Dallas often referred to herself as "aggressive." During a class activity exploring the character traits of the two sisters in *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale*, Dallas said she was like Manyara, who the text described as selfish and mean, because her first grade sister is like the kind Nyasha, who is the female protagonist in the story that ends up becoming queen.

It is important to explore why Dallas defines herself as "bad" in contrast to her sister who is "good." Morris (2016) explains that black girls in America are raised in a cultural tradition that does not always equate *defiant* as "bad". Morris points out, "Harriet Tubman was

defiant. So was Sojourner Truth and countless other enslaved women who resisted oppression” (2016). Black feminist thought explains that black girls like Dallas and her sister can either be seen as “good girls” or as “ghetto girls.” Good girls align to white, middle-class definitions of femininity. “Ghetto” girls are resisting the intersecting oppressions of race and gender. Dallas never called herself “ghetto” but she did label herself as “bad”, “loud,” and “aggressive”. Morris explains the necessity black girls feel to take up these characteristics, “To be ‘loud’ is a demand to be heard. To have an attitude is to reject a doctrine of invisibility and mistreatment.” (2016)

In Dallas’s struggle to be heard she often clashed with classmates and authority figures, such as teachers and adults. When Dallas felt insulted by a peer, she had a strong desire to defend her humanity. She learned fear was an effective tool among her meeker classmates, so she often raised her voice and threatened physical harm. Since both behaviors are unacceptable qualities in her school community, Dallas often found herself in the principal's office.

In hindsight, it is unclear what provoked some of Dallas’s aggressions. Despite the cause, the result of being sent to the principal is consistent with research findings that black females are more likely to be seen as perpetrators of violence, than as victims of it (Fordham 2016).

While in my classroom Dallas found students who would not back down to her loud advances, and so she countered by being even more boisterous and making increasingly more violent threats. I recall one conversation with her where I talked through what would happen to her if she actually did “knock Damian’s lights out.” Although I she knew she would be suspended from school, she remained resolute, “I’ve got to hit him if he keeps messing with me.” This is Dallas’s desire to regain her humanity, which was being robbed by Damian’s insults. The consequences were irrelevant to Dallas, because in her eyes she would be vindicated. This is

consistent with experiences of other young black females in American schools who also chose violence as a means of attempting to maintain their humanity and regain any semblance of power (Morris 2016).

Volume and aggression were not the only ways Dallas tried to assert her humanity in the classroom. She, along with several other students, often tried to gain status by discussing items they had at home. These items were not permitted in school, so children could feel free to try to gain status by stating they had lavish, expensive objects, even if they did not. Dallas would often say she had “a hot tub” or she “took a private limo.” She would say she possessed high status possession in unbelievable quantities, like 5,000 video games and 1 million Shopkins. This revealed Dallas desire to gain social status, and her refusal to be viewed by her peers and teachers as an inferior human being-even if that meant enumerating fictitious inventories of items she wished she possessed.

After the initial lesson I spent exploring gender stereotypes, I pulled Dallas aside to have a conversation about her strong desire to distance herself from things that were considered feminine. This revealing conversation provided great insight into what Dallas considered appropriate gendered behavior.

JB: I’ve noticed that every time I say a girl stereotype you’re really quick to be uh-uh not me, is that true?

Dallas: Yea

JB: Why do you think that is?

Dallas: because I’m very tough

JB: you like being tough?

Dallas: yes I’m the tough one in my family.

JB: okay cool. So you think that makes you more of something else? What do you think that makes you?

Dallas: A tomboy.

JB: What does a tomboy mean to you?

Dallas: It’s someone- it’s a girl that’s very tough, like Taylor (white classmate). It’s a girl that’s very tough but still is kind of- she’s very rough on the edges but inside she’s very soft.

At various points during the year Dallas self identified as aggressive, mean, and tough. Using her gender schema she considered these traits as masculine, and was thus quick to disassociate from any stereotypical female behaviors. Black feminist thought explains that this is a deliberate rejection of a “good” girl persona. “Good” girls are not supposed to be running wild through the streets like boys (Jones 2010). Dallas is intelligent, so she knows she is not doing her femininity correctly by society’s standards, but sees the value of self identifying as a tomboy as opposed to a “good” girlie girl.

Interestingly, Dallas did provide a nod to her feminine identity that she chose to keep on the inside and not outwardly display in our classroom, which she labeled as “soft.” I would argue that Dallas chose to construct her identity as a “tough” to ensure that no one impinged on her humanity. Young, poor, black females are used to many layers of oppression. Dallas stands in sharp contrast to Tiyaë, another black girl who only self-identified as a tomboy slightly. She was more quiet and reserved than Dallas, and as a result did not get as much attention from peers or the teachers in the room as “tough tomboy” Dallas did. Tiyaë would fit the bill of a “good” girl. Dallas was “loud” and “aggressive,” which forced her to be seen and allowed her to be heard in a world that might otherwise silent her. This ensured she received attention (even if it was not always positive) from adults.

This was one of the important ways intersectionality was apparent in my classroom. In the figured world of our classroom, due to its placement in a larger societal context, Dallas did not have many options available to her due the intersection of her low socioeconomic level, her race, and her gender, but she had adopted a version of femininity that suited her need to assert her humanity and gain social status among peers. The following section address two notable times intersectionality was apparent in the classroom.

Intersectionality in Peers

Intersectionality is an important factor when children select peers. As described in the previous chapter, in a class activity I called “Pick a Friend,” I presented the students with 20 multicultural images of boys and girls. Only one first grade student selected a child of a different gender than their own. This was a strategic decision, because he explained that he thought the girl he selected as a secondary playmate was the sister of the boy he selected first. None of the third grade children chose a friend of the opposite gender. By examining who the children picked, and by analyzing their explanations for their choices I learned that what children valued most in a playmate was someone who was a similar gender and race to themselves. First grader Toshani summed up the reason for this succinctly. Toshani assumed that children who looked like her would also, “like the same things as me” and that therefore they could “have more fun together.”

The intersectional choices students make in peers is not inherently bad. There is much to be gained from having friends with whom you feel you can relate. Tatum (1997) explains how this is beneficial in *Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? And other conversations about race*. Together, black students can share commonalities. Collectively, they can find the feeling of safety and security that is rare in a society that marginalizes and oppresses them.

The concern comes in when students only want to associate with peers who are similar to them. This is what psychologists label as in-group favoritism (Aboud 2003). This is particularly damaging to children who are minority in their school community, because they can become socially isolated and emotionally vulnerable. It becomes the work of an anti-bias educator to get children to question the assumptions they make about people who are similar to them and

different than them. Can the students see the value in playing with people who are different than themselves?

Ladies and Gentlemen, Who Gets to be Royal?

Graduate courses made me realize the powerful connection between language and the creation of reality in the figured world of my classroom. It made me reconsider the terms I had selected to use to address my students. I deliberately said “ladies and gentlemen” to call their attention. This was done because I wanted my students to rise to the occasion, and be as mature, proper, and sophisticated as these terms implied. For this reason I found it preferable to “boys and girls”. However, both terms contributed the reifying the gender binary.

This line of thinking led me to consider another habit I had picked up over a decade of teaching. I often called girls, “Princess.” For instance, when handing a female student a piece of paper I would say, “Here you go Princess.”

Toshani, a female first grader, once questioned why I did this. I hadn't thought about it before, but in light of the courses I was taking I realized this term might not be appropriate. I told her I did it because most girls liked it, since it made them feel special, but I could stop if she wanted me to. She said, “No, I like it” before she turned and skipped away.



Jonathan's drawing of royalty.

Seeing Toshani, a first generation student from India, feel delighted by the term, “princess” made me think more about the link between royalty, race, ethnicity, and gender. Did my students have a limited westernized notions of who was allowed to be royal? Did the cult of

Disney princesshood impact how children of all genders viewed royalty? To find the answer I decided to incorporate an exploration of royalty into my study. I asked all the students to draw royalty.

When I instructed the first and third grade students to draw royalty there was lots of excitement in the room. There were many call outs of “oooohs” and “cools” as I explained the assignment. The room was noisy as the children chatted with their seatmates about what they planned to draw as all the children immediately jumped on the task. This activity had struck a chord with them. The idea of royalty as portrayed in fairy tales is a popular fantasy for children to imagine. It is something they often see represented in movies, television, and children’s literature.

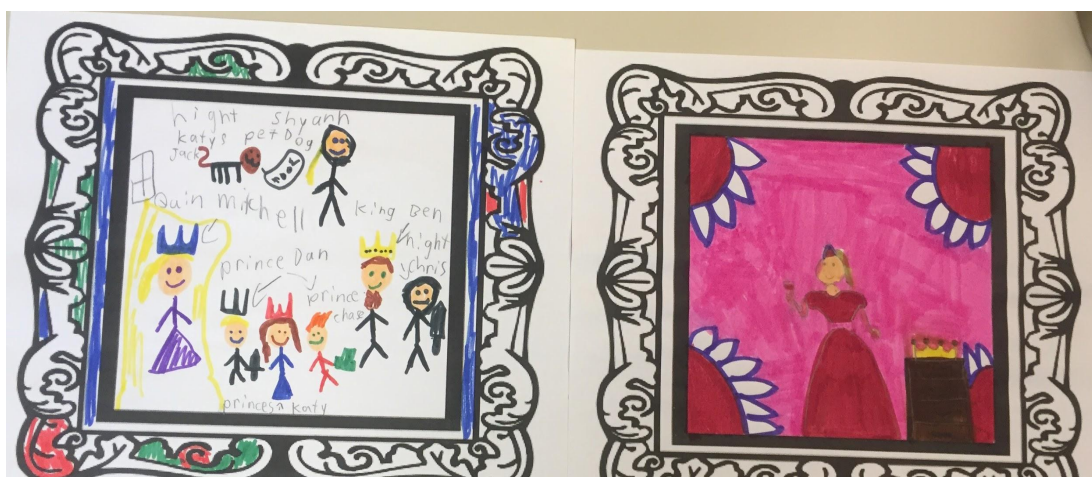
Despite specifically drawing attention to the class set of multicultural crayons as I handed out the paper many of the students did not fill in the skin color of their royal figures. Those who did picked light tones, such as peach or beige. Michelle, Latina, said she was “making her princess look like her.” She gave it extremely long hair, curly eyelashes, and light skin. When asked about her elaborate image of a prince and a princess Janiya (a black girl) gave a detailed explanation of their clothing and castle. I told her I noticed she did not color in their skin, and I asked her what color skin the prince and princess had. She shrugged before simply saying, “White.” We see in this activity that whiteness is constructed as normal, in this case it is normal for royalty. Children understand princesses, princes, and kings to be people with wealth and power, two traits the children indicated they valued. Every last one of the first grade students drew the royalty as absent of color or as white. Only one third grader deliberately colored in the skin brown, Dallas. Dallas asserted her black, femininity in the form of her princess drawing.

She proudly told me her princess looked just like her and had a streak of purple hair, because “of course princesses have purple hair.”

There were gender implications present in the children’s drawings. The males did not chose to draw princesses alone. If they did draw a princess, it was part of a larger royal family or as part of a damsel in distress scenario. They drew mostly knights, men who aligned more with the hegemonic masculinity they constructed as powerful, brave, and active. Some of boys drew images of males with crowns, who they identified as kings, presumably because they were more powerful than lowly princes.

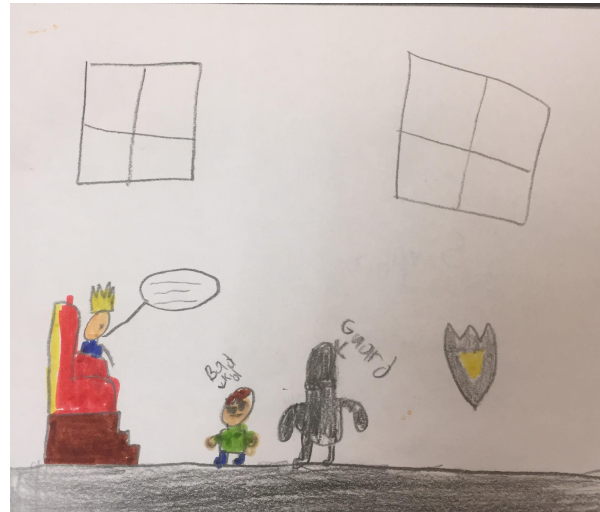


Dallas’s drawing of royalty.



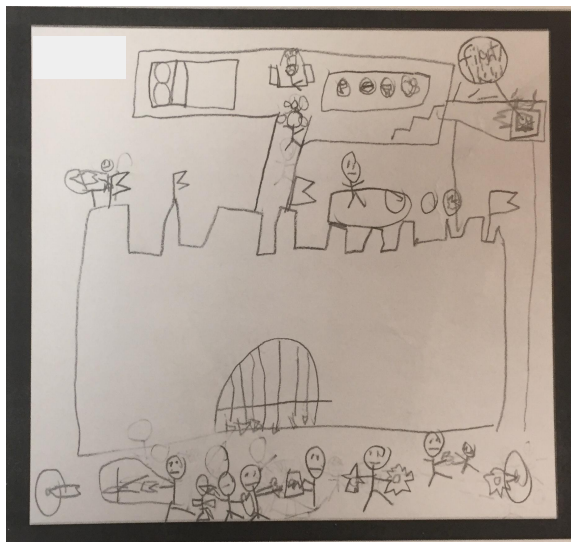
Drawing of royalty: Phil’s(left) and Christina’s (right)

There was a intersectional relationship in whom the children considered royal. Royalty was predominately white, and there were clearly defined gender roles. Female students mostly drew queens and princesses who were white. Their heads had with long flowing hair and were capped with crowns.



Malik's drawing of royalty.

Their skinny bodies were draped in fancy dresses (Christina's picture). This is indicative of their ideal versions of femininity, and is consistent with the socially constructed mainstream (white) definition of feminine beauty in America. Male students drew powerful white men, knights with shield and helmets depending castles or kings pronouncing judgement on bad guys (see Malik, Jonathan, and Ricardo's



Ricardo's drawing of royalty.

pictures). This is consistent with the version of hegemonic masculinity that is pervasive in American society and locally constructed in our classroom (see Chapter 4). It is interesting to note that students wanted to self identify with royalty, as Dallas and Michelle directly expressed in their comments. Identities are made possible through children's play, and it struck me as sad that in my diverse classes only one student decided royalty

could be black.

Conclusion

The following is a conversation I had with Dallas and some of her classmates towards the end of the school year. Dallas had on a t-shirt that read, “I will change the world.”

JB: I believe your shirt, Dallas

Dallas: Huh?

Leeann: What does it say?

JB I believe your shirt, I think you will change the world

Taylor: Oh I get. Why?

Leeann: I think you will.

Dallas: I'll become president.

JB: I can see that.

Dallas saw great potential for her future. It is important to note that her white female classmate Leeann, also saw this potential by affirming “I think you will”. In a society where strong black women are more likely to be labeled as “loud” instead of “leader” it is important for teachers to challenge this notion.

Earlier in the year, the class had read about Victoria Woodhull, the white suffragist who historians consider the first woman to run for president in America. Dallas knew there was never a female president, but Dallas’s belief that she, a black female, could become president suggests the potential power an anti-bias education can have on one student’s positive self identity. Powers and Duffy (2016) asserted that educators must consider that identities are constructed and subordinated, so that they understand their role in privileging certain identities, even subconsciously. This is critical because teacher expectation significantly affects students’ academic success and their conceptions of self. (Powers & Duffy 2016, Jussim & Harber, 2005; Nash, 2012). As a part of the anti-bias educational experience Dallas had in my classroom she was exposed to politically active women and explored the inaccuracies of racial stereotypes. In this way the anti-bias educational experience was deliberately attempting to open up multiple positive identities, that might otherwise been subordinated due to race, gender, or class. At the

same time, the curriculum did not paint an unrealistic idealized view of society. The curriculum honestly presented struggles with gender and racial stereotypes that continue to exist.

It is not enough to recognize that students are comprised of multiple identities. Teachers should learn about the complicated intersectional identities that are present in their classroom. Safe learning spaces, like classroom run by culturally knowledgeable teachers employing anti-bias educational practices, have the potential to create school environments where all identities can be safely expressed (Powers & Duffy 2016) and meaningful learning can occur.

CHAPTER 6

IMPACT OF AN ANTI-BIAS CURRICULUM

An anti-bias curriculum is not easy to measure in quantitative educational metrics. At the present time there is no standardized, norm based, criterion referenced pretest and posttest you can give to assess the effectiveness of an anti-bias educational experience. Instead, I provide in this chapter qualitative data from discourse taken throughout the study that indicates evidence of the children demonstrating each of the four goals of Anti-Bias Education (Derman-Sparks & Edwards 2010). Throughout the chapter I combine student dialogue with descriptions of the curriculum I created as evidence that the intervention I implemented as part of this design-based study was successful. Also in this chapter, I offer examples of times the students displayed racist or sexist thinking despite the curriculum, and postulate rationale for these instances that highlight the limitations of an anti-bias curriculum. I hope this chapter presents a balanced analysis of what occurred in my classroom. Although it was my personal aspiration to teach an effective anti-bias curriculum, the reality of answering my research questions forces me to be honest when the data points to the shortcoming of my own teaching practice.

ABE Goal 1

- *Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.*

The first diversity activity I incorporated into my anti-bias unit with the first graders was an examination of the student's physical appearances. After reading *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz the students explored their skin tones by mixed paint to match their skin. They named their own unique shade, and painted self-portraits. While doing this activity the students were very proud of the unique paint they mixed as demonstrated in comments like, "Look at my beautiful butterscotch!" and "oh, this is just my color." These comments are evidence that they were proud of their own skin tones and were developing positive social identities.

Further evidence of positive identity could be seen when the first graders were asked to draw something or someone they thought was cool. Michelle and Jovan chose to draw themselves.



From left to right:
 Claire's portrait
 labeled coconut,
 Adrian's portrait
 labeled coffee,
 Leeann's portrait
 labeled coconut,
 Jackson's portrait
 labeled peach,
 and Deepa's
 portrait labeled
 butterscotch.

Another example of positive self identification came from the third graders, particularly the girls, when they engaged in the tomboy discussion. Most of the students felt very comfortable explaining why they chose to self identify as a tomboy or not. Understanding that they might not fall squarely into a socially constructed gender category was a major goal of the anti-bias stereotype unit I did with the first graders. Dallas's comment indicates she internalized this message:

JB: Okay, so boys and girls I think what you're feeling a little confused about is-that in our society people are usually a boy, or a girl and they're kind of like opposites. That's how we usually think about things. But some people although they are born a boy or born a girl might not really feel that way.

Dallas: I feel that way. I'm aggressive.

Dallas brought up the terms “tough” and “aggressive” several times throughout the unit to describe herself. Her comment above indicates that she identified with individuals who do not feel comfortable with the gender they were assigned at birth, because she considers herself more aggressive than is her perception of the norm for females. Dallas was unapologetic about her aggressive personality, and her repetitive declarations of it indicate her pride in this label. The anti-bias unit allowed her to be empathetic to others who also didn't conform to gender norms, while providing her a space to be proud of her own identity.

ABE Goal 2

Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.

The curriculum I created, and the analyze of it, focused on race and gender. Therefore, I divided this section into race and gender to show evidence of students reaching the goal for each category.

Findings on race.

Research indicates that most students are not exposed to racial topics in their elementary classrooms (Copenhaver -Johnson 2006, Van Ausdale & Feagin 2001), thus I created my anti-bias curriculum with the assumption that the students were not used to having conversations about race in school. In order to provide them a space to find joy in human diversity and the language to communicate in, I had to give them appropriate terms. After talking to the students and to a first grade teacher I learned that in kindergarten, the teachers had taught them that white people were really peach, so they all called themselves peach. This seemed like a deliberate attempt to avoid addressing issues of Whiteness and warding against possible racial tensions that

could flare up from that parents or students. This avoidance was contrary to the anti-bias educational goals. To counteract this, I read the first and third graders *Black Is Brown Is Tan*, (Adoff 1973). I used the poetic language in the book to highlight the terms white and black. I explained that those do not accurately describe a person's skin tone, but instead refer to larger categories that people use to label each other. This prompted many students who did not fall neatly into the white/black binary to ask, what about me? Third grader Maria asked, "What are people from Mexico?" and first grader Gavin asked, "What about people from the Philippines?" I explained to the children that white and black are larger labels, and some of the other larger labels that people use are Hispanic (for anyone with a Spanish speaking heritage) and there are smaller labels for people just from one country. This made sense to Gavin who said, "Yes, I am Filipino." Since accurate language was an important feature of this goal, it became a key component of the initial stage of the curriculum.

In Chapter 5 I told the story of Leeann. When the school year began, Leeann, a third white girl with ADHD would loudly shout "that's racist" whenever anyone would use the terms white or black. After I heard her do this a handful of times I explained to Leeann, in front of the entire class, that in our society some people are labeled as black and others are labeled as white. I explained that talking about those racial differences is not racist, but it is racist to use those terms to hurt somebody or to make assumptions and judgments about them. This message worked, because Leeann began to use the term more appropriately. She did not shout out, "That's racist!" again until she overheard a classmates saying that his mom does not like black people. Her appropriate use of the phrase was evidence of understanding.

Opening up the classroom to conversations about racial and ethnic differences was an important part of getting students to learn from each others. At one point in the year Darius, a

black male, asked his classmates, who were from families that moved to New Jersey from Mexico and Puerto Rico, if Spanish people wore hats and masks. Both boys laughed at the question. Christopher said no, and Justin said, “Only sometimes, like for celebrations.” This conversation is evidence that children are naturally curious about the world around them, thankfully Darius’s classmates were able to clear up his mistaken ideas about Hispanic culture.

I provide these examples as evidence that by allowing my classroom to be a place where racial and ethnic issues were not taboo it enables students to work through complicated feelings so they build an appreciation for diversity.

Findings on gender.

The curriculum I created attempted to get children to realize that multiple gender identities were possible. There was some evidence of flexible thinking on this issue for some students. For instance, Deepa, who insisted a male classmate not use pink paper got excited at the conclusion of William’s Doll when the grandmother gives the little boy the baby dolls he has been longing for. When the grandmother in the story told the dad that it was nonsense that boys shouldn’t have dolls Deepa declared, “Yup, nonsense.” And when William got to hold his new doll she exclaimed, “That’s just what he wanted!” This book allowed Deepa to appreciate human diversity, and her comments are indications of her movement towards achieving ABE Goal 2.

Some first graders showed extremely flexible thinking when it came to gender. Nathan was confused because at the end of the book a girl was describing Bailey as a girl, but the entire book everyone kept telling Bailey he was a boy. I asked Nathan and the class, “But does he feel like a boy?” They all said. No. I pushed the issue further, “So should he maybe get to choose if he wants to be a boy or a girl?” The students had mixed views on this. Nathan said,

“No, it’s not his choice.” and Toshani said “well its his mother, cause it’s his mother.” Janiya tried to persuade her classmates and said, “It’s his choice!” Toshani debated, “His mother is the one who gave birth to him.” But Janiya insisted, “It’s his choice because you can be whoever you want to be because it’s yourself!” Overjoyed with Janiya’s sweet, respectful stance I declared, “Love that!” which caused Gavin to become jealous that Janiya got to share before he did. He said, “And also, oh never mind.” When I pushed him to tell me what he was going to say he said, “The same thing as her,” and pointed to Janiya. “You can be whatever you want to be?” I asked. Gavin nodded. Gavin and Janiya’s responses showed a deep level of comfort and joy with gender diversity.

Another instance of gender discussions occurred in my elementary classroom after computer class. The children go to another teacher for computer coding instruction, and there was a form they had to fill out online with a box for gender. The choices were male, female or other. When Madelyn came back from coding she asked me what the other meant. I told her, “Remember when we read 10,000 dresses. It is a choice for people who do not feel like they are a boy or a girl.” Madelyn said, “ooh” as she processed this. She really appreciated this information and said “That makes more sense than what Mr. O said.” I asked her what his response was. Madelyn said, “He said to ask my parents.” Mr. O’s refusal to talk about gender nonconformity left Madelyn confused. Her curiosity was not satisfied when the coding teacher did not provide a proper answer to her question. It also might have made her feel like the other option was inappropriate to talk about at school, and thus had a negative connotation. This would be counterproductive for ABE Goal 2. Instead, having discussed gender nonconformity already, Madelyn was able to appreciate my explanation and hopefully this increased her understanding of the range of human diversity.

Conclusion of findings in regards to ABE Goal 2.

The data suggests that children are very interested in learning about people who differ from themselves. The discussions that occurred with the first graders about a gender nonconforming child encouraged them to consider the feelings of other children, and the value of individual gender expression. In terms of race and gender the children displayed a keen interest in fairness for diverse people. They understood when situations were unfair, which will be highlighted in the following section focusing on ABE Goal 3.

ABE Goal 3

Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.

As the authority figures in the room, myself and my co-teachers did not want to force our views onto the students. Since discussion is an important pedagogical method that is essential to democratic citizenship (Brookfield & Preskill 1999; Rubin 2011) we chose to use it as the basis for this unit. We used structured discussion as a method of getting the children to share their beliefs. When addressing unfairness it is also important to note the difference between the explicit anti-bias curriculum I created, and the unintentional hidden curriculum in my classrooms. A hidden curriculum is understood to be the informal academic, cultural, or social messages a student receives while at school. I would argue that when a teacher adopts an anti-bias philosophy it becomes hard to tell when then explicit anti-bias curriculum begins and ends, because every aspect of the school day becomes an opportunity to point out differences between peers and to examine the students lived experiences. This was important to me because research had shown that traditionally little has been done to examine the lived experiences of young students or problematize injustices still prevalent in society. (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001; Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Polite & Saenger, 2003, Pelo, 2008). In this way my classrooms

became anti-bias educational spaces, even when I was not delivering content from my thoughtfully crafted social studies anti-bias lesson plan. This helped my entire classroom community because, “learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice.” (Lave & Wenger 1991 p. 32)

An example of this occurred when I was lining up students to leave the classroom. In my classroom I had a “helper” each day who was in charge of all the extra classroom tasks. For one day this person served as the line leader, word wall leader, messenger (who would deliver paperwork and notes around the building), and paper passer. This helper rotated daily down a pre-determined list I hung in the classroom. No one was ever skipped unless they were absent on their day. To me this was an egalitarian system to spread the tasks that students in a classroom seemed to enjoy being responsible for. I was thrown off guard when halfway through the year Darius declared, “White people always be first.” I asked him, “Do you mean in life, or right now in this classroom?” I took a quick look at my line to realize that all of the black students in the room were at the rear of the line. Thankfully, my students felt empowered to speak up. Josiah, another black student, helpfully commented, “I was line leader last time.” Although initially taken back by the accusation, I was proud of all my students in this scenario. I was proud of Darius for speaking up against a situation that be viewed as racially unfair, so I consider this evidence of ABE Goal 3. I was also proud of Josiah for calmly engaging in a racial discussion, which is something that many adults are uncomfortable with.

This conversation an example of the difference between my explicit anti-bias curriculum and the larger anti-bias educational philosophy I had adopted as a part of my teaching philosophy. This teachable moment was not written into my formal lesson plans, but it was an authentic moment where Darius perceived a bias, and spoke up against it. After Josiah pointed

out the inaccuracy of Darius's claim I said to Darius, "So you see Darius, I try to mix it up in here and give everyone a turn. So it is fair." Darius did not respond. I can only hope he internalized my intention, and did not see this as a minimizing of his grievance. In hindsight, I wish that I had allowed for a deeper conversation about what he had previously seen, heard, or experienced as a young black male.

Since biases and unfair behaviors often manifest themselves in stereotypes, I began my explicit anti-bias curriculum during social studies instruction with a definition of stereotype. I defined it as, "Stereotypes are things that a lot of people think are true, but if you really examine it, it's not always 100% true."

Although this definition helped my students to process the concept of stereotypes, this differs slightly from the definition given in the literature on gender stereotypes. Stereotypes are defined by social psychologists Deaux and Lewis (1984) as a general cognitive process, and not as one particular behavior. Using this definition, there is a tendency to "move away from the conception of stereotypes as negative judgments that deviate from some true state, and to move toward a more neutral view that emphasizes process and content rather than "rightness" and "wrongness." (p. 991) I found Deaux and Lewis (1984) definition helpful for this research project, because it aligns with gender schema theory, in understanding gender as a cognitive process. Stereotypical thinking is also a cognitive process, which would be a bi-product of gender schemas that are too rigidly produced to allow for individual variation. However, I selected my definition for the students because I believed that children needed to hear that stereotypes are not true. Young students are trained to think in binaries. Answers are right or wrong. A sentence is a fact or an opinion. A statement is true or false. I needed to combine these abstract binary concepts into one simple concrete definition. Defining stereotypes as,

“something that is untrue but many people believe them to be accurate”, allowed the students to begin to challenge unfair assumptions they themselves might hold in order to attempt to meet ABE Goal 3. It gave them permission to initially be “wrong” and to examine the ramifications of those incorrect thought patterns on a societal level.

The following conversation is an example of how I introduced this concept.

JB: So for example, pink is a common color on girls toys. We saw this when we look at toys yesterday. But, some of you said, but my brother likes pink toys or I have a cousin that likes pink toys. So, is that always true?

Class: No

JB: Okay, so that’s an example of a stereotype. So, let me show you another one. A lot of people on their papers, when you saw trains, a lot of you said that’s a boy toy. So a lot of you said transportation toys, most of you said are for boys. A lot of you said that fighting toys, like Nerf guns or robots that do fighting or Star Wars, you said there were boys toys. Some of you. Some of you said, “No I like those too and I’m a girl. So those could be for anyone.” So what I’m trying to tell you boys and girls is that these are stereotypes. Did you notice that they did not make the robots pink? I wonder why not.

Students call out

Leeann: Cause they’re for both. Red is a girl color, yellow is a girl color.

JB: Natalie, why do you think not?

Natalie: I think that they didn’t do it pink or purple because they, boys, usually play with transformers, but those trains, but those cars, there are some for girls too.

Taylor: True, I have those toy cars. I have a boy car that’s red and a Camaro that is yellow.

In this vignette I used toys as a way of defining a stereotype and as a means of exposing stereotypes to be untrue. Highlighting female classmates who said they liked to play with “boy” toys was effective at getting students to realize that stereotypes are not always accurate and they could be considered unfair. This was one step towards ABE Goal 3. getting students to realize the limitations of stereotypical thinking. The fact that children still tried to apply gender schema to the colors of toys is something that is explored in Chapter 4, but I do believe that the girls who spoke up in this instance were achieving the ABE Goal 3 of increasing developing awareness of unfairness.

The anti-bias curriculum provided many opportunities to explore unfairness. One of the first stereotypes we explored was cleaning, a domestic task that historically has been associated with femininity. The three year olds in the video identified cleaning as a feminine task, and so did some of the children in our class. One example of this as Madelyn, who when asked if a toy vacuum was for boys, girls, or both she replied, “Girls. Girls like to clean more than boys.” The class was asked to stand on a continuum according to how much they agreed with the statement: women should do the cleaning. Dallas, was one of the female students who most strongly opposed the cleaning stereotype and offered this information, “Uh, I think that they’re wrong because when I’m at my dad’s house um my grandmother, my uncle, my stepmother and um they all, we um, they clean and um I, I think that um men and women both clean.” Dallas cited all of her male family members as evidence that both males and females clean. Riley also used her family for context, but was able to see gender possibilities that did not exist in her own household.

Riley: I’m in the maybe because, because like my father doesn’t clean he like makes a mess and my mother does but some, but some people’s dads clean.

JB: some do but not yours?

Riley: no

So for Riley, the stereotype was true, but she was able to see that in other families other arrangements were possible. Ricardo was not able, in this conversation, to go beyond his personal experience, and believed the stereotype was true. As he explained,

Ricardo: um, because um, men are like very busy. So, like they have to do something else. So the women have to clean because men are more busier than women.

Random Call Out: Now you’re saying men are lazy.

JB: did everybody on the yes side hear what Ricardo said? Did the other side hear what Ricardo said? Ricardo say it again louder so they can hear you.

Ricardo: we’re more, cause mens are more busier than um girls so like maybe girls are like done with everything then they can just do the cleaning while men can work.

Ricardo does not define what his version of legitimate “work” looks like, but in this line he reveals that it is different than what female do and it is not a part of the domestic sphere.

Several children in the class resented his comment and verbalized their dissent. Dallas said, “uh-uh, uh-uh, uh-uh.” Even Madelyn, who previously said that mostly females take care of children and mostly do the cleaning, did not appreciate the implication that *only* men’s work counted as work. She said, “It’s not like boys only do the work, they barely even do the work.” Madelyn’s comment that men barely work prompted a conversation about if men were lazy or not.

We tried to refocus the discussion on the two stereotypes they were now debating: men are the gender who is busy, but men are lazy. I said to the class, “If I was a man I think I would be offended by that. As a mom who works outside the home, I am offended by that.” The children offered their thoughts:

Christina: Yea, my mom actually works a lot.

Jake: I think it’s rude.

Dan: I’m insulted by that.

Ariel: Um I think that it should not be true. I don’t think that it’s not true that only men work and women should be in the house and clean because anyways that’s both the work cleaning up you know-cleaning up. And my mom has a job, and cleaning, and school, and she takes care of me

Dallas: Everything that they said is not true because men are not lazy.

Christina: My dad is.

JB: Okay so that’s your father, but is that *all*...

Dallas: All men are not lazy. All men are not lazy, cause my father makes time to work and still to clean. Cause my father makes time to work and makes time to clean.

JB: Okay good comment Dallas.

Dallas: Even when he was in the army he worked and still cleaned.

This conversation shows that children were able to use their personal experiences to consider the validity of the gender stereotypes. Several of the students, like Ariel and Christina, were children who began the anti-bias curriculum saying that three year old students were correct

when they pointed to a female doll as the one who likes to clean and take care of babies. This showed growth in their thinking on gender stereotypes. Engaging in these discussions with their peers made them realize that maybe even within their own households gender stereotypes were not being put into practice. Jake illustrated this when he said the thought the stereotype was “more of a maybe.” His justification for his change of heart was, “Cause my mom- she usually does most of the cleaning and sometimes my dad does some cleaning so...” His voice trailed off and he shrugged. This was exactly the type of growth in understanding that can be made possible through an anti-bias curriculum. Jake was now able to consider that perhaps cleaning was not only a woman’s responsibility, and he was able to reflect on how he had seen his own father help clean sometimes. This close examination of societal inequities could be the start of social change. We explored the idea that women like to clean, and that men are slobs. Ricardo pointed out that unfairness of this assumption, saying “Boys are not slobs; like some of them are like my sister. When she had a playdate she messed up my own bed like she went crazy. And also like boys cannot be slobs or like when you went to a friends or restaurant where people are like in tuxedos they’re not slobs.” Ricardo used his twin sister as an example to disprove this biased assumption. Using family members or themselves as evidence was a common means of justifying their opinions and providing proof that stereotypes were inaccurate.

It is important to note that throughout the data there are many instances of children using themselves and their families as their frame of reference for our classroom discussions. Besides their own families, TV shows and movies were often noted. For instance, when exploring the stereotype of dancing being considered girly, several students brought up TV shows, such as *Everyone Hates Chris*, as evidence to support dancing being for everyone. It is important for educators to consider the home lives and the media these children are exposed to when

constructing an anti-bias curriculum. These experiences form their initial schema, and any curriculum that aims to have children recognize unfairness and appreciate diversity needs to understand the strength of those already established schema.

To make the connection between their previously held gender role expectations, and biases that exist in literature I used fairy tales with the third graders. We read traditional versions of *Beauty and the Beast* and *Rumpelstiltskin*. We read *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* by John Steptoe (2008) *The PaperBag Princess* by Robert Munsch (1980), and *Prince Cinders* by Babette Cole (1997). We made a list of character traits as we read. After reading all the tales, I asked them to identify patterns. They noticed that male characters were supposed to be brave, but it was also common to see them acting greedy and mean. They realized that female characters were expected to be polite and shy, and it was acceptable for them to be frightened. I told the class, "So, what I'm trying to point out to you is that a lot of time in scary movies and classic literature, you're going to see stereotypes. And if you start believing those stereotypes, then you might get some bad ideas that some people are only allowed to feel a certain way or act a certain way and that makes the stereotype get bigger and bigger and bigger and worse and worse and worse." Many students immediately understood. Malik provided personal examples of both genders expressing fear when he/she said, "I actually want to say why I choose both boys and girls to be scared. My sister is afraid of the dark and mostly nightmares just scared me."

I then asked the class to consider if it was ok for everyone to be scared. The entire class agreed. I asked the class, "Everybody can act both scared and brave sometimes?" Christopher agreed, "I think that some girls can be scared and some won't be scared." Jazzy was able to make a connection to prior discussions a women's history month unit, "Uhm, I think this is why

it (stereotypical gender thinking) got so big in the 1800s because a lot of people didn't realize you were allowed to be scared." In this instance all the students were meeting the ABE Goal 3 of examining unfair stereotypes, and some were even able to suggest historical implications for this unfair practice.

When we discussed the platitude "boys will be boys" we explored contemporary unfairness. I wrote the phrase on the board and asked them if they had heard it before and what they thought it meant. The following suggestions were offered:

Dallas: Boys can be rough

Christina: I think they mean that boys can like boys have to be themselves and let them do whatever they want to.

Natalie: Just let them do what they do

Michael: Yea I always do whatever I want

Marshall: Um, like boys go outside and get all muddy and stuff people would say "well boys will be boys"

Madelyn: Like when boys are rough. Boys are boys. They accidentally push you and didn't say sorry.

These students were familiar with the term, their responses indicate they had experienced the term as justification for male behavior. Ariel was able to connect the phrase "boys will be boys" to stereotypes:

Ariel: I think boys will be boys means like since we're talking about stereotypes I bet it's something about them like maybe sometimes they'll be like oh boys will be boys because you know they don't clean or they're messy

JB: and is that okay?

Ariel: no

I asked the students to take their understanding a step further, to realize how this was an unfair practice because girls were not afforded the same behavioral freedoms:

JB: hmm. Okay so boys and girls when I hear people say boys will be boys I think exactly what you guys were thinking about-boys should be able to do what they want they can go be rough and crazy and somehow that's supposed to be okay. But then if a girl was doing those same things, they might tell her that that's not ladylike or you shouldn't be running around like that.

Marshall: Yea, because mostly ladies when they're wearing dresses they have to not like get it dirty

JB: Good point.

Random: They have to be like gentle.

JB: And girls are supposed to be gentle but a lot of people aren't running around telling boys they have to be gentle.

Random male call out: That's because boys are tougher.

JB: Boys are tougher, hmm interesting

Dallas: No

Madelyn: Sometimes it means that, cause my mom says "boys are boys" because sometimes they get more servings than girls do at the dinner table. They get more pizza and stuff.

JB: Okay. And we talked a lot about that. What do we call that? That's a...

Several students call out: Stereotype!

Multiple socially constructed, gender behavior expectations are addressed in this vignette.

Marshall made the connection between feminine attire and feminine behavioral expectations by explaining that girls have to not get dirty when wearing dresses. Madelyn connected to her family practice of giving the boys more serving at meal time than the girls, because in her household male children were allowed to eat more than their female siblings simply because they were male. As a result of the anti-bias curriculum, the students recognized this as an unfair practice and labeled it a stereotype.

There were signs of ABE Goal 3 even with the most stubbornly held stereotype believers. A few days later, we tried to explore exactly how stereotypes are limiting. We used this cleaning stereotype as an example by asking what would they do if we told all the boys to sit down and relax while the girls cleaned the classroom. Most of the girls said how unfair this was, and Malik, who had previously indicated that cleaning was a girl's task because he was lazy, said that he would, "just clean up anyway." We shocked by his kind sentiment that he would help his female peers clean the room, despite being given the option not to, so we praised him.

Several of the boys in the room followed suit and stated they too would help. It is hard to tell if they originally felt this way as well, or wanted to indicate they too would help since we praised Malik for his willingness to clean. We were shocked when Ricardo also said he would help too. His exact words were, "I'll try and be quick by like I just running- like I'm a cleaning tornado!" creating his own cleaning persona using masculine traits of fast and wild.

ABE Goal 4

Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions.

The main way students demonstrated this ability was by pointing out discriminatory actions or unfair stereotypical statements. For instance, during a tomboy discussion Malik correctly pointed out that it was unfair that I was calling on mostly girls to share their thoughts.

Another instance of children speaking up against discrimination occurred when one student, Ricardo, insisted that girl did not do sports.

Ricardo: No way, I don't want to be up. All I can say is I've never seen a girl on a single sport team.

Dallas: What?? Nah uh...

JB: Interesting

Leeann: Interesting, inter...

Ricardo had rigid pro-masculine beliefs. He believed boys to be superior to girls, and when presented with evidence that supported equality he refuted its credibility. Ricardo did not want to speak up initially, because he realized his opinion was contrary to many of his peers. His peers jumped on the opportunity to act against his discriminatory view. The following conversation unfolded.

Christina: You know there's girl sports too. There's um cheerleading, gymnastics, dance, tennis, basketball, soccer and football.

Ricardo: No, I meant like any rough sports like soccer.

Call out: Soccer is rough

Call out: And football

Damian : My cousin Turay plays football!

JB: Okay

Leeann: and I play football and soccer

JB: Okay boys and girls this is not going to work, this is not a good discussion if we're calling out. So I think I heard some very interesting things. Riley has been waiting patiently with her hand up, go ahead.

Riley: um so well, I think it's not just only for boys, because um because- I watched girls soccer all the time, like there's a national league and there's also like a girls team in our town for soccer and I'm playing basketball and they're actually, um, two women who are playing in national league football.

JB: Okay.

Damian : Um boys and girls could play because my cousin Turay, she plays football and wrestling and basketball.

JB: Okay. One more thing. Maria.

Maria: Um I think it's a no because when I was six or seven or eight years old I um joined soccer.

JB: Okay so Ricardo, did anybody say anything that's convinced you otherwise yet? (Shakes head no.)Not yet. Okay let's try two more and then we might go on to our next topic. Madelyn and then Natalie.

Madelyn: Haven't you been to the Vandever pep rallies for the big football game?

Madelyn was referring to a yearly event in which the teachers from all the schools in town play football against each other. There is a school wide assembly the day of the game to build excitement for the event. The majority of the players on the VanDerveer team are females, which reflects the gender of the school's population of teachers.

Ricardo: Yes.

Call out: Lots of girls play in that!

Leeann: True

JB: That's a valid point. Lots of female teachers do play football. Uh Natalie?

Natalie: Um well, I will say it's for both because obviously um, it's not only for boys cause girls can play sports. Um, and also I'm joining this year soccer, so that makes it, since I'm joining soccer, it doesn't make like sports just for boys.

In making an argument against Carlo's unfair gender bias about women in sports the students in this conversation were meeting ABE Goal 3. Most of the students made individual appeals, citing personal experiences as evidence. Ricardo, however, remained resolute.

Malia: I have a question for Ricardo.

JB: okay.

Malia: Did you mean like national sports that are on TV or just like regular teams?

JB: mmm, good question.

Ricardo: hmm I would say like national sports or the like the other things that are like.

I'm just saying like, like I never seen a girl on a very rough sports, like especially soccer.

Although his classmates were unable to persuade Ricardo, this conversation demonstrated that the students felt empowered to speak up against what they saw as a prejudice. Although the passionate discussion had several call outs and did not always follow orderly classroom turn taking, the students displayed the skill to logically present an argument that attacked discriminatory thinking. The fact that they were unable to convince Ricardo is a phenomena I will explore in the implications section of this chapter.

The students enjoyed engaging in these dialogues. There was one day when Dallas asked hopefully if we were going to "argue" the second I walked into the room. She loved the power that came from having the opportunity to express her opinions in the classroom. Empowering students is the crucial element of ABE Goal 4, which should have been further developed in the curriculum. In this study, the anti-bias curriculum seems to have stopped at merely recognizing unfairness. For instance, one Monday, Madelyn was excited to tell us she had encountered another stereotype over the weekend, "that women are bad drivers." Another example came after Ariel saw *Zootopia*, a Disney movie in which personified animals experience discrimination based on their distinctions as predator and prey. Ariel couldn't wait to tell us that she saw a movie that was "full of stereotypes." The students' background knowledge of

stereotypes was useful when we explored racial discrimination and immigration concerns that arose during the 2016 presidential campaigns. We celebrated the students' ability to question the established order of society on the last day of school, by showing *Zootopia* and pointing out the damaging effects of stereotypes on the characters. In hindsight, I believe the work could have gone further into what to do or say when experiencing or witnessing an unfair behavior, instead of simply pointing out that an unfair condition exists.

CHAPTER 7 LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study and this curriculum were created and implemented by me. Therefore it is important to explore the way my positionality impacted the curriculum and this study. This chapter will use the gender self-identify continuum activity as a means of illuminating the limitations of my own white feminist perspective. As a design based study, I must examine the shortcoming of the educational intervention that was implemented. Despite these imperfections, I believe the curriculum was useful for this study because it allowed insight into how children think about race and gender. Therefore, I conclude this dissertation with implications for the field of education and educational researchers.

Help! I'm stuck in the gender binary

Hidden behind any newly created instructional unit, is a teacher's personal agenda. My motivation was to get students talking about "taboo" topics. Research indicates that elementary classrooms are not spaces that usually take up this work, so I believed if I gave the students lessons on stereotypes, race, and gender that I would be able to create less biased young citizens and simultaneously collect interesting data for my dissertation study.

What I did not account for while creating this study, is that by trying to get children to expand their thinking about gender, I was actually reifying the binary. This became apparent when I reflected on the data I collected during the gender continuum activities (Chapter 3). By forcing children to stand on either a boy or girl continuum, I was forcing them to display the embodiment of their gender in front of the entire class. Through this activity, the gender binary became even more solidified in their cognition after a series of embodied activities. Stronger solidification of the gender binary was contrary to my intentions. So, how did this happen?

For starters, my gender continuum activity was based on the separation of children to the two categories of boys and girls. The sheer act of sorting the children by gender reinforced for the children that gender is a valid means of sorting individuals. It solidified that gender came in binary options, boy and girl. There was no room for variation. This was also counter to my intention to highlight the ranges of gender possibilities and to expand their thinking. Instead of highlighting how fluid gender can be, I created two rigid categorizations.

The activity then forced children to consider their bodies, and consider their own gender identities that they has constructed in this classroom community. Had they been presenting themselves in feminine clothing such as dresses? What did their hair length indicate? After considering how they physically embodied their gender, I then instructed them to physically stand before their classroom community as a representative of their gender. This would have been extremely problematic for any student who was questioning their own gender identity, such as a transgender child. But even for children who identify as the gender they were assigned at birth, this activity confirms that there are two gender, and they are boy and girl.

Then I had the students create ranges for male and female identities. I tried to have the students come up with the correct terms for these positions, but even when attempting to settled terms (eventually we went with “tomboy” and “girly girl”) I was using my position of power within the classroom to unintentionally dictate the conversation. This can be seen when Christina objected to the terms I suggested and asked, “Can you just write girl for normal?” I told her, “No because if you think you’re a super girly girl go over here. If you are 100% tomboy you’re going to go over here. But you need to think and think well maybe I’m a little bit girly but maybe I like some boy things so I’m going to stand somewhere in the middle. So it matters where you stand in this group. If you’re closer to this side you’re more girly if you’re closer to

this side you consider yourself more tomboyish.” Christina still objected, “Just write girl.” In Chapter 3 I explained that Christina did not want to be seen as doing her gender incorrectly, and so therefore she wanted to just say girl. In hindsight, I wonder if Christina was opposing the terms because I was unintentionally forcing my white feminist perspective of femininity on our class activity. By defining the binary as somewhere on the continuum of , “super girly girl and 100% tomboy” I was defining (and therefore limiting) the behavioral ranges of femininity. I thought the children were able to explore their gender identities, and my intention was to allow children to show the many ways a female might decide to show her femininity, but in hindsight I was forcing them into a limited range of behaviors.

This activity also failed in the treatment of the male students. Masculinity is defined by dominance and control, and to assert their own masculinity boys engage in “fag discourse.” (Pascoe 2007) In Pascoe’s study, fag discourse resulted when high school students were insulting each other for doing something feminine. The boys in my classroom had already asserted that any boy who would be a tomgirl was “crazy” or “had lost their mind.”

Since I had heard this slightly sanitized third grade version of fag discourse, I should have realized that I was asking males to do something ludicrous. By standing anywhere on the continuum besides the extreme hegemonic masculine side, I was setting children up to be objects of ridicule. Even if a boy had enjoyed playing dolls at home with his cousins, he most likely would not have felt comfortable revealing this in a classroom where feminine behaviors were considered crazy.

Although this continuum activity led me to deep realizations about how children understand gender, it completely missed my original intention of expanding children’s thoughts beyond the binary. I would not advocate this lesson be used by other teachers, because instead

of getting children to question the gender binary and society's current construction of gender roles, I ended up reifying it.

Shortcoming of the curriculum

Freire's critical pedagogy was the framework for the curriculum I created and implemented. My hope was that by focusing on the students' lived experiences with stereotypes they would be liberated from these oppressive constraints and prejudices. My classroom was my unit of analysis, which I situated as a unique community of practice. A limitation of this study, and of using a classroom as community of practice, is that it does not take into account the experiences students have when they are not in the classroom. Data revealed, that outside personal and societal influences greatly impacted how students understood race and gender.

Analysis showed that the anti-bias curriculum failed to do several important things that Freire would consider "riding themselves of the dominate consciousness." First, the children were unable to abandon the gender binary. Even after readings about transgender individuals, the children did not accept that gender could be fluid, or that there were multiple gender options available. To the students, there was only boy and girl. How you "did" that gender was a matter of personal preference, but only those two categories existed and they were fixed.

While there was evidence to suggest that several of the students were capable of demonstrating some of the goals of an anti-bias education, there was nothing to suggest that the students were now able to rid themselves completely of society's influences. Children were unable to escape hegemonic masculinity (Chapter 4), and the effects of cultural racism (Chapter 5). However, there are many indications that, through participating in this curriculum, students were able to expand their consciousnesses to consider new ways of thinking about race and gender. For instance, during a gender continuum conversation of who should clean, Ben initially

thought that women mostly cleaned, but after hearing his classmate's provide personal examples of male relatives cleaning, he changed his mind to "maybe it could be both." This is an example of how our community of practice helped Ben alter his previous gender role assumptions.

In light of these findings I believe that an anti-bias educational experience is not something that can be squeezed into a six week unit near the end of a school year. An anti-bias educational experience should begin on the first day of school, and be embedded into every activity. Understanding and implementing such an experience required a unique understanding of race, gender, and bias. In the following section I will discuss the recommendations I have for the field of education as a result of this study.

Implications

This study has implications for several fields, specifically: practicing teachers, teacher education programs, school administrators, and the social studies research community.

Implications for anti-bias education.

What does this mean for anti-bias education? This analysis suggests that such a curriculum/approach can be used to help children reach the anti-bias goals of positive self identification, providing them with language to discuss human diversity, and empowering them to see unfairness and discrimination when they encounter it. The data also suggests, as Aboud (2013) previously found, that children do not unlearn a bias. The educational intervention does not wipe clean the slate of a child's biased thoughts. For instance, Madelyn, who was now empowered to spot stereotypes and did so on several occasions, still thought that there were many activities that were more appropriate for girls than boys, such as ballet dancing.

This analysis suggests that children have the potential to learn what Aboud called, a *counter-bias*. For instance, when we had conversations about stereotypes, students provided

information for their classmates about family members who defied gender role expectations: dad's who took care of babies, female cousin's who played football and wrestled. The students were then exposed to fairy tales, through which we explored gender roles and biases within. After considering all of this information, students became less likely to think that a stereotypical gender role was accurate. In the beginning of the unit, when we lined up on a continuum several students would say they felt statements like "Girls should do the cleaning" was accurate. By the end of the unit, when we explored the topic of who was allowed to be scared, only two boys indicated that it was only girls who were allowed to be scared.

This contrast shows the potential for students to learn a counter-bias. The counter-bias can become a new framework for the child to apply to future situation he or she encounters. After experiencing the unit, the students in my class were more likely to think that a stereotypical gender role response might not apply to everyone. The role of an educator would be to first help children create these counter-biases, and then provide them with opportunities within their classroom community to apply them. This is congruent with Freire's concept of *conscientization*, in which the new technique is learned which contains a critique of present circumstances and an attempt to overcome these circumstances (Gadotti 1994).

Implications for teachers

From this study, practicing teachers should note that telling students to think or feel something that is contrary to their previously established gender or racial schema was ineffective. Despite my authority as his teacher, I could not convince Damian that there was no such thing as "boy colors" and "girl colors." (Chapter 3) The class was unable to change Ricardo's mind about girls in sports (Chapter 6). Both classes were unconvinced that gender could be a continuum, and that a character from a book did not need to be labeled as either a he

or a she (Chapter 3). Darius did not stop saying he did not like Indians and Mexico (Chapter 4). If teachers want to challenge previously held gender and racial schema, they cannot simply preach about social inequalities or tell students their method of thinking is wrong or inaccurate.

Instead, teachers need to get students to see these inequalities and inaccuracies in their own thinking for themselves. This was done effectively through modeling. I began by showing the students biases that I thought were problematic. I did this through Disney videos that displayed gender stereotypes and images of items stereotypically assigned to a specific gender. Discussions and questioning about these videos and images allowed children to challenge their own way of thinking. For instance, when showing the students the video of Cinderella where the mice help create a dress for Cinderella we discuss which mice performed the various jobs. At one point in the song a female mouse tells the male mouse, “Leave the sewing to the women.” I asked the class how that might have made the male mouse feel if he really wanted to do the sewing. Several students realized that the mouse might be sad. We discussed how upsetting it is when someone tells you that you can not do something that you really want to do. Some astute students connected this to biases they saw in social studies lessons. Dallas said, “Like when they told Elizabeth Blackwell she couldn’t be a doctor.” As a teacher, I was particularly proud of students, like Dallas, who were able to make connections between the bias shown in the videos and images and previous history units (slavery, Civil Rights Movement, Suffragist Movement, and Women’s Rights Movements) and current event discussions (Tamir Rice’s death, 2016 presidential election).

Children come into classrooms with pre-existing racial and gender schemas. To capitalize on this prior knowledge, the teacher needs to allow students the chance to make connections to their own personal experiences. The students felt valued and important when

they were able to share their own stories and make connections to the material they were studying. Using children's literature for classroom read alouds was a pedagogically practice that fostered dialogue and allowed students the opportunity to make connections. To borrow a popular metaphor from children's author Jacqueline Woodson, books can be like windows or mirrors. Mirrors are books that show children experiences that are similar to their own. Windows provide children a glimpse into a world that is different and therefor unknown. An anti-bias curriculum ought to provide a combination of the two. Some of the stories of discrimination, such as *Courtney's Birthday Party* by Loretta Long, have the potential to provide either a mirror or a window opportunity for a wide range of students. This story features a black girl and white girl who are friends in school, but the white mother discourages her white daughter from inviting her black friend to her home for her seventh birthday party. Many of the students were able to personally connect with one of the two main characters, while others saw it as a shocking and upsetting story about discrimination that they were not familiar with.

Another implication for teachers is the importance of addressing racial and gender issues when they arise organically. Children need to feel valued, and they want to have their experiences validated. They often seek adult help when confronted with an unfamiliar issue, like when Madelyn noticed the "other" option for gender on a form. Not addressing these issues can leave students feelings confused. Teachers might not feel prepared to address racial and gender concerns if they do not have the proper training to do so, which is an implication of this study for both teacher preparation programs and for school administrators. Teacher preparation programs ought to train teacher candidates to know and implement the four ABE Goals. This could be done through a variety of course, such as social studies methods, diversity, or classroom management. Teachers must be prepared to openly discuss racial and gender inequalities so they

do not inadvertently contribute to systemic inequalities through their future practice. School administrators ought to encourage their staff to be knowledgeable of, and to implement, the ABE Goals throughout their school day.

Implications for educational research.

Educational researchers should also note the usefulness of DBR for conducting classroom based research. It allowed for the examination of actual lived experiences of students, within the messy and complicated context of an elementary public school classroom. It was flexible enough to allow for organic changes to pedagogy and data collection. If I wanted to see how the students were thinking about stereotypes, I could ask them to stop and draw a picture or write about it. If a student had a salient concern, I was able to address it on the spot and then analyze their thought process through the discourse. This provided very authentic results on how children think about race, gender, and stereotypes that enabled the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions that could be applicable to other classrooms. A limitation of DBR is that it is very contextual, so the implications for this setting might not necessarily translate to another. However, in this instance there is no reason to think that the two classrooms in this study were so unique that the results could not be replicated in other elementary classroom settings.

This work suggested that counter-bias is an effective means of changing children's previously held biased beliefs. Hopefully, future educational research will explore the use of counter-bias in early childhood classrooms. The curriculum I created for this study focused on racial and gender bias and stereotypes. It would be valuable to see what would happen if the focus of the unit shifted, depending on the students needs. For instance, if the unit began with discussions on stereotypes the teacher could identify the children's previously held biases. Then

the teacher could construct targeted lessons that focused on the construction counter-bias. I hope to explore this line of research in the future.

Conclusion

The findings of this study were consistent with the literature regarding the early formation of children's racial (Tatum 1997, Omi & Winant 2004, Aboud 2013) and gender (Davies 1989, Thorne 1993, Paechter 2007 2010, 2007, Reay 2001) schemas and self-identities.

In terms of race, the children displayed a preference for whiteness, which is consistent with the literature on the pervasiveness of racism in society and racism displayed by children (Tatum 1997, Van Ausdale & Feagin 2001) Also consistent with the literature, throughout this study I witnessed adults who were uncomfortable addressing contemporary racial inequalities (Pollock 2004, Copenhaver -Johnson 2006, Van Ausdale & Feagin 2001).

In terms of gender, the children maintained their rigid gender schema, which was a male/female binary. These were rigid categories with no fluidity. However, the children did feel that an individual had personal choices in how they enact their gender. Many of the girls in the study showed a preference for masculine preferences (playing video games, doing sports) and traits (being tough). Rarely did the males show any desire to affiliate with anything considered feminine. To quote a post Gloria Steinem wrote on Facebook (2015), "I'm glad we've begun to raise our daughters more like our sons – but it will never work until we raise our sons more like our daughters." It is apparent in this study that females want to act like in ways that have traditionally been considered masculine, but boys are still trapped in a limited range of acceptable masculine behavior. It is socially dangerous for a male to stray to far from this norm.

Children held these gender and racial schema rigidly, until they were presented with new information that forced them to alter their previously held belief. Therefore, an anti-bias

curriculum is effective when it gets children to critically examine their own personal beliefs and provides them with opportunities to consider how their rigidly held beliefs impact others, such as children who do not conform to the gender binary, children who do not perform their gender accordings to stereotypical gender behavior, or children who are racially stereotyped and discriminated against. It is helpful to frame discussions around the concept of fairness. Students then need to see examples of children who are different than themselves in a positive light, so they can build empathy and construct a new counter-bias to alter their previously held schema. The cognitive dissonance that children experience when their prior beliefs are challenged by the new perspectives they are exposed to in an anti-bias curriculum is where real personal growth can occur for students and ABE Goals can be achieved.

References

- About, F. E. (2003). The formation of in-group favoritism and out-group prejudice in young children: Are they distinct attitudes? *Developmental Psychology*, 39(1), 48-60. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.39.1.48
- About, F. E. (2013). What are they thinking? The mystery of young children's thoughts on race. In M. R. Banaji & S. A. Gelman (Eds.), *Navigating the social world: What infants, children, and other species can teach us* (pp. 332–335). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Allen, A. (1997). Creating space for discussions about social justice and equity in an elementary classroom. *Progressive Education in Conservative Times*, 74 (7), 518-524
- Anderman, E. M. & Anderman L. H. (Eds.) (2009), Neo-Piagetian theories of development. *Psychology of Classroom Learning*, 2, 639-643.
- Atkinson, D., Okada, H., & Talmy, S. (2011). Ethnography and discourse analysis. In K. Hyland and B. Paltridge (Eds.), *Continuum companion to discourse analysis*. (1st ed.). New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing
- Banks, J. (1994). *An introduction to multicultural education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Barker, J. & Weller, S. (2003) "Is it fun?" Developing children centered research methods. *The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 23 (1/2), 33-58.
- Barron, I. (2013). Finding a voice: A figured worlds approach to theorising young children's identities. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 12(3), 251-263. doi:10.1177/1476718x12463912
- Blackburn, Mollie V., and Jill M. Smith. 2010. "Moving Beyond the Inclusion of LGBT-Themed Literature in English Language Arts Classrooms: Interrogating Heteronormativity and Exploring Intersectionality." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 53 (8): 625– 634.
- Blaise, M. (2005). *Playing it straight: Uncovering gender discourses in the early childhood classroom*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bonilla-Silva, E (2003). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

- Boutte, G., Lopez-Robertson, J., & Powers-Costello, E. (2011). Moving Beyond Colorblindness in Early Childhood Classrooms. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 39(5), 335-342.
- Brookfield, S. & Preskill, S. (1999). *Discussion as a way of teaching; Tools and techniques for democratic classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brown, A. (1992). Design experiments: Theoretical and methodological challenges in creating complex interventions in classroom settings. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 2(2), 141-178.
- Brown, K.D., Brown, A.L. (2011). Teaching K-8 students about race: African Americans, racism, and the struggle for social justice in the U.S. *Multicultural Education*. 19 (1) pp.9-13
- Collins, A., Joseph, D., & Bielaczyc, K. (2004). Design research: Theoretical and methodological issues. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 13(1), 15-42.
- Collins, P. H. (2009). *Black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Cohen, Cathy J. 2005. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics." In *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, edited by E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson, 21 – 51. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Connolly, P. 2003. The Development Of Young Children's Ethnic Identities. Implications For Early Years Practice. In: Vincent, C. (Ed.) *Social Justice, Education And Identity*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Copenhaver-Johnson, J. (2006) Talking to children about race: The importance of inviting difficult conversations. *Childhood Education*; 83 (1), 12-22
- Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. C. (2007). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a black feminist critique

- of antidiscrimination doctrine, *Feminist Theory, And Antiracist Politics*. University Of Chicago Legal Forum, 14, 538-554.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Deaux, K., & Lewis, L. L. (1984). Structure of gender stereotypes: Interrelationships among components and gender label. *Journal of Personality And Social Psychology*, 46(5), 991-1004.
- Davies, B. (1989). *Frogs and snails and feminist tales: Preschool children and gender* (First ed.). Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Derman-Sparks, L. (2008) Why an anti-biases curriculum? In Pelo, A. (Ed.) *Rethinking Early Childhood Education* (pp. 7-12). Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools Publication.
- Derman-Sparks, L., & Edwards, J. O. (2010). Anti-bias education: for young children and ourselves. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children
- DeLeon, A. P. (2006) Beware of Black the ripper! Racism, representation, and building antiracist pedagogy. *The Social Studies*, 97(6) 263-267
- Dinkins, E. G., & Englert, P. (2015). LGBTQ literature in middle school classrooms: possibilities for challenging heteronormative environments. *Sex Education*, 15(4), 392-405.
- Doucet, F., & Adair, J. K. (2013). Addressing race and inequity in the classroom. *YC Young Children*, 68(5), 88-92,94-97.
- Fairclough, N. (2001) Critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research. in Woods and Meyer, 2001, 121-38
- Fitchett, P.G. & Heafner, T.L.O. (2010) A national perspective on the effects of high-stakes testing and standarization on elementary social studies marginalization. *Theory and Research in Social Studies*, 38 (1), 114-130.
- Fordham, S. (2016). *Downed by friendly fire: Black girls, White girls, and suburban schooling*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Foucault, M (1972) *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York:Random House
- Good, A.J. et al (2010). The De-Emphasis on Social Studies in Elementary Schools: Teacher Candidate Perspective. *Current Issues in Education*, 13(4).
- Goodchild, S., & Gloger, D. (2005). When four-year-olds were asked to pick a troublemaker from these pictures, guess who they chose? *Independent*,p. 8.
- Gramsci, Antonio (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, New York, International Publishers.
- Grant, S.G., Lee, J., & Swan, K. (2014). *The inquiry design model*. Retrieved from <http://www.c3teachers.org/inquiry-design-model/>
- Grieshaber, S. (2008) Interrupting Stereotypes: Teaching and the Education of Young Children, *Early Education and Development*, 19:3, 505-518
- Hinton, K. (2004). "Sturdy black bridges": Discussing race, class, and gender. *English Journal*, 94(2), 60-64.
- Hughes, J. M., Bigler, R. S., & Levy, S. R. (2007). Consequences of learning about historical racism among European American and African American children. *Child Development*, 78(6), 1689-1705.
- Hughes, D., & Chen, L. (1997). When and what parents tell children about race: An examination of race related socialization among African American families. *Applied Developmental Science*, 1, 200-214
- Holland, D. et al. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Jones, N. (2010). *Between good and ghetto: African American girls and inner-city violence*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press
- Jussim, L., & Harber, K. D. (2005). Teacher expectations and self fulfilling prophecies: Knowns and unknowns, resolved and unresolved controversies. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 9(2), 131-155

- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97, 47-68.
- Lee, R., Ramsey, P. G., & Sweeney, B. (2008). Engaging young children in activities and conversations about race and social class. *YC Young Children*, 63(6), 68-76.
- MacNaughton, G. (2001) Silences and subtexts of immigrant and nonimmigrant children. *Childhood Education*, 78, 30-36.
- Matias, C. E. (2013). Who you callin' white? A critical counter-story on colouring white identity. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 16(3), 291-315.
- Morgan, H. (2009). Using read-alouds with culturally sensitive children's books: a strategy that can lead to tolerance and improved reading skills. *Reading Improvement*, 46 (1), 3-8.
- Morris, Edward. (2007). "Ladies" or "Loudies"? Youth & Society. 38. 490-515.
- Morris, M. W. (2016). Protecting black girls. *Educational Leadership*, (3), 49
- Morris, M. W. (2016a). *Pushout : The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*. New York: New Press
- National Center for Educational Statistic (2015) U.S. Department of Education.
- Nesdale, D., & Flesser, D., (2001). Social identity and the development of children's group attitudes. *Child Development*, 70 (2), 506-517.
- Nesdale, D. (1999). Developmental changes in children's ethnic preferences and social cognitions. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 20, 501-519.
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Orenstein, P. (1994). *Schoolgirls: Young women, self-esteem, and the confidence gap*. New York: Doubleday.
- Orenstein, P. (2011). *Cinderella ate my daughter: Dispatches from the front lines of the new girlie-girl culture*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

- Paechter, C. (2007). *Being boys, being girls: Learning masculinities and femininities*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Paechter, C. c. (2010). Tomboys and girly-girls: embodied femininities in primary schools. *Discourse: Studies In The Cultural Politics Of Education*, 31(2)
- Park, C.C., (2011). Young children making sense of racial and ethnic differences; A sociocultural approach. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48 (2), 387-420
- Pascoe, C.J. (2007) *Dude, you're a fag: Masculinities and sexuality in high school*. Berkeley; University of California Press.
- Pascopella, A. (2005). Staying alive: Social studies in elementary schools. *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, 17(3), 30-32.
- Pelo, A. (2008) Introduction. In Pelo, A. (Ed.) *Rethinking Early Childhood Education* (pp. 3-6). Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools Publication.
- Phinney, J.S., & Chavira, V. (1995) Parental ethnic socialization and adolescent coping with problems related to ethnicity. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 5(1), 31-53.
- Pipher, M. (1994) *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls*. New York:Putnam
- Polite, L., Saenger, E.B. (2003). A pernicious silence: confronting race in the elementary classroom. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 85 (4), 274-278.
- Pollock, M. (2004). *Colormute: Race talk dilemmas in an American school*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Powers, B., & Duffy, P. (2016). Making invisible intersectionality visible through theater of the oppressed in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 67(1),161-73.
- Urrieta, L. (2007) Figured Worlds and Education: An Introduction to the Special Issue. *The Urban Review*, 39 (2), 107-116
- Reay, D. (2001). 'Spice girls', 'nice girls', 'girlies' and 'tomboys': gender discourses, girls' cultures and femininities in the primary classroom. *Gender and Education*, 13(2), 153-166.
- Renold, E. (2005). *Girls, boys and junior sexualities: exploring children's gender and sexual*

relations in the primary school. London: Routledge.

- Rice, P. (2002). Creating spaces for boys and girls to expand their definitions of masculinity and femininity through children's literature. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 28(2), 33–42.
- Rogers, R., Mosley, M., (2006) Racial literacy in a second-grade classroom: Critical race theory, whiteness studies, and literacy research. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 41 (4), 462–495.
- Rubin, B. (2011) *Making citizens: Transforming civic learning for diverse social studies classrooms*. New York: Routledge.
- Rubin, B.C. (2016). Design-based research for research in social studies education. Paper presented at the University of Hiroshima. Hiroshima, Japan.
- Ryan, C., Patraw, J., & Bednar, M. (2013) Discussing princess boys and pregnant men: Teaching about gender diversity and transgender experiences within an elementary school curriculum. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 10:1-2, 83-105.
- Ryan, S., & Grieshaber, S. (2004). It's more than child development: Critical theories, research, and teaching young children. *YC Young Children*, 59(6), 44-52.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (No. 14). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Sandoval, W.A., & Bell, P. (2004) *Educational psychologist*, 39(4), 199–201
- Schieble, M. (2012) Critical conversations on whiteness with young adult literature. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 56(3), 212–221.
- Schwalbe, M. (1992). Male supremacy and the narrowing of the moral self. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 37:29-54.
- Simpson, B. V. (2007). Exploring the influences of educational television and parent- child discussions on improving children's racial attitudes (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu>
- Skelton, C. (1997) Primary boys and hegemonic masculinities, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 18, 349–369.
- Steinem, G. (2015) Facebook post December 8, 2015. Retrieved from

<https://www.facebook.com/GloriaSteinem/posts/10153129748542854>

Swindler Boutte, G., Lopez-Robertson, J., & Powers-Costello, E., (2001). Moving beyond colorblindness in early childhood classrooms. *Early Childhood Education*. 39, 335–342.

Tatum, B. (1997). *Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? and other conversations about race*. New York: BasicBooks.

Thorne, B. (1993). *Gender play: Girls and boys in school*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

Van Ausdale, D., & Feagin, J. R. (2001). *The first r: How children learn race and racism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Van den Akker, J. (1999). Principles and methods of development research. In J. van den Akker, N. Nieveen, R. M. Branch, K. L. Gustafson & T. Plomp (Eds.), *Design methodology and developmental research in education and training* (pp. 1-14). The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

VanFossen, P. J. (2005). "Reading and math take so much of the time...": An overview of social studies instruction in elementary classrooms in Indiana. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 33(3), 376-403.

Walkerdine, V., Lucey, H. (1989) *Democracy in the Kitchen* London; Virago

Walkerdine, V., Lucey, H., & Melody, J. (2001). *Growing up girl: psychosocial explorations of gender and class*. New York: New York University Press.

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. (1987). Doing Gender. *Gender and Society*, 1(2), 125-151.

Weiner, M. J., & Wright, F. E. (1973). Effects of undergoing arbitrary discrimination upon subsequent attitudes toward a minority group. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 3, 94–102.

Whitney, T. (2008) Using persona dolls to help children develop anti-bias attitudes. In Pelo, A. (Ed.) *Rethinking Early Childhood Education* (pp. 23-28). Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools Publication.

Wolcott, H. F. (2009). *Writing up qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.