Deconstructing Gender: Realizing the Possibilities

Leanna Madill

University of Victoria
lmadill@uvic.ca

Abstract

Education is calling for approaches to improve adolescent males' success in language and literacy related classes; however, the reasons for this lack of achievement are complex. There is no sustainable immediate solution. Through poetic representations created by the researcher, this research study reports on the voice of an adolescent male student who examined gender roles and expectations in a Grade 10 English class. The findings reveal his growing insight into the complexities that co–construct his role and expectations as a gendered being. These findings can inform educators towards helping students realize their potential as literacy students and guide their understanding of gender roles.

Deconstructing Gender: Realizing the Possibilities

With increasing standardized testing and the perceived need for higher education in order to attain quality careers, boys' underachievement in reading and writing has been a growing concern (Hammett & Sanford, 2008). However, boys are not a homogeneous group; their personal interests, their appearances, and how they practice masculinities differ (Connell, 1996; Davies, 2001; Frank, Kehler, Lovell, & Davison, 2003; Hammett & Sanford, 2008). Therefore, not *all* boys are struggling in language and literacy related courses. Very often boys are expected to be tough, aggressive, loud, and active. These demonstrations of hegemonic masculinity are examples of conforming to the social and cultural expectations of gender roles - expectations which are conveyed and confirmed through various sources, such as school, media, peers, family, religion, and sports. Consequently, many males feel pressure to behave within these confining expectations (Connell, 1996; Kimmel, 1993; Martino, 1995b).

Teachers are often unaware that they inhibit adolescent males' literacy practices by maintaining dominant male discourses (Peterson, 2002). Research has shown that teachers may expect boys to read, write and participate in literacy activities in stereotypical ways (Hansen, 2001; Roen & Johnson, 1992). However, being a male is more complex than the restrictive assumptions made by teachers and society in general. Enacting a gender differs according to the setting, the context, and the relationships functioning at any particular time (Frank, Kehler, Lovell, & Davison, 2003). There are also various social factors that create power inequities between people such as class, race, and sexuality (Gore, 1998; Jackson & Scott, 2001), so that not all males are afforded a position of power.

In this article, the findings from an investigation into the relation between gender and literacy are presented and discussed. In particular, the experiences of male students in schools and their engagement with critical literacy activities that encourage an examination of gender roles are explored. More specifically, this article shares the experience of one of the male students who deconstructed and reflected on his opinions, beliefs, and experiences as a male.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to explore how adolescent male students in a high school English class could examine gender roles and expectations through critical literacy activities. The main objectives for this inquiry were to examine whether adolescent male students could gain more insight into how they are constructed as gendered, and

to explore whether they could consider how to deconstruct those beliefs and values and reconstruct a more broadened concept of gender. More specifically, the guiding research questions for this study were: How do adolescent males' literacy experiences situate them as gendered beings? How can literacy experiences enable adolescent males to reconsider their gendered positions?

Theoretical Framework

Since gender roles are largely unexamined in schools (Hammett & Sanford, 2008), this research project attempted to create opportunities for adolescents to examine gender through critical literacy activities. A feminist poststructuralist perspective allowed an examination of the way language was utilized by the participants to situate themselves and others as gendered beings. Poststructuralists believe that language affects how a person knows (Mills, 1997), and thus that the key to understanding the power of language is to deconstruct how it is used within different communities of speakers. Since there are numerous discourses within various communities (e.g., school, sports, arts, families, peers), language should be conceptualized as belonging to a particular discourse and then interpreted for how it holds or surrenders power (Martino, 1995a).

It is important to clarify how the poststructural position adopted in this study can be applied to adolescent males, the hegemonic masculinities that have affected their understanding of self, and their role in society - including school. Some researchers might argue that this cannot be performed using a feminist perspective, and instead that this perspective should be used to work towards enhancing women's rights and equality. However, Reinharz (as cited in Dallimore, 2000) has suggested "that feminist research is guided by feminist theory which 'aims to create social change' and 'strives to represent human diversity'" (p. 158); bell hooks (2000) has argued that "Feminism is anti–sexism" (p. 12). Thus, taking Reinharz and hooks' perspectives into consideration, the nature of this study was to encourage males to reflect on the power structures used to create and maintain the inequities between males *and* females, and which thereby limit the opportunities afforded to both. It is argued that by having male students become aware of existing inequalities, they may be moved to question and challenge these inequities.

Literature Review

Since language constructs our beliefs, values, and ideas about gender, it is critical to question and disrupt those limitations language often imposes on our behaviours, beliefs, or perspectives. This idea is explored in this section with a review of pertinent literature for this study. The literature is thematically highlighted below in accordance with issues in gender and language, critical literacy activities, and methods of supporting literacy practices.

Gender and Language

According to Davies (2001) language is both helpful and constraining: language allows us to be a "social and personal being" (p. 280) but also limits our possible ways of being. Embedded within language are ideas of how males and females are identified differently from each other. Davies (2001) commented further on this relation between hegemony and masculinity:

> Hegemonic masculinity is an *idea* of masculinity (as well as something practiced by men) that we generally refer to when we go along with the assumed generalizations that make all men not only superior in terms of strength and power to women, but also *opposite* to women (p. 283).

Situated within language, then, are ideas about how a male should be aggressive, dominant, and active, and how a female should be passive, sexual, and nurturing. These concepts of gender are passed on by the mass public and institutions in society to future generations (Davies, 2001). Parents, peers, schools, media, and other agents teach children what gender role they are supposed to assume and identify with; however, children are capable of "constructing and maintaining the social world through the very act of recognizing it [the organization of the social world] and through learning its discursive practices" (Davies, 2001, p. 282). In other words, children learn to position themselves as male or female within the expectations of society, but they can also choose to challenge and transform these positions. Critical literacies enable students to observe and critique the ways they are situated, such

as how institutions view and treat them as gendered, how everyday language can provide or steal power based on gender, or how visuals can suggest and limit gender portrayals.

Critical Literacy Activities

Freire (1970) used the term critical literacy to describe how literacy can empower people to question inequities surrounding them and to work toward social justice. Freire found that once the disenfranchised had become literate, they were able to see how they were disempowered both by others and themselves. According to Moje, Young, Readence, and Moore (2000), the purpose of critical literacy is to discover the ideologies that are in texts and to examine the power inequalities and resource distribution in the world. Therefore critical literacy is a way to consider the particular meanings, as construed by readers of texts, which promote inequities among certain social groups based on race, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomics. Readers bring their past experiences, values, and beliefs to the reading, which affects their interpretation depending on their gender, race, age, and social class (Rosenblatt, 1986, 1991).

That said, it is challenging to examine how language, beliefs, and values limit us, because we usually do not want to disrupt the social order, especially if it means losing power. Gee (2003) explains that "Social groups do not usually pay much attention to their cultural models, unless one is threatened" (p. 144). Exploring hegemonic masculinities is a challenge for many students, since both males and females often try to achieve or maintain the power status that traditional masculinity offers them. Thus, the aim of this study is to find resolutions for this challenge.

Supporting Literacy Practices

In order to avoid being passive towards the conventional social rules and expectations students need to garner an awareness of how they are situated with regard to race, ethnicity, social class, and gender (Cherland, 1994; Freire, 1970; New London Group, 1996; Young & Brozo, 2001). Students need to know that they can be agents of change. With respect to gender, critical literacy activities provide "a framework in which adolescents can explore the language that constructs and maintains dominant practices of femininity and masculinity; it makes visible the choices adolescents have for constructing their own gendered identities" (Moje et al., 2000, p. 407). In this way, critical literacy activities encourage a review of language.

Furthermore, language is "our means of ordering, classifying, and manipulating the world" (Spender as cited in McClure, 1999, p. 78). Since language and thought are interdependent (Berthoff, 1987), language is powerfully at work in our minds; that is, our thoughts, ideas, and values operate at unconscious levels (Kamler, 1993). Language also transports the imbalances and ideologies manifested in gender inequities (McClure, 1992). The process is cyclical: the disparity is created by our views of the world, but also moulds the very perceptions that foster the inequality. Further, these imbalances are shaped by and shared through language in talking, writing, and representing (Britton, 1982).

Wilhelm and Smith (2004) exhibit how boys may reject literacy because they find it "schoolish" (p. 460). Gender deconstruction is further addressed in Martino's (1995a, 1995b) examination of how boys' understandings of masculinity are constructed as a one–dimensional way of being. Martino suggested that teaching males to deconstruct gender would enable them to break down the restrictions with which they regulate themselves. Boys could then discover how their identity is socially constructed in the way they act, think, value literacy, and conduct other aspects of their lives in specific ways. This deconstruction of gender may also enable them to understand why some males view literacy as "schoolish", while many girls do not. Adolescent males do not need to love school, nor accept the ways they are being taught as the best way of learning, but they should be given the opportunity to make informed decisions.

Methodology

This qualitative research study drew on ethnographic methodology. Over a period of four weeks, a Grade 10 enriched English class located within a large Western Canadian high school was observed during a unit on gender issues. The classroom teacher was a colleague, who agreed to teach the critical literacy activities developed for this

study. The students in the class were mostly Caucasian and came from varying economic backgrounds. Both classroom observations and student interviews were collected.

The class of students engaged in various critical literacy activities during the unit on gender issues that included role–playing gender stereotypes, writing in journals, and examining gender in advertisements, children's literature, and poems. During the observations of the classroom each day, notes were taken, and the researcher did not interact with any students (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The interviews and the classroom observations of these Grade 10 male students revealed how they explicitly and implicitly situated themselves as gendered beings. The males were observed as they interacted with the activities, their teacher, and their male and female peers. Their assignments that focused on gender, such as a journal entry entitled *If I woke up tomorrow as the opposite gender*, were collected.

The interview data focused specifically on one adolescent male student participant, Sam, who examined gender roles and expectations in the observed class. Artefacts of Sam's, such as journal entries, assignment instructions, and writing examples were collected over the course of the study, and he was interviewed three times each over the four–week period. The classroom teacher was also interviewed at the end of the four weeks. (See Appendix A for a list of sample questions). Following data collection, the data was analyzed and transformed into poetic representations.

While two of the eight male students in the class volunteered to be interviewed, within this article only Sam's experiences and thoughts are examined. Sam's experience was chosen because his transition over the four weeks was more clearly articulated. During the one–on–one interviews, Sam was asked about his literacy practices, how he viewed himself in comparison to others, and we discussed issues of masculinity and femininity at length. Sam was able to explain how he has situated himself as gendered. As well, analysis of his language revealed that he also implicitly situated himself as gendered. During this study, Sam was able to further question his gendered perspective of the world and his gendered role within it.

Although most males do not fit neatly into the category of hegemonic masculine male, Sam's appearance, interests, and views of masculinity were more reflective of a subculture than of the main culture. Sam was an intelligent, insightful, and critical thinker. His grades were mostly 'A's. At 15 years old, he was surprisingly philosophical and aware of larger social factors that affect gender issues. He had a quiet, happy demeanour and described himself as "nice". However, he was also aware that his opinions and thoughts about societal issues were not readily acceptable, and he would often choose not to share his ideas aloud in class. His interests included playing and learning various instruments and reading and discussing historical and political issues. Although Sam never once mentioned his appearance in any of our interviews, his appearance is reflective of where he is situated as gendered. His shoulder length hair was always down and framed his face. His hair was extended by his long, thick sideburns that almost met below his chin. He was often smiling. Sam's apparel usually consisted of jeans that were loose and worn, t–shirts that contained thought–provoking messages or that promoted a subculture, and running shoes that were skateboarder–style. His appearance was reflective of an alternative style, and not the hegemonic style of shorter hair and preppy or athletic attire.

As a quiet member of the class, Sam was well–liked by his fellow classmates. One female student chose to write about Sam as her hero and read it out to the class, highlighting all the positive characteristics about him. Sam explained that he chose to surround himself with peers who held similar values, such as being critical thinkers of important issues. His family also played an integral role in the formation of his values. Although Sam spoke about his mother and father only briefly, he mentioned them as crucial people in his life.

Data Analysis

In this section, the analysis process of this study is discussed, including discourse analysis and poetic representations. Discourse analysis enabled an examination of the language of the participants more closely, noting patterns, responses, questions and other important features. After themes and sub–themes emerged during this process, critical examples of the participants' language were chosen to reflect the themes in a more cohesive, personal portrayal: poetic representations.

Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a methodological framework and a way of carrying out research. CDA perceives that language is part of and constructive of social practices (Gee, 2003, 2004). For instance, "Discourse analysis is as much (or more) about what is happening among people out in the world (sociology) than it is what is happening in their minds (psychology)" (Gee, 2004, p. 38). Therefore, a person's understanding of self comes from the language that has been available and used to define who they are.

Discourse analysis was used to analyze the data collected during the research process. This type of analysis allowed the hierarchical relations between and within sentences, clauses, transactions, and exchanges (Mills, 1997) that occurred during the interviews to be assessed. More specific categories became evident through coding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). While coding, the transcripts were read and reread to discover participant's main messages about their experiences. Young (2004) explained that a discourse analytic process involves "moving back and forth between the micro analysis of the transcripts to the macro analysis of the social practices and cultural models" (p. 169). During multiple readings of the transcripts, notation was taken of the repetition of words or phrases, the ordering of the words, what was not said, and how opposing words such as *masculinity* and *femininity* were used or perceived. Many of these key words and phrases were incorporated into poetic representations, in an attempt to make the males' discourses more readily available to the reader (Sparkes, 2002).

Sam initially attempted to resist societal beliefs and ideas, but because he was missing alternative discourses to speak about gender, he relied heavily on dominant discourses. Once Sam was able to see the power that language held when left unquestioned, he was much more willing to challenge and critique it. According to van Dijk (1985), once we know more about "the discursive representation and management of such problems and conflicts, we have the design for the key that can disrupt, disclose, and challenge the mechanisms involved" (p. 7).

Poetic Representations

From a poststructuralist perspective, poetic representations are not the only true story to be written, but one of many (Richardson, 2003). Richardson (as cited in Sparkes, 2002) has argued that "Poetry is thus a practical and powerful method for analyzing social worlds" (p. 108), because poems allow the reader to see and feel the world of the participant more closely. In qualitative research, poetic representations are created to "make the worlds of others accessible to the reader" (Sparkes, 2002, p. 107). Sparkes also argued that the reader is able to search for further meaning between the lines and the structure of the poem; therefore, multiple readings can occur and no single truth needs to exist.

The process was to read over the transcripts to get a sense of themes that emerged from each interview. "Each interview transcript was examined separately and poems were created by choosing and arranging key phrases or multiple sentences that emphasized specific words or ideas". The key phrases and sentences were determined from understanding the transcript as a whole, seeing sub–themes, and choosing the most appropriate sections to represent what was said and meant. These sections included sentences that summed up the participants' responses, repeated lines or ideas, anecdotes, as well as literary devices that the participants used in their dialogue. The creation of the poems acknowledged the pauses, the silences, and the confusion, while the organization attempted to reveal the participants' meanings more succinctly. Approximately 11 poems were created from Sam's transcripts. He was given the final poems based on his own transcripts and responded favourably, expressing surprise and satisfaction at how his meaning and voice had been represented.

Representation: Multiple Masculinities

In Canada, being masculine implies particular behaviours, certain physical traits, and sometimes specific interests. "All societies have cultural accounts of gender, but not all have the concept 'masculinity'" (Connell, 1996, p. 67). In other words, the terms *male* and *female* may imply expectations, but *masculinity* or *femininity* are more particular connotations and definitions of being male or female; they are often more narrow and limiting than being male or female.

In each interview, Sam was asked to define the terms masculinity and femininity. His initial answers addressed the stereotypes of masculinity and tried to depart from the stereotypes without much success, because he did not seem to have the linguistic resources to be critical of those stereotypes. Over the four weeks of considering gender activities in class and reflecting on gender in our interviews, Sam's use of language and thinking evolved. The following poem reveals his transformation by the end of the study.

Possibilities

masculinity would be anything
          or everything
which encompasses what a man
          can become.
In whichever area he wants to be
so it could be
          completely indiscriminate
                    in all areas,
it could just be
          encompassing anything that the man is
                    and wants to be
instead of
just focusing on a strong, vigorous, manly kind of way

                              But that would make them
                                one in the same then,
                                            it wouldn't really,
                                            it would just refer to sex,
                                            like a man is this
                                            a woman is that
                                            and they both have equal spectrums
                                            act like
                                            be however they wanted.
                              I don't know,
                           if I were to define them
                        I wouldn't really define them.

                           It's just…you're people.

                           You happen to be
                           male or female
                        your roles are maybe different
                           they're equally the same
                              and you can do
                                 whatever
                                 you want.

                           Everybody
                        should feel free to act
                           or free to be
          but a lot of people wouldn't accept it.
                        But you should feel free
                                                to be yourself.
                           Feel free
                                                to live however you wish.
                           Feel free
                                                to have the job you want,
                                                buy the things you want,

                                    listen to what you want.
                            It might expose them to
                               new things,
                    they wouldn't have thought they could do before,
                     wouldn't have thought they should do before,
                           that they might really enjoy
                              and they might turn out
                         to produce a lot of positive results
                            and people are more happy
                          because they don't feel bound
                      by these kind of bonds of masculinity,
                              but they feel open to
                               being able to do
                             whatever they wish
                             however they wish.

                                    Interpretation

Discourse analysis allowed the subtle changes that occurred over the four weeks in the students' language to be identified. The poem, "Possibilities," revealed how Sam had begun playing with language – using his language and the language of others to create different perspectives. Once he had begun to gain some awareness of his gendered language, there was a shift in his tone. He became more confident. There were very few "I think"s or "I don't know"s and he began to brainstorm possibilities, which were evident in the repetition of "should" and "might." He also ended his descriptions with an optimistic and hopeful tone.

During the third interview, when asked to describe the words masculinity and femininity, Sam expressed the need to eliminate the terms – which was likely influenced by his developing discursive choices: "anything or everything which encompasses what a man can become." He understood that the term masculinity was too restrictive and that a man can actually be defined in multiple ways: "anything that the man is/ and wants to be." Sam's enthusiasm was apparent as he freely described and brainstormed the potential of masculinity. Sam also realized that by eliminating gender terms, men and women could be viewed as equal and could thus be valued for their (individual) strengths (Davies, 2001). Sam seemed empowered by the exploration of these gendered terms. The distinction he made when deconstructing these two terms and his insightful comments revealed impressive growth.

When we discussed the benefits of using the term *multiple masculinities*, Sam listed several potential benefits. Sam repeated the words "free", "want", and "wish", which signified the freedom and choice that males could experience. These terms indicated how Sam understood the restrictions of hegemonic masculinity – in that it binds a person to specific roles and expectations. In addition, Sam also realized that people, both males and females, are capable of reaching their full potential as humans (Davies, 2001) when they can conceive the pluralities of gender.

Kimmel (1993) wrote, "That men remain unaware of how the centrality of gender in their lives perpetuates the inequalities based on gender in our society, and keeps in place the power of men over women, and the power some men hold over other men" (p. 3). In order to disrupt males' lack of gender awareness, they need opportunities to see the numerous areas where inequalities develop and are maintained and to practice deconstructing those inequalities. Davies (1997) summarized the purpose of deconstructing masculinity:

> Critical literacy and critical social literacy are not aimed at replacing one dominant discourse with another morally ascendant discourse. They are not 'reformist' in the sense of re–forming the bodies and minds of the students in a different and specific mould dictated by those with authority. Rather, they are aimed at giving students some skill in catching language in the act of formation and in recognizing and assessing the effects of that formation. (p. 20)

Within the space that the interviews allowed, Sam began to recognize how established language exists, and he started to learn a different discourse in speaking about multiple masculinities (Davies, 1989). Kimmel (1993) recommended making gender visible so that hegemonic masculinity can be deconstructed and viewed as

problematic; then, masculinities can be reconstructed and understood "as a set of possible gendered identities, each different, and all equal" (p. 9). Sam took the time and space through interviews and class activities to discuss and work through the contradictions and confusion as he began to understand masculinity as it is perceived by others. During the process, he practiced a new discourse that allowed him to see the possibilities for masculinity.

Discussion

Sam's voice was representative of a unique gender perspective in that he was an adolescent male who was situated outside of the hegemonic masculine domain of school. His understandings of where he was situated, his awareness of gender issues, especially of masculinity, are important to listen to, because they give insight into how other students like Sam, who are often silenced in school, feel and think about gender issues. For instance:

> [B]ecoming critically literate, offers opportunities, for boys as well as for girls, to arrive at new insights into personal and social relations; to understand the construction of their own selves as contemporary social subjects; and to recognize the ways in which various social language practices have become naturalized and normalized within everyday talk and action. (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997, p. 3)

Examining Sam's language as his discourse changed throughout the four weeks revealed his increasing awareness of personal and social relations, the construction of his gendered self, and how language works to situate everyone as gendered. On the other hand, this change did not occur solely because of the critical literacy activities. Like many other males, Sam was already situated outside the hegemonic masculine domain. This position, along with the support he received from his family and social group, enabled him to have a more critical perspective on gender roles. The interviews created another space where he could practice his ideas and values further so that the messiness, uncertainties, and tensions could be aired and reorganized. These factors contributed to Sam's increased gender awareness.

Missing from the critical literacy activities were opportunities to learn vocabulary associated with gender issues. Students could be further empowered by having access to language that spotlights how gender issues oppress some while empowering others. The increased vocabulary would enable students to articulate alternatives to conventional ideologies and terms surrounding gender.

Educational Significance

It is critical for educators to engage in opportunities to learn about how gender messages have influenced their lives, empowering or disempowering them as individuals. Many educators have not had the opportunity to deconstruct texts, speech, or images to see how these things sustain our social beliefs, values, and expectations about gender roles. Teachers could be guided through these same critical literacy activities as an opportunity to practice critiquing gender issues. Once teachers were more comfortable recognizing gender construction, they could then begin to practice disrupting and challenging gender messages. This practice would help them begin to use new discourses themselves, and in turn would allow them to help their students locate and practice new gender discourses.

Educators also play an important role in helping silenced voices be heard and have an opportunity in classes to make visible issues that often remain hidden. For example, during the whole class discussions about gender issues, there were many students who never spoke out. Some of these silenced students could have the voices who are more willing to disrupt gender roles and expectations, but who are too uncomfortable to speak against the dominant classroom dialogue. Therefore, safer spaces need to be crafted for these silenced students to practice using their voices and to learn to articulate their ideas.

Possibilities for fostering the critical reflective process are through personal reflection, perhaps in written form, and sharing with others. When working with texts, teachers need to model and scaffold how to deconstruct language; using dialogical journal writing is one way to model critical reflections of language (Bertoff, 1987). Another way for students to practice deconstructing gender beliefs would be to have them engage in critical literacy activities with younger students. By reading stories to a younger student, the older student may begin to recognize how characters are portrayed in stories. Writing individually or co–writing stories that disrupt gender ideas, and reading them to

younger children or reading stories that portray gender differently, are all possible ideas to create a safe space for stimulating awareness about gender assumptions (Cleary & Whittemore, 1999).

In conclusion, in an email response, Sam's final thoughts about the process revealed his passion to continue observing and questioning the way gender situates individuals:

> It was quite an experience to go back and read and reflect upon my viewpoints and the statements I put forward during our interviews. Arranging the phrases in such a strong and artistically stimulating way really brought forward the ideas that I was trying to convey. It's much more enjoyable to read my statements in poetic form than in the unfiltered spoken state. After reading the poems, it brought me back to what I originally thought about the questions, and it allowed my mind to once again focus on the ideas and base new thoughts off of the old ones. I think that my favorite poems are "Tied, Bound, and Gagged" and "Possibilities". From reading the latter poem, I would definitely agree and heartily re–state that the definition of a man or woman, or masculinity or femininity, should strictly refer to biological characteristics and speak nothing of abilities or mental characteristics, as abilities and mental characteristics are, I believe, taught and nurtured and are not predisposed as so many people seem to think. Why must we wear the shackle of gender when we already have far more less–trivial issues to worry about which also have the possibility of condemnation to an unjust, unfulfilling, and unsuited life? When will people evaluate and address gender issues and their implications? Thank you very much for sending me the poems, they were very stimulating and enjoyable to read!

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Appendix A – Sample of Interview Questions

1. How do you define masculinity? Where do you fit into your definition of masculinity? How do you define femininity?
2. Looking back on the literacy activities you enjoy, would you classify any of those activities as masculine or feminine? (I show them a list of their activities as I had written them down).
3. What messages do you think the media (T.V., movies, videogames, magazines, newspaper, etc) are sending the viewers about masculinity? About femininity? About school?
4. Are there any ways that you know of that males and females are not treated equally? In what ways are they treated equally?
5. As a male, have you ever felt like you were expected to act or be a certain way? (By family, friends, school). If yes, describe the scenario, or feelings about that.
6. Do the characters (in the story or play) reflect any aspects of gender roles in our society today?
7. Do you see yourself as being silenced in any ways? When? How?
8. In your opinion, how are you perceived or understood as a male, by others at school?
9. Choose another activity from class related to gender issues:
   Stereotypes role play / Children's stories/ Poetry and authors

   How easy did you find participating in this activity?
   What were you thinking during this activity?
   Did you learn any thing new by doing that activity?
   What gender issues were raised for you or by you during this activity?
   What was the purpose of the activity?

10. How do you think people *should* understand masculinity and femininity to be verses how masculinity and femininity are understood by many people?

Author's Note