



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2017 Volume II: Literature, Life-Writing, and Identity

Given, Chosen, and/or Imposed: My Gender, Myself

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Introduction

“Our genders are as unique as we are. No one’s definition is the same, and compartmentalizing a person as either a boy or a girl based entirely on the appearance of genitalia at birth undercuts our complex life experiences.” Janet Mock¹

“It’s a boy!” or “It’s a girl!” These are the words that parents await when they are expecting a baby. From the sonogram at four or five months, parents begin their preparation during the remainder of the pregnancy in which they may paint a room blue or pink, purchase color-related clothing, and begin to think about the toys their future child – boy or girl – may play with. Lately, “gender reveal” parties are hosted by the soon-to-be parents in which they, along with their guests, discover if their child is a girl or boy even before its birth. A variety of ideas allow for this: pink or blue streamers escaping out of an air cannon, or biting into a cupcake or cutting a sheet cake which reveal the color associated with boy or girl. The use of color coordinated balloons, confetti poppers, and piñatas, among other ideas enable everyone at the party to finally yell out those three magical words. Yet, this is actually a huge misconception. Gender is not being revealed, the sex is. There is a difference between these two terms. Chaz Bono’s words, “Gender is between your ears and not between your legs[,]”² give us a better perspective of what this means.

Over the course of this seminar, I have come to better understand how wrapped up our gender is with the idea of identity. During our time together, we have read stories about a variety of peoples. We have seen how identity is interwoven into these stories even just by whether they tell their own story or someone else tells it. From Shelley’s description of Frankenstein’s creature’s struggle to Janet Mock’s memoir, these readings have helped me to better grapple with the questions of Who are You? and Who am I? in relation to gender. In reading and discussing these stories, I have reflected on how ingrained gender is in our society, and in our everyday lives.

Although we discussed many aspects of this multi-layered idea of identity, this unit will focus on the social construction of gender to include an understanding of the difference between sex and gender, how gender is socially constructed, and what are the causes and consequences of this classification system, as well as the formulation and evaluation of personal reactions to the topic of gender.

Rationale

I have produced eight units to date to use with my dual-enrollment Sociology course. In fact the majority of the course is comprised of these in-depth content-based units. I know from experience that students are more focused and interested in the lessons created for these units. From the seminar readings, research, and my participation in **Literature, Life-Writing, and Identity**, I will have a ninth unit. This one, in particular, I am very excited about, as it will focus on the topic of gender. Last year at the beginning of our time together, I asked each student to select the one topic of those we would study over the course of the year in which they were most interested. The number one chosen topic was that of gender. Currently, I only use the textbook in my teaching of this unit, which definitely does not measure up to their level of interest! I would also argue that it is a necessity for students to better understand the topic as a whole since it does affect all aspects of their lives whether they know it or not. However, I write this with a disclaimer. I have done my best to present the information in the best way possible – that I know, right now. I will continue to educate myself on this rapidly evolving subject to do my best by the students seated in our classroom. In this unit, students will come to understand the sociological concepts of gender first through their textbook reading and my lectures. Then, they will read multiple personal narratives to see how these sociological concepts are connected to human lives. Some of these are quoted within what I have written, while others are listed in the resources section. Lastly, students will reflect on their own world and experiences to determine how their lives are intertwined with these concepts. In doing so, students may better understand my reasoning for the title of this unit.

This curriculum unit is divided into three parts: (1) the socialization of gender, (2) the causes and consequences of classifying people by gender, and (3) the formation and evaluation of personal reactions to the sociological concept of gender – all reflective of the objectives I must meet. As this topic can be very controversial, I anticipate that students’ ideas/thoughts on it may differ widely. Because of that, I want to promote the skill of active listening, all the more important as we are in different locations, and the students at each location are not as familiar with those from the other schools. I believe this type of listening along with the use of text sets will help students to develop a deep understanding of the topic.

Additionally, I will address the History/Social Studies Common Core Standard for Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: *Integration and Ideas/CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources*. Text sets will be created that provide common readings for the entire class and choice sets for individuals to explore a particular area of interest within the subject of gender more deeply. Students will be able to determine which texts within the choice sets they would like to read. They will synthesize these multiple texts to increase their level of understanding regarding gender. I want to include a variety of resources for students to read through that not only demonstrate the scientific component of gender but also multiple personal accounts so that students see the *human* component of these concepts and will be better able to connect to what they read. For that reason, I will also include a number of personal narratives for each of the three parts of the curriculum unit.

School Setting

Our district’s motto, “College and Career Ready” is reflected at each of the high schools where multiple courses are offered in conjunction with our local community college and university. I am the teacher of one of these courses, *Sociology*. This is the seventh year that I am teaching this dual-enrollment course in which students are enrolled at the local community college and receive credit from that institution upon successful

completion of the course with me on the high school campus.

Moreover, this is a *distance-learning course* in that some of my students are at my home school while others are at two sister schools in our district. The course happens real-time - at the three different locations - same teacher (me!). Each of the three schools is similar yet distinct from one another. Through the district's Choice Program, students' families can determine which school's learning "*strands*" would best suit their children and "choice" them into that school. The three high schools are less than ten miles apart from each other, each situated on the outskirts of the city of Wilmington well known for its violence rates. There is no district high school within the city limits. Instead, students are bussed out to their chosen schools. The school where I am housed, Conrad Schools of Science (CSS), is a science/biotechnology magnet school serving almost 1300 students in grades 6 - 12. At this school, strands such as biotechnology, physical therapy/athletic healthcare, biomedical science, animal science, and computer science are offered. It is the only one in the state that is not a vocational-technology school to offer a Delaware Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program. The sister school, A.I. du Pont (AIHS) serves about 1,100 students and houses the early College Academy in which students are assigned "colleges" that they belong to as soon as they enter the building in ninth grade, aiming to build cohesiveness amongst the group. The other sister school, McKean (MHS), has a diverse, inclusive population in which one out of each four students is one with special needs. It offers specializations in communications, business, horticulture, culinary, and education pathways.

For most of these students it is their first distance-learning course. To ease their fear and to promote a feeling of inclusiveness, I travel to their schools once every three weeks. During my planning time, I drive to one of the other two schools and host "office hours". During that time I meet with the individual students at that site, helping with their feelings of connection to me, to the course.

This particular unit is designed for the high school juniors and seniors who choose to take this social sciences course, *Sociology*, as an elective. Due to scheduling requirements, most of them tend to be seniors who have already met their graduation requirements. These students must complete and pass a basic literacy test given by the local community college to gain entrance. Additionally, their families must pay a tuition fee, albeit severely reduced. This ensures if they complete the work at a satisfactory level and pass with a predetermined grade average, they will receive community college credit that tends to be easily transferred to local universities/colleges.

Learning Objectives

There are a number of Delaware Technical Community College Wide Core Course (CCC) Performance Objectives that I follow as I plan my units of instruction. These are, in a sense, non-negotiable. A mentor from the institution checks in to confirm that what I am doing is aligned with what they are doing at their institution. In this unit I will be using three of these CCC Performance Objectives: (1) *assess the impact of socialization on both the individual and society*, (2) *analyze social stratification and the causes and consequences of classifying people by race, ethnicity, and gender*, and (3) *analyze personal reactions to sociological concepts, principles, and processes*. In doing so students will be able to explain how socialization and gender are related, illustrate the connection between social stratification and life chances according to gender, and assess their own understandings and reactions to their gender experiences. When I first started teaching this course, the textbook chapter was entitled, *Gender*. Now, it is named *Gender and Sexualities*

demonstrating what I believe to be an expanding definition and understanding of the fluidity of gender reflective of our society. That being written, I initially felt an uneasiness regarding my own lack of knowledge and understanding of the subject. All the reading that I have done has made me think more deeply about what I believe, think, and understand. Some of my readings have pushed me in my own thinking as well as created even more questions to which I am still searching for answers. I believe relaying this information to my students will enable them to see that educating oneself can lead to better understanding of concepts and people.

Enduring Understandings, the big ideas of the unit, are taken from the Core Concepts of our textbook's chapter on Gender and Sexualities. Students will understand that sex is a biological concept, whereas gender is a social construct; and gender expectations are learned and culturally imposed through a variety of social mechanisms, including socialization, the commercialization of gender ideas, and situational constraints. These understandings lead to *Essential Questions* that guide students throughout the unit within each lesson. These questions are those that students will investigate through their reading and viewing of a variety of sources. They include: How are sex and gender defined and understood?, How are gender expectations learned and/or imposed throughout one's lifetime and what does this mean to individuals and society?, and What is my understanding of gender and how does it impact my life? A variety of texts (both for reading and viewing) will be used in this unit. From the comprehension of these texts, students will develop an understanding of the social construction of gender. Students will closely read a number of texts – some assigned as a common reading among all class members while others will be by choice. Students will analyze and synthesize these to answer the *Guiding Questions* while engaging in conversations that will also assist them in practicing their active listening skills as well as developing their personal reactions/responses to important topics – sociology subjects – such as gender.

Content Objectives

Listening

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines *listen* as “to hear something with thoughtful attention, give consideration.”³ This is a skill with which my students have difficulty. In fact, it is something that I still struggle with myself. What does it mean to actively listen to another human being? Throughout the course of the school day, I need to “listen” to many different people – my principal, colleagues, and multitudes of students. During my hectic day, how much do I truly listen, to hear what is being said? Last fall, one of my former students came back for a visit, dropping in unexpectedly one afternoon after the school day was done. He stayed for about fifteen minutes in which I “listened” to him talk while I straightened things up and put away papers at my desk. He told me about his change of majors, we engaged in a conversation about a mutual professor we knew, and laughed about an old joke we had about him never introducing me to his brother. The next day he went missing, only to be found days later after he had committed suicide. A question that runs through my mind is, “Did I really listen to him?” Did I give him enough attention and consideration? He served as a very important life lesson for me. I vowed to myself that I would not complete busy work when someone visited with me; instead, when someone came to me, to my classroom, I would actively listen – no matter how much work I had in front of me or a deadline that needed to be met. Since then I have strived – continue to do so – to work on the practice of listening.

In the course of a school day I see my students more and more attached to their cell phones versus the people around them. In fact, in the book, *The Lost Art of Listening*, Michael P. Nichols contends that we have lost the habit of concentrating on others mostly due to the fact that there is so much information around us all the time. He states that the “lack of listening impoverishes our most important relationships. We hurt each other unnecessarily by failing to acknowledge what the other one has to say.”⁴ In seminar, our readings and discussion are about the stories people tell or those stories that are told for us regarding our identities. As humans, we want to be understood and have an intense desire to belong. Having someone truly listen, with full attention on us, results in us feeling a stronger connection that then enables us to better understand one another. To further elaborate, Nichols writes, “Listening serves two purposes – taking in the information as well as bearing witness to another’s experience.”⁵ In doing so, people feel cared for and accepted rather than isolated. We are “honored”, as Patrice, one of my Life Writing Fellows, stated in seminar.

The unit will begin with helping students to develop their actively listening skills – to be more fully involved in what their peers are trying to convey. Our classroom situation is different from the norm in that students are at three different locations connected by cameras and computers. This skill of listening is essential to the well being of the group. In a situation, in which students could pay attention to only those in their immediate vicinity, the goal I have for them is to show as much attention to those that are at a distance from them as those who are close by.

“Listening means paying attention not only to the story, but how it is told, the use of language and voice, and how the other person uses his or her body. In other words, it means being aware of both verbal and non-verbal messages. Your ability to listen effectively depends on the degree to which you perceive and understand these messages.”⁶

Students must make a conscious decision to listen and watch others for cues to understand the complete message the speaker is trying to convey. It includes listening with all of the senses. Additionally, students must try to not pay heed to preconceived notions⁷ they may have of a speaker and to be open to speaker’s words/their story. Lastly, we must ask ourselves, why is it so difficult to listen? The answer is simple: *most people are not actively listening to those who are speaking because they are waiting for their own turn; they are already thinking about how they will respond.*⁸ *This is central to any conversation, and particularly so within the classroom situation in which people are competing with up to thirty others for their “turn”. A lot of interrupting others can occur.*

According to **Sherrie Bourg Carter**, three behaviors are common in those who listen well: being respectful of others, talking less than you listen, and challenging your own familiar assumptions.⁹ Obviously, it is a difficult skill to master and needs to be constantly practiced. So, patience is important, as we need time for the skill to develop. Introducing students to a step-by-step process to better listening is a good beginning. These include: maintain eye contact, be attentive, keep an open mind as to what the speaker is saying, no interrupting, when speaker pauses ask clarifying questions, try to feel what the speaker feels, give regular feedback.¹⁰ During our time over these past weeks, I have seen our Seminar Leader, Jill Campbell, practice part of this skill. During each of her colleague’s morning talks, I observed her taking notes. Using these, each day in our seminar, she carefully reflected on what the day’s speaker had presented and wove it into our topic of the day. I am going to have my students take notes in a similar manner.

Identity

During our first time together, Campbell focused the conversation on the seminar's central theme of identity, a sort of overview of its definition and explanation dependent on a variety of sources. The question of Who are You? began with self-explanations of our names. Each Fellow's answer began to give us clues to their *story*. Afterwards, she defined identity for us as: The fact of being who or what a person or thing is. The characteristics determining this...2. A close similarity or affinity.¹¹ Famous writers such as John Locke, Beverly Daniel Tatum, and Erik Erikson's theories were just as complex as people's explanations of their names. Locke focused on the sameness - yesterday, today, and tomorrow as who they are/their identity. Tatum's emphasis was on the complex nature of our make up in that we are who we are due to all the forces around us that have had a hand in determining our identity. This mirrors the sociological concept of the sociological imagination in that you are who you are in relation to the space, place, and time you are born. This is a concept that students will have been introduced to prior to studying the topic of gender.

For this unit, my main focus is on the work of Erick Erikson regarding identity. Most of my students are familiar with Erik Erikson's psychoanalytic theory of psychosocial development comprised of eight stages spanning from birth to death. This personality development occurs in a staged process - one after the other from the first stage at infancy of trust versus mistrust to the eighth and final stage in old age, of ego integrity versus despair. Each stage is psychosocial; meaning there are two sides of the conflict - the psychological needs of the individual versus the social/environmental needs. At each stage, a person must resolve a conflict in order to avoid a crisis.

The stage that is of interest to this unit in particular, is the fifth one - Ego Identity versus Role Confusion during adolescence from ages 12 - 18. Of course, this is the stage that my students find themselves in. During this time "adolescents search for a sense of self and personal identity, through an intense exploration of personal values, beliefs and goals."¹² It is a complicated process in which people are determining their sexual and occupational identities. In this major stage of development, the adolescent is transitioning from child to adult and with this transition, come many changes. Young people "try on" many different roles as they learn to navigate their new independence while trying to determine where they fit in to society - what type of job might they have, where might they live and with whom, what will be their profession?

Erikson recognized a challenge in accepting others despite "ideological differences."¹³ Within this stage one must struggle with the idea of accepting others while also accepting oneself, and even what others may think of said person. Of particular interest to this unit on Gender are the ideas of self, body image, and sex roles within the formation or establishment of our identity. At a time in which young people are confused about their identity and trying to figure things out, it is very difficult for some of them to deal with the additional issue of not being part of the gender binary. Forcing someone into a category can have negative effects, some extreme. These can result in rebellion or unhappiness.¹⁴ In the podcast, *How To Be a Girl*, Marlo Mack, speaks about raising her nine-year-old transgender daughter. In one of the first episodes she told the story of when at age three her "son" came to her and said, "I'm a girl." What ensued afterwards was about a year of telling him that he was a boy that liked girl things, among others. She said he became sad, depressed and remained like that for quite a long time until she and her husband at the time agreed with what he said and began the process of transitioning.

Reconsidering Gender

The subject of gender is complex. In readings that I have completed, most try to approach it from multiple

perspectives – biological sex, gender identity, and gender expression – that are independent of each other. The biological sex is the physical make-up of bodies. Gender identity, usually established by age three, is whom you know yourself to be, how you think about yourself inside¹⁵. In one of the Young Adolescent (YA) texts students will be reading, *George*, by Alex Gino, the main character (George) knows that she is a girl not a boy. She keeps these thoughts and behaviors secret until she finally confides in her best friend, Kelly.

“They’re jerks,” said Kelly. “You’re not a girl.” “What if I am?” George was startled by her words.

Kelly drew back in surprise. “What? That’s ridiculous.

You’re a boy. I mean” – she pointed vaguely downward at George – “you have a *you-know-what*, right?”

“Yeah, but...” George trailed off and looked at the ground.

She kicked a small rock that skipped into a tuft of grass.

She didn’t feel like a boy.

They stood together in a heavy silence. Kelly’s brow furrowed in thought. After a few moments, she spoke.

“You know, I thought about whether I was a boy once. Back when I wanted to be a firefighter and I thought all firefighters were boys. Is it like that?”

“I don’t think so, Kelly.”¹⁶

Gender expression is how you present on the outside. This is how others interpret who you are according to their gender expectations. These are established by one’s society. In Liz Prince’s graphic memoir, *Tomboy*, she reflects on her years growing up and how she did not match what was expected of a girl when from the age of four she preferred wearing a baseball cap, pants, and a hand-me-down blazer to a dress.

Sex

At a baseline level, a person’s sex is determined by primary sex characteristics – those that are necessary for reproduction. Most cultures are binary – meaning, they have two categories, male and female. If you have a penis, you are considered male. If you have a vagina/ovaries, you are considered female. However, things are never easy. In fact, it is much more complicated. Sex is more encompassing to include “measurable organs, hormones, chromosomes, and other anatomy”¹⁷. For example, “about 1 in 1500 to 1 in 2000 births”¹⁸ are born intersexed – born with any combination of male and/or female primary sex characteristics. However, there are also multiple types of intersex. The Intersex Society of North America claims that many more people are born with some type of sex anatomy variation, many of which may not show up until adolescence.¹⁹ In fact, about one out of one hundred babies are born with non-standard male or female bodies. From what I gathered looking at this from a spectrum perspective could be helpful.

Ambiguity is difficult for people within a society to handle; it does not fit in our binary world. “We make the

whole world obey a *gender binary*, a separation of everything into two different and contrasting gendered boxes.”²⁰ Imagine as you have grown into adulthood and have thought solely in binary terms – then, you have a baby. First thought may be – what is it? A boy or girl? But, the doctor doesn’t state either of those words. Instead, there is not a clear answer. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) noted this issue to be a “social emergency” until 2006. Now the AAP defines it as “congenital conditions in which development of chromosomal, gonadal, or anatomic sex is atypical.”²¹ These babies are labeled as having a “disorder of sexual development (DSD).”²² The AAP lists guidelines which include a gender assignment be given after an expert evaluation, long-term management should consist of an interdisciplinary team, open communication with families and in the strictest of confidences.”²³ The team looks first at the internal anatomy and then to the chromosomes in their determination of the sex.

Another issue that arises is that sometimes a person’s chromosomes do not match their anatomy. In most cases, two chromosomes determine a person’s sex. The mother gives an X chromosome. The father gives another X chromosome to be female; or a Y chromosome to be male. In vitro, the process to become male or female is complicated. Each embryo has both sets in which “A molecular chain of events orders one set to disintegrate at about eight weeks. Around nine weeks the embryo starts to develop external genitalia that match the internal sex organs.”²⁴ The SRY gene makes the proto-gonads turn into testes that will then secrete testosterone and other male hormones. Or they will turn into ovaries, producing estrogen and other female hormones. However, this gene can be dysfunctional at times, leading to “an XY embryo that fails to develop male anatomy and is identified at birth as a girl” or “show up on the X chromosome, leading to an XX embryo that does develop male anatomy and is identified at birth as a boy”.²⁵ Some other variations include Turner’s syndrome in which people with just one X chromosome grow up as females. Also, individuals with Klinefelter’s syndrome have two X chromosomes and one Y, and grow up as men. There are XX males and XY females whose sex doesn’t match their chromosomes. Usually this is explained by the presence or absence of particular genes; sometimes it’s because of unusual levels of particular hormones at important developmental stages.”²⁶ Although this is a very complicated matter, in reality, babies are labeled as boy or girl by their external genitalia at birth. Because of the intensity of this subject and the interest my students have in it, we will be reviewing a variety of sources including medical texts and organizations’ explanations regarding this issue.

Gender as a Social Construct

After the explanation of what is sex, one must turn to what is gender. Sociologists study many things within this topic. First, they look at the meanings that are given to the male and female categories. In a broader sense, it investigates the gender system, “a system of meaning and differentiation, lined to the sexes through social arrangements.”²⁷ Second, it looks at the trends of change within the system – the nature of them and the forces behind them. For example, on some level, gender has become less noticeable as women’s opportunities have increased. Additionally, it explores the meanings of maleness and femaleness in social contexts and the effects of these meanings on the individual and groups. Furthermore, they “pursue questions about people and social structure: the pattern of social relationships and behavior” such as “discriminatory practices and pay scales”.²⁸ Lastly, they examine “individuals’ agency or active approach to finding ways to participate in, adapt to, change their circumstances.”²⁹

Within the field of sociology, the general understanding of gender – male/masculinity and female/femininity – is based on the society’s construction of what is expected and ideal for males and females. Gender is referred to as the “social practice of perceiving and defining aspects of people and situations inconsistently” to force

our observations to fit our social beliefs.³⁰ It is learned throughout one's lifetime through an overt and covert system of reinforcement. In fact, it becomes institutionalized. Judith Lorber writes about individuals viewing gender as sameness yet for society it means difference – a distinction between the two categories of male and female. The gender daily practices, norms, and expectations institutionalize gender.³¹ Examples of these include: who does what types of jobs/enters what types of professions, body hair practices, clothing, expression of emotions, among others.

Gender Ideals

Gender Ideals are the exaggerations of both the “perfect” male and female to include appearance, behavior, and mental and emotional characteristics – those that are believed to be appropriate by society. These are standards to which each member compares him/herself. Think about magazine advertisements to better understand a gender ideal – how are males and females portrayed? In our culture, who should have hair under their arms or on their legs? These ideals are, for many, difficult to achieve and unable to sustain, especially as we age. Manipulation of bodies such as feet binding in China, use of corsets in earlier times, and plastic surgery such as breast augmentation are some of the ways people have tried or try to meet gender ideals. Commercialization of these ideals is overwhelming in our society. There are multitudes of creams, pills, machines – a variety of products that promise whatever ideal you are looking for! Advertisers use a combination of psychological and sociological tactics to get you to purchase products so that one can dye their hair, melt away fat, plump their lips, and moisturize any area of one's body. There is always a new and better product available to help one accomplish the ideal set by society. Additionally, the market has expanded to include men, capitalizing on the commercialization of society's ideas for the “perfect” man. Products for skin and hair care, for example, can now be found for men as well. Although, as humans, when we age, these ideals become more and more difficult to obtain due to the natural body changes that accompany it, the ideals do not change, making the quest relentless.

Socialization

These ways of believing what is considered masculine and feminine are learned over time. Each interaction we have with others is dictated by *what* you are. As you grow up, you internalize these expectations, which, in turn, make you act in certain ways that are considered appropriate for the society in which you live. Agents of socialization including parents, siblings, friends, schools, religious leaders, and mass media help to mold you. Norms, or the “written and unwritten rules that govern our behavior”³², that are reinforced by these agents of socialization. One of our Seminar Fellows, Toni, spoke about her own daughter who went against the rules, preferring Spider Man products instead of the ones normally associated with girls. However, in the third grade she chose a backpack with just one color, odd for her. When Toni asked, her daughter told her it was because she did not want to hear negative comments from her peers. We see how people are kept within the lines by the responses of those around us. This is an example of social control.

This manifests itself on a very intimate level of a family member or peers to a much larger level. In Janet Mock's memoir, she writes about an event that occurred around the age of three when she was playing with her mother's earrings. After an unfortunate encounter of the backing sliding into the inside of her ear and a visit to the doctor to have it taken out, her father's “booming voice filled our house with reprimands about why his son was playing with earrings.”³³ Additionally, in “*Bros Before Hos: The Guy Code*,” Kimmel writes about masculinity rules men should follow. He states that fathers and coaches teach these and that these rules constantly need to be proved, and monitored since other men judge you. He states, “men subscribe to these ideals not because they want to impress women, let alone any inner drive or desire to test themselves

against some abstract standards. They do it because they want to be positively evaluated by other men.”³⁴ In many of the texts that I read, just as in *Bros*, it referred to “doing gender” as performing, beginning at a very early age. It is maintained on the micro-level in face-to-face interactions with individuals and small groups to a macro-level of institutions, such as a man versus a woman shopping. Social interactions are life-long and maintain the ongoing means for socialization even as an adult.³⁵

Gender Identity

There is a certain vocabulary that students must be aware of as we discuss gender identity. Up to now, we have defined sex, male, female, masculine, and feminine, as well as gender. Gender binary has also been mentioned above in that our society focuses on two “types” of people – male and female. In doing so, we begin to assume that all those people within the type are the same. Gender binary is applied not only to people but “objects, places, activities, talents, and ideas.”³⁶ In our society, it begins as soon as a parent can determine if the soon-to-be baby is a boy or a girl. Will I buy a pink or blue outfit? Will I buy a tiny dress or a cute romper with a fire engine on it? Will I paint the room a shade of blue or pink? At schools we also follow a gender binary by reinforcing a separation of activities and sports. Once children understand these divisions, they begin to act upon them and around the age of six, children become extremely rigid in doing things the “right” way – appropriate “gender way”.³⁷

This idea of gender binary, does not apply to all societies. In some, there is a third gender category, in addition to male and female, distinguishing that a person may belong to another group. This group may be labeled as third sex, gender and/or transsexual depending on the society. In our class textbook, Joan Ferrante includes examples of the Kathoey of Thailand, Whakawahine/whakatane of New Zealand, Mamluk of Egypt, and the fa’afafine of American Samoa. In each of these cultures, these third cultures are distinct from the other two. In the case of the fa’afafine, people are not biologically female but take on the “‘ways of women’ in dress, mannerism, appearance and role.”³⁸ Others in the family decide if a person is fa’afafine based on behavior and circumstance – if there are not enough girls in the family to complete the work necessary to maintain a family/home. Research concludes that most likely something within the society allowed for gender blurring. This idea of gender blurring reminds me of the book, *The Underground Girls of Kabul: In Search of a Hidden Resistance in Afghanistan*, in which girls born are raised as boys due to the disadvantages of families with only girl children in the country. Sociologists refer to this as the temporary or permanent sex switching due to strict social rules.³⁹

Some societies define gender by expertise. In Dayk, being a woman is tied to expertise in rice – identifying types and their uses.⁴⁰ Other societies use social status to assign gender. For example, a high-ranking woman would be considered male and could marry another woman and her lovers could father children for them.⁴¹

I know my students will find this information about others interesting yet, I believe, they may also find it difficult to wrap their minds around some of the texts they will be reading. I anticipate some confusion and believe that Sam Killermann’s work will help them as it also helped me. He considers his work to be a primer of sort. He focuses on four aspects of our identity that are interconnected but not interdependent: gender identity, gender expression, attraction, and sex. As he explains, gender identity is who you know to be on the

inside, “how you think about yourself”⁴². This goes back to Chaz Bono’s quote as well as the example of George (the YA book) who knows herself to be a girl. Gender expression is how you present gender through your actions, clothing, demeanor, etc. This is also reflective of how others perceive you as these expressions follow societal gender norms. Attraction refers to the sexual (physically intimate) and romantic (relationally intimate) ways in which one is attracted to others. Gender identity as a spectrum refers to woman and man at each end with genderqueer in the middle. Gender expression as a spectrum refers to feminine and masculine at each end with androgynous in the middle. Sex as a spectrum refers to female-ness and male-ness. For the purpose of this unit we are focusing mostly on gender identity although sex was previously explained in great detail as it is often confused with gender.

Sam Killermann is careful in his writing on this subject. He states that these identifiers are the best explanations he could come up with. Additionally, he believes by including information from people who consider themselves to be within a particular category, that their words are more useful in understanding the information than his own. As I found this to be true, I will use them with my students and have included them here. Killermann’s advice is to limit the use of labels as this may lead to more bad than good, as sometimes happen with labels. The following are terms and explanations that will be reviewed with my students. People who consider themselves to be *agender* (*gender neurotois, gender neutral, or genderless*), a relatively new term for gender nonconformity, are those who have no strong “connection to the traditional system of gender, no personal alignment with the concepts of either ‘man’ or woman,” and see themselves as existing without gender.”⁴³

“ ‘I was born female, but it never clicked. If it were up to me, I wouldn’t have nipples. My ideal physical body would be without genitalia or breasts, and I prefer when people refer to me as ‘they’”.⁴⁴

Bigender people identify with two separate genders. This division can be clear-cut as in specific times or it can be more “gray, hovering between the two at any given time, but at all times they still fully identify with both.”⁴⁵

“ ‘A lot of people think of gender as a continuum, and that’s fine, but I see it more like apples and oranges. Some people are apples, some people are oranges, some people are grapes, etc. For me, I just happen to be an apple and a grape – like a fruit salad. At times you’ll taste 100 percent apple. Others it’s 100 percent grape. Others it’s a bite with both, so you taste them both at the same time. But I’m not a grapple. I’m a grape, and I’m an apple. I fully align with ‘man’ just as much as I fully align with ‘woman’”.⁴⁶

Genderfluid refers to a “dynamic” fluidity – a movement on the spectrum that usually responds to situations not times.

“ ‘When I was younger, my parents thought I suffered from chronic depression because I would consistently go through phases where I was despondent and just turned off from the world. As I grew up, I realize this was just my gender shifting from woman to man, and my body not knowing how to make sense of it. I would feel completely outside of myself, because I was a girl and

didn't feel like a girl for a few months, but then it would all come back to normal for a while. I've since realized what was happening and can support the boy part of me when it comes out better and not feel like an alien in my own body every couple of months."⁴⁷

Genderqueer encompasses a variety of identities, "an umbrella term for anyone who doesn't identify within the gender binary."⁴⁸

" I see saying I'm genderqueer the same way someone might say they are agnostic: I believe that gender exists, and I have it, but it's beyond me to say that I can comfortably define what it is. If you think you know what gender is, and are sure about yours, I think you're making a leap of faith."⁴⁹

The next two terms are common in that they are associated with what most of my students may better understand - those who identify as a *man* including *transman*, *trans man*, or *Female-to-Male/FtM man* and those who identify as a *woman* including *transwoman*, *trans woman*, or *Male-to-Female/MtF woman*. These people have no qualms with the ways in which they express themselves or the roles and norms related to the specific gender with which they identify.

" It makes sense to me that I'm a man. I like manly things, and I'm comfortable around other men. I'm not super athletic and have a job as a teacher, which I guess to some people might make me "less of a man," but I see being a man more as being comfortable in the gender I've always had and never feeling any pressure from inside that something wasn't right."⁵⁰

" As a kid, seeing the girls on TV playing with Barbies, I was always like, "Yes, that is so me. That's my friends. That's my life." I never needed another option. I was a pink girl. I was a fashion girl. I want a career, but I also want to be a mom - yes, a "mom," not a "parent." There's a difference."⁵¹

Transgender is "an umbrella term for anyone whose gender identity doesn't correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth in the socially expected way."⁵² This is helpful in many ways: encompasses a diversity of identities, assists in "group cohesion", and aids in civil rights work. However, it is damaging because it does encompass a diverse group of people and their identities. Again, one must be careful in lumping people into one category, one experience, and one story.

Strategies

Close Reading

The Common Core Standards ask students to close read texts. This includes having students read and re-read texts for deeper meaning. Part of this includes citing evidence from the text to support one's idea/thought.

One way to accomplish this task with students is to number the paragraphs within a text so that it is easy to acknowledge which paragraph is being referred to when citing evidence. It may also help to “chunk” the text into sections so that it does not appear to be too overwhelming. Students can also draw lines at various points – e.g. paragraphs 1-4; 5-8; 9-12 to help with this chunking technique. It is also important to instruct students how to underline and circle with a purpose. Using questions with them – so that they need to look for answers within the text – is a good way to begin developing this skill. Directing students to what is important is vital in their success of understanding the text. Annotating the text also enables students to close read. They can use the left margin to summarize the chunks of text and the right margin to ask questions.⁵³ This will also aid students during the Socratic Seminar discussions.

Text Rendering

This process helps students to construct meaning, clarify, and to think more deeply about a text. After reading the text, the strategy takes place in three rounds. In the first round, all students choose and report out on a sentence that they believe is important to the understanding of the text. In the second round, a phrase and in the third round, one word. A scribe writes all of these comments in a spot visible to all class members so that everyone can “see” the thoughts of their classmates. Afterwards, questions such as: “What new insights have you gained about the text by looking at it in this way?” and “What do you think this text is essentially about?”⁵⁴ are discussed. Lastly, students reflect on what was spoken about and are able to summarize the text. This activity, I believe, will be beneficial for helping to develop active listening skills by providing summarizing opportunities by taking notes while listening and reflecting on what was said.

Socratic Seminar

I have noticed that my students tend to talk before thinking and are more interested in hearing themselves than their fellow classmates. Being able to think critically about a text before discussing it and then listening to others are important skills necessary for academic success and the life-long ability to understand better another person’s viewpoint. The weight of the conversation is left to the participants – in this case the students. They must critically look at and read the texts before coming to class and be prepared with questions and comments they would like to focus on. This is vital to the conversation’s success. I want them to experience what it is to be in college in a small seminar-type atmosphere. Additionally, I believe if they are made responsible for this it will help them to better comprehend the content of the text that they are expected to master. While students are well armed with evidence from the texts that they have read or viewed, it is also important at this point, that they begin to employ the active listening strategies as well.

Deep Viewing

Visual Literacy Strategy Ann Watts Pailliotet's three phases: Literal Observation, Interpretation, and Evaluation and Application. In the first phase, a student should look at the photograph for a minute or so. Afterwards, they should try and doodle/sketch from memory what they saw. Then, they should answer questions, “*What is pictured? What type of language is used? How is space used?*”⁵⁵ After students upload their answers into a GoogleDoc, they can focus on their collaborative effort by answering the questions in the second phase. These include: “*What are the most important words?, Which words do you have questions about?, Describe your feelings about the photo., What other images are you reminded of, past or present?, What messages are implicit and explicit?, How did you analyze the photo?, and What do you understand now that you didn't before?*”⁵⁶ After answering these, it is helpful for students to summarize their understanding of the entire conversation. In the third and final phase, “*Does the implied purpose of the photo convey ideas*

that are important?, How?, Is the image biased?, and How so?”⁵⁷ Using the National Archives’ Photo Analysis form as a graphic organizer will enable students to notice items within the photograph, determine what type of photo it is, explain the caption, and what the photo includes – people, objects, activities assisting students in explaining the who, what, where, and when of the photo.

Activities

Text Sets

“Text sets are collections of texts tightly focused on a specific topic. They may include varied genres (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and so forth) and media (such as blogs, maps, photographs, art, primary-source documents, and audio recordings).”⁵⁸ It is vital that students have opportunities to read a variety of texts, not only to meet the Common Core Standards; but for the practical purposes of what life brings them in regard to what they will need to read, process, and comprehend during their lifetimes. Text sets geared towards having students acquire academic content knowledge; help to achieve this goal. As I was thinking about my unit, I wanted to set it up much like our seminar, with a few common readings and, choice texts – ones they will choose to read for themselves. For each text set, students will synthesize their increasing more complex texts by answering a few overarching questions much like the ones Jill Campbell, or our seminar leader, provided us for our seminar readings in that students must find textual evidence to support the points in their synthesis. The text sets will be set up to mirror the three objectives students must meet to demonstrate mastery of the content – two of which are the socialization of gender and the causes and consequences of classifying people by gender. The third objective is specific to having students formulate and evaluate their personal reactions to the sociological concept of gender.

A Visit to the Local Mall

A field trip serves to enrich the delivery and/or understanding of content area knowledge. In our case, it also serves another purpose in that students can be in the same place at the same time instead of being separated by distance and cameras. Students will be teamed up with their classmates from the sister high schools to work together. They will wander through our local mall and photograph examples of gender which they will upload as photo collections with the hashtag #DrPDTCCSOCGender. Student groups will create captions for each of the photographs. A list will be provided for students indicating which vocabulary terms are to be addressed in the photos. Before leaving the mall, there will be a culminating activity in which group members are mixed up and there is a sharing time to determine the photo collections’ commonalities and differences.

Artifact to Photo Essay

The initial activity will include a written explanation accompanying an artifact that represents students’ gender. I will model this activity for them using – I believe – my MAC lipstick (Viva Glam III) which I rarely deviate from. I envision this looking like a show-and-tell time in which students will have an opportunity to explain to others how they believe the item to represent their gender. Each student will write an object label that will help orient classmates to each individual’s “gender narrative” modeled after my own. An “object label reflects the museum’s time-honored role as keeper and classifier of treasured objects and artifacts of history. Reading between the lines of the object label there is a legible trace of the social, fiscal, and educational

forces underpinning the entire enterprise of museums.”⁵⁹ Reflecting on this meaning, on a micro level, students will be the “keeper and classifier” of their gender representative objects. On a macro level, students will be able to see how “forces” outside of themselves determine their understandings of even their own gender. The culminating activity will be a photo essay of *A Day in My Life* through the lens of gender. I’m thinking that it would be “museum-like” in that they will provide introductory, section, and object labels for the assignment. It will be digital given the environment we find ourselves in so that we can easily share our photo essays with each other. This activity, in particular, helps students to meet the third objective of their own reactions to the sociological concept of gender – where do they see themselves and how can they demonstrate this to others.

Teacher/Student Resources

Portions of all of these resources will be made available to students either as common or choice readings. These students will attend college next year so they are almost or already ready to handle the reading levels of these texts.

Bradley, Brendan. YouTube. April 19, 2016. Accessed July 28, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyYn9izT9gc>.

This video's inspiration is from a children's book about a baby born to a family who does not state what is the baby's gender - boy or girl and how others react to this lack of information.

Break Free. Performed by Ruby Rose. Accessed July 12, 2017.

[https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-mozilla-002&hsimp=yhs-002&hspart=mozilla&p=ruby rose break free#id=1&vid=fbbea34d040fb169d033228ab1dcbf06&action=click](https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-mozilla-002&hsimp=yhs-002&hspart=mozilla&p=ruby%20rose%20break%20free#id=1&vid=fbbea34d040fb169d033228ab1dcbf06&action=click).

This five-minute video shows Ruby Rose's ability to move from female to male.

Brown, Chip. "Making a Man." *National Geographic*, January 2017, 74-103.

This article describes how a man is "built"/made by the society in which he lives.

Diamant, Anita. *The Red Tent*. New York: St. Martins Press, 1997.

Chapter six includes an explanation of the first menses ceremony of a young woman. This will be part of one of the "choice" text sets for students.

Ferrante, Joan. *Sociology: a global perspective (9E)*. Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2015.

This is our dual-enrollment sociology class textbook. It has sixteen chapters that focus on the major sociological concepts such as race, gender, religion, socialization, amongst others.

Gender Revolution: A Journey with Katie Couric. United States: National Geographic, 2017. DVD.

Gino, Alex. *George*. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc., 2015.

This Young Adolescent (YA) book is about a transgender school aged child. It is an easy read about the experience of transitioning.

Henig, Robin Marantz. "Rethinking Gender." *National Geographic*, January 2017, 48-73.

This is an excellent resource for students to gain a better understanding of the term "gender", its meaning, and how that is changing in today's society around the world.

Henslin, James M. *Down to earth sociology: introductory readings*. New York: Free Press, 1991.

Two selections are chosen from this book for student choice text sets - On Becoming Male: Reflections on Childhood and Early Socialization (Henslin) and On Becoming Female: Lessons Learned in School (Eder).

"How common is intersex?" How common is intersex? | Intersex Society of North America. Accessed July 12, 2017.
<http://www.isna.org/faq/frequency>.

Intersex Society of North America's website has many facts beneficial to the reader in better understanding gender.

Killermann, Sam. *A Guide to Gender: The Social Justice Advocate's Handbook*. Austin, TX: Impetus Books, 2017.

This book serves as an excellent resource on how to address the issue of gender. Many terms are explained in layman's terms.

Kimmel, Michael. "Bros Before Hoes." Accessed July 15, 2017.
<https://terikovacs.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/bros-before-hoes-article.pdf>.

A short article that explains the "Men's Code" - who teaches it, who keeps a check on it, and why is it so important.

Kramer, Laura. *The sociology of gender: a text-reader*. New York, NY: St. Martins Pr., 1991.

Lorber, Judith. Night to His Day: Social Construction of Gender. Accessed July 12, 2017.
<https://wgs10016.commons.gc.cuny.edu/lobber-night-to-his-day-the-social-construction-of-gender/>

This reading was taken from Lorber's book but focusing on excerpts from Chapter One - Paradoxes of Gender.

McLeod, Saul. "Erikson's Psychosocial Stages of Development." Simply Psychology. January 01, 1970. Accessed July 12, 2017.
<http://www.simplypsychology.org/Erik-Erikson.html>.

Erik Erikson's stage development of identity is explained.

Mock, Janet. *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love, & So Much More*. New York, NY: Atria, 2014.

Janet explains her story as a transgender woman.

Nichols, Michael P. *The lost art of listening: how learning to listen can improve relationships*. New York: Guilford Press, 2009.

Listening is an important skill to better understand others and to have better - more meaningful relationships. Here's some advice on how to improve your skills.

Rosenberg, Tina. "American Girl." *National Geographic*, January 2017, 110-27.

This article depicts what it is like to be a girl in our society today. Interviews with girls are also included.

The Mask You Live in. United States: Virgil Films, 2015. DVD.

Wade, Lisa, and Myra Marx. Ferree. *Gender ideas, interactions, institutions*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2015.

This resource explains about gender from a sociological standpoint. It is used as a textbook at the university level.

Wade, Lisa, Douglas Hartmann, and Christopher Uggen. *Assigned: life with gender*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2016.

Short essays about gender are included in this book and will be used with students in the class.

Appendix

In this unit on gender, three of Delaware Technical Community College Wide Core Course (CCC) Performance Objectives will be addressed: (1) *assess the impact of socialization on both the individual and society*, (2) *analyze social stratification and the causes and consequences of classifying people by race, ethnicity, and gender*, and (3) *analyze personal reactions to sociological concepts, principles, and processes*. In doing so students will be able to explain how socialization and gender are related, illustrate the connection between social stratification and life chances according to gender, and assess their own understandings and reactions to their gender experiences. A variety of texts (both for reading and viewing) will be used in this unit, thus meeting the History/Social Studies Common Core Standard for Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: *Integration and Ideas/CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources*. They will closely read a number of texts – some assigned as a common reading among all class members while others will be by choice. Students will analyze and synthesize these to answer guiding questions while engaging in conversations that will also assist them in practicing their active listening skills as well as developing their personal reactions/responses to important topics – sociology subjects – such as gender. From the comprehension of these texts, students will develop an understanding of the social construction of gender.

Endnotes

1. Janet Mock, *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love, & and So Much More*, 22.
2. https://images.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search;_ylt=A0LEVvSXmZZ56MAvBEnnIIQ;_ylu=X3oDMTByMjB0aG5zBGNvbG8DYmYxBHBvcwMxBHZ0aWQDBHNIYwNzYw--?p=Chaz+Bono+Quote+Gender+Is+Not&fr=yhs-mozilla-002&hspart=mozilla&hsimp=yhs-002 (accessed July 11, 2017).
3. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/listen> (accessed July 12, 2017).
4. Michael Nichols, *The Lost Art of Listening*, 3.
5. *Ibid*,15.
6. <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/listening-skills.html> (accessed July 12, 2017).
7. Michael Nichols, *The Lost Art of Listening*, 50.
8. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/beyond-words/201111/effective-listening-aphorisms?collection=107271> (accessed July 12, 2017).
9. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/high-octane-women/201209/the-art-and-value-good-listening?collection=107271> (accessed July 12, 2017).
10. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2012/11/09/10-steps-to-effective-listening/#71b2b87f3891>
11. Jill Campbell, YNI Literature, Life-Writing, and Identity Handout May 5, 2017.
12. <https://simplypsychology.org/Erik-Erikson.html> (accessed July 12, 2017).
13. *Ibid*.
14. *Ibid*.
15. Sam Killermann, *A Guide to Gender: The Social Justice Advocate's Handbook*, 72.

16. Alex Gino, *George*, 90.
17. Sam Killermann, *A Guide to Gender: The Social Justice Advocate's Handbook*, 13.
18. <http://www.isna.org/faq/frequency> (accessed July 15, 2017)
19. Ibid.
20. Lisa Wade, Douglas Hartmann, & Christopher Uggen, *Assigned: Life With Gender*, 4.
21. https://www.pedsendo.org/education_training/healthcare_providers/consensus_statements/assets/DSDconsensusPediatrics2006.pdf (Accessed July 15, 2017).
22. Ferrante, *Sociology: A Global Perspective (9E)*, 200.
23. https://www.pedsendo.org/education_training/healthcare_providers/consensus_statements/assets/DSDconsensusPediatrics2006.pdf (accessed July 15, 2017).
24. <https://web.stanford.edu/dept/news/stanfordtoday/ed/9705/9705fea403.shtml> (accessed July 15, 2017).
25. Robin Marantz Henig, *Rethinking Gender*, 51.
26. <https://web.stanford.edu/dept/news/stanfordtoday/ed/9705/9705fea403.shtml> (accessed July 15, 2017).
27. Laura Kramer, *Sociology of Gender*, 2.
28. Ibid, 4.
29. Ibid, 5.
30. Ibid, 3.
31. Judith Lober, <https://wgs10016.commons.gc.cuny.edu/lobber-night-to-his-day-the-social-construction-of-gender/> (accessed July 12, 2017).
32. Joan Ferrante, *Sociology: A Global Perspective (9E)*, 50.
33. Janet Mock, *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love, & and So Much More*, 23.
34. Michael Kimmel, *Bros Before Hos* (accessed July 15, 2017).
35. Laura Kramer, *The Sociology of Gender*, 74.
36. Lisa Wade & Myra Marx Ferree, *Gender: Ideas, Interactions, Institutions*, 11.
37. Ibid, 66.
38. Joan Ferrante-Wallace, *Sociology: A Global Perspective (9E)*, 205.
39. Lisa Wade & Myra Marx Ferree, *Gender: Ideas, Interactions, Institutions*, 14.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Sam Killermann, *A Guide to Gender: The Social Justice Advocate's Handbook*, 72.
43. Sam Killermann, *A Guide to Gender: The Social Justice Advocate's Handbook*, 134.
44. Ibid.
45. Sam Killermann, *A Guide to Gender: The Social Justice Advocate's Handbook*, 135.
46. Ibid.
47. Sam Killermann, *A Guide to Gender: The Social Justice Advocate's Handbook*, 136.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
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55. <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/ccia-10-visual-literacy-strategies-todd-finley> (Accessed July 14, 2017).
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57. Ibid.
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59. <https://openspace.sfmoma.org/2015/10/object-labels-101/> (Accessed August 3, 2017).

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