

The heterosexual matrix exposed!: Critically examining how gender influences research

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This paper examines how gender influenced data collection and analysis while carrying out a 6-month qualitative and feminist poststructuralist study of gender in an urban kindergarten classroom, located in the US. Through reflexivity, the author became conscious of the heterosexual matrix and how it influenced her research relationships while collecting data as a participant observer in an early childhood classroom. By critically re-examining her research practices, the author questions and problematizes the centrality of gender and how gender discourses regulate research relationships. The paper concludes by raising questions about the significance of the heterosexual matrix and how it influences research aimed at challenging gender norms.

Introduction

Feminist analysis of traditional research methods have analyzed and reconceptualized the relationship between feminist researchers and those they collaborate with in research (i.e., Nielson, 1990; Ribbens & Edwards, 1998; Stanley & Wise, 1993). Roman and Apple (1990) assert that feminist research must move beyond simply arguing the validity of women's subjectivities towards recognizing the transformative potential of critical inquiries. These scholars claim that recognizing power relationships between the researcher and researched is essential to comprehending how social understandings are constituted in and through the research process. Therefore, doing feminist research means not just taking a woman's perspective, but it also includes engaging in the research process in order to generate knowledge that enables females to become conscious of oppression and transform their lives. In other words, theory, praxis, and research methods become inseparable from each other within feminist research (Fay, 1987; Nielson, 1990).

Critical and feminist poststructuralist researchers often propose the need for creating research designs that are empowering to both the researcher and researched, as well as encouraging consciousness-raising and transformation (Lather, 1991). Although these inquiries often use reflexivity by building in varying degrees and forms of reciprocity into their designs, rarely are they critically theorized with gender in mind. That is, although poststructuralist theories have influenced the attention we give to researcher subjectivity in the research process (i.e., Davies, 2003; Walkerdine, 1990), the centrality of the researcher's gendered subjectivities and the complex workings of heterosexual discourses, particularly how they inform the research process are neither questioned nor thought of as problematic. Furthermore, this becomes even more problematic when situating research within early childhood settings because of the ways that the field of

early childhood has constructed young children as innocent, naïve, and unable to take an active part in gendered power relationships (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998).

Recently however, Wanda Pillow's paper, "Confessions, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research" (2003), discusses the difficulties of reflexivity, encouraging researchers to pay close attention to how they are enacting reflexivity and advocates for working within and against parameters of comfortable research and moving towards "reflexivities of discomfort." Pillow defines reflexivities of discomfort as "...a reflexivity that seeks to know while at the same time situates this knowing as tenuous" (p. 188). I found these new ideas about reflexivities of discomfort provocative and they inspired me to revisit some troubling moments I encountered as an active participant while carrying out a 6-month qualitative and feminist poststructuralist study of gender in an urban kindergarten classroom (Ochsner, 1999). This paper contributes to the discussion that Wanda Pillow began as it examines how I used reflexivity in critical ways. In doing so, the complexities of the social construction of gender became apparent, raising new questions about how the heterosexual matrix influenced the research process.

Disclosing these uncomfortable reflexive practices provide opportunities to recognize how gendered power relationships exists between researchers and those they research with and how the heterosexual matrix informs the research process. Then, it becomes possible to question what this means for my role as a feminist researcher committed to enacting inquiries aimed at challenging gender norms. Most importantly, these uncomfortable reflexive practices make it possible for practices of truth, such as heteronormativity, to be interrupted while researching as an active participant in early childhood classrooms. An awareness of uncomfortable reflexive practices is necessary for not just showing the complexities of gendered power relationships and how gender discourses informs research relationships and methods, but it is also a vital methodological tool for envisioning and carrying out feminist poststructuralist research aimed at social action.

This paper begins with a brief overview of the 6-month qualitative and feminist poststructuralist study of gender I conducted in an urban kindergarten classroom. Although three case studies were constructed, this paper focuses on the research relationship that was developed with one of the research participants, a five-year-old boy named Alan. The classroom examples that I have chosen capture the gendered and tenuous research relationship I had with Alan. I believe that these research moments might be considered examples of what Wanda Pillow defines as "reflexivities of discomfort" (Pillow, 2003). The paper will then conclude with suggestions of how reflexivities of discomfort might allow for practices of truth, such as heteronormativity, to be interrupted in future classroom based projects.

The study

By investigating the phenomenon of compulsory heterosexuality and analyzing gender from a feminist poststructuralist perspective, this study explored how young children socially constructed meanings of gender from the gender discourses available to them.

Feminist poststructuralism was used to examine how gender discourses operated in an urban kindergarten classroom and how children used their understandings of gender norms to regulate the gendered social order in their classroom. To examine children performing gender, a qualitative and case study design was employed over 6-months. Qualitative procedures of taking field notes, audiotaping and videotaping children's talk and actions in the classroom, and the collection of student artifacts were used to gain in-depth descriptive information about how children socially constructed *themselves* as gendered beings through the heterosexual matrix.

For this study, gender was viewed as a social construction, challenging the Western cultural assumption that there is a direct causal and necessary connection between biological sex and the gender role one takes up (Connell, 1995; Nicholson, 1994; Paechter, 1998). Instead, gender was seen as a collective, dynamic, and political phenomenon, an aspect of both social relations and social life (Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Connell, 1994). This investigation also drew from the work of queer theorists and their efforts to understand and challenge existing power relations between males and females, by exploring heterosexuality as a form of sexism and social regulation (Connell, 1987; Warner, 1993). This perspective believes that every culture has hegemonic or morally dominant forms of genders and sexualities that are considered "normal" or proper for women and men (Lorber, 1994). Hegemonic masculinity, as defined by Connell (1987, 1996) is the cultural expression of the dominant form of masculinity that governs and subordinates other patterns of masculinity and femininity. The most important feature of hegemonic masculinity is heterosexuality, which shapes the structural order of gender relations (Connell, 1987).

According to Connell's (1987) understandings of femininity and masculinity, there is no femininity in our present society that is hegemonic. Instead, there is a type of femininity called emphasized femininity, which is defined around the compliance of subordination and accommodating the interests and desires of men. Like hegemonic masculinity, emphasized femininity is a very public construction. "Hegemonic" and "emphasized" signify positions of cultural authority, not total dominance; allowing other forms of femininities and masculinities to persist (Connell, 1996). Both hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity maintain practices that institutionalize men's dominance over women, therefore sustaining the current gendered social order.

These dominant forms of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity are influenced by heterosexual discourses, which are defined as stereotypical gendered norms and expectations considered appropriately male and female, including society's expectations of males and females to fall in love and sexually desire a member of the opposite sex. From this perspective, gender is seen as a kind of becoming or activity, performed normatively, as we know it, making it impossible to understand gender except through what Butler (1990) calls the "heterosexual matrix", a term used to "...designate that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized" (p.151) and how they appear normal. The concept of gender becomes meaningless in the absence of heterosexuality as an institution, which is compulsory and enforced both through rewards for appropriate gendered and heterosexual behaviors and

through punishments from deviations from the conventional or “normal” ways of being either a girl or a boy. This understanding of gender assumes that heterosexuality functions to produce regulatory notions of masculinity and femininity, implying that heterosexism, prejudice by heterosexuals against homosexuals, is another form of sexism that is often overlooked. As a form of sexism, heterosexuality is neither natural nor freely chosen, but rather a political institution that disempowers women and other marginalized populations (Rich, 1980). These critiques of heterosexism are not attacks on heterosexual practices, but rather the discourses of heterosexuality and how they have become embedded into the foundations of our thoughts; subsequently manifesting and maintaining power over females and others (Butler, 1990; Rich, 1980; Sedgwick, 1990).

By understanding the social construction of gender and children's desires to maintain stereotypical gender differences through the heterosexual matrix this study explored how discourses of heterosexuality operated in a kindergarten classroom and how such practices regulated the gendered social order. Additionally, three case studies were created to illustrate how one boy and two girls actively constructed themselves as gendered beings and how they maintained and resisted gender norms and the heterosexual matrix.

Since the focus of this study remained on the constructed rather than found worlds of knowledge, the time I spent as a participant observer included developing collaborative relationships with the teacher and children in which we discovered how the complex practices and discourses of heterosexuality operated in their classroom. According to Lather (1991), reciprocity is one way for creating a research design that is empowering to both the researcher and researched, as well as encouraging consciousness-raising and transformation. Reciprocity occurred in varying degrees and forms within this study. Although I was the main author and creator of this inquiry, an overarching goal was my attempt to restructure the often oppressive and inequitable relationships that exist between the researcher and the researched in many research projects (Alldred, 1998; Burman, 1992; Lather, 1991). Instead of a unidirectional process where the researcher goes into the classroom extracting information and data from the research subjects, the methods of this study aimed to encourage a more dialogical process or relationship to occur between those I was researching with and myself. As a result, meanings about gender were negotiated through question posing, data collection, and analysis (Gitlin & Russell, 1994; Lather, 1991; Wilkinson, 1986).

Reciprocity with the researched was built into the design in three ways (for a more thorough discussion, see Ochsner, 2001). First, informal, reflective teacher interviews included the teacher in helping decide such issues as the best data collection methods to be used, the identification of certain children to observe and interview, and identifying current classroom events worth investigating further. Second, reflective interviews with selected children were scheduled to occur monthly as well as having a small group of students analyze episodes of video data. A final way that reciprocity was included in the design of the study occurred as data was shared with the entire class, during everyday classroom routines such as morning circle or show-and-tell.

Although a self-reflexive research plan was built into the design of this study and efforts were made at building collaborative and dialogic relationships with participants, I did not initially realize how the heterosexual matrix was regulating my relationships with children, subsequently influencing the research process. I did however become aware of how my gendered subjectivity as a female researcher was constituted through my interactions with Alan, one of the male kindergarten children.

Alan: Gender expert

When this study began, Alan was five-years-old. He is an Anglo-American boy who was genuinely liked by the female adults in the classroom, silently revered by the boys, and more often than not disregarded by the girls. He is part of a stable and caring middle-class family, which includes his mother, father, and older brother Franklin. Alan's mother and father work full-time outside of the home, while their baby sitter, Rose, cares for both boys. Alan has dark brown eyes and hair, and wears his hair in a short clean style. He most often wears tennis shoes, jeans, T-shirts, and a baseball cap to school. He did however, once come to school dressed in a formal navy blue sports coat over his T-shirt. I remember this outfit because of the way in which he proudly displayed his jacket and himself. While sitting at a table writing field notes, I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned around to find Alan standing with both of his arms stretched out, with a big grin, saying, "What do you think?" I was a bit confused, so I asked, "Think about what?" Alan dramatically steps back, points to his jacket, and with a smile replies, "...this...look...I wanted to be dressed up."

Alan enjoys school and his favorite part of the day is, "...going to the park and chasing girls." During free play, a part of the curriculum where children have the opportunity to work and play in a variety of learning centers of their choice, he does not seem to have one favorite learning center. Instead of choosing a center based on the activity found there, Alan's decisions are influenced by who is working at each learning center. When called on to choose a learning center, Alan sits up on his knees and looks around the classroom before carefully deciding where he is going to play. More often than not, Alan is found sitting next to a female adult, rather than one of his classmates, during free play.

Alan values the explicit and appreciates visible work. For Alan it is important that his work and ideas are publicly acknowledged. The importance Alan places on how he is perceived by others coincides with Davies' (1994) descriptions of the privileged male speaker as not only having a certainty of who they are but also placing a high value of attaching work and ideas to their individual selves. The significance for Alan of being recognized for having an idea first is observed one afternoon during writing workshop.

The class is seated on the rug and they are brainstorming ideas to include in good-bye cards they will be making for Hazel, a preservice teacher who will be completing her field placement. The classroom teacher, Isabel is sitting in front of the group in her blue chair, while Loren (another preservice teacher) and I are seated in chairs behind the children.

Isabel: Does anyone have any ideas about what you could write on Hazel's good-bye card?

Alan: I'll miss you.

James: I love you.

Liza: I wish you could stay.

Breanna: I wish you could stay more often.

Sue: I wish you could stay so you could do more murals.

Cheng: I like you.

Keith: I like you and I like that you play with me.

Loren: We will miss you.

Alan: (Turns around looking at Loren, pointing to himself.) Hey, that's what **I** said.

Not only does this episode show Alan as a caring and thoughtful child, who has developed a relationship with a female preservice teacher, but it also illuminates the importance Alan places on being recognized for *his* idea. Instead of simply ignoring Loren's contribution or treating it like a coincidence, Alan physically turns around in a somewhat defensive manner and emphasizes publicly that what Loren said was really *his* idea and that he came up with it first.

The importance of working independently, rather than cooperatively is another characteristic often associated with the public sphere and white, middle-class males (Davies, 1994; Kimmel, 1990). Alan value independence and wants to be recognized for the work that he produces individually. For example, while waiting for children to become engaged in classroom activities, I noticed Ian and Alan working at the paper work table. Remembering that they have been co-creating a newspaper earlier in the week, I walk over to investigate. Without moving from his spot on the floor, Alan looks up from the table explaining, "Ian is writing and **I'm** (pointing to himself) doing all of the work!" A few minutes later, Alan finds me working with Charmaine. He interrupts us, while pulling on my arm, stating, "Hey, look at this Mindy (showing me the newspaper). **I** did all of the work. It's good."

In his everyday talk, Alan is often overheard discussing gender stereotypes and gender differences with his friends. Alan understands the discourses of gender norms and hegemonic masculinity well and throughout the school day he works hard at maintaining and reinforcing them. For Alan, there are certain and distinct ways to be *either* a girl *or* a boy, without much room for the blurring of these two genders. It is not uncommon to hear Alan loudly and confidently state to a group of friends that boys neither play with Barbie dolls, nor like the color pink. It simply is not a possibility. While playing Lego with a small group of friends, he explains with certainty, "Look..... boys are supposed to do boy things and girls, well, they do all those girly things. That is how it is! Boys play football, girls are cheerleaders....AND we aren't going to mess with it. That is final!" Through his talk and actions, Alan understood femininity and masculinity as part of a dichotomy, in which masculinity and femininity are based on binaries. His understandings of these binaries are seen in the way he talks about boys only liking the color blue and girls only liking pink, or how boys like to jump and get sweaty and girls

like to sit and look pretty. By accepting gender in terms of these dualities, not only does Alan reinforce the differences between boys and girls, but he also places a higher value on particular ways of being masculine. Alan's understandings of masculinity are influenced and regulated by the heterosexual matrix.

Alan's knowledge of hegemonic masculinity situates him as an expert with the boys in the classroom and they often turn to him for advice regarding gender issues. For example, Cheng was observed consulting Alan about whether a certain colored piece of construction paper was a girl or boy color before deciding whether or not to use it. Or, as children were opening their Valentine's Day cards, Ian turns to show Alan one of his cards while asking, "Hey, is this a girl or a boy Valentine?" In these instances he is positioned as knowledgeable and powerful amongst the boys in his class.

Alan has little interest in the feminine world. Talking about dolls, the color pink, or Barbie evokes a cringe, rolling of the eyes, and groans from Alan. While waiting for workshare to begin, the classroom teacher, Isabel, carefully places children's drawings and constructions completed at paper-work table during center time in the middle of the rug. Kelly's complex three-dimensional house created out of construction paper and Theresa's drawings of the mermaid Ariel were chosen for workshare. As Theresa begins explaining her drawing, Alan groans loudly, interrupting her as he complains, "//She's talking about the little mermaid **again**." While saying this, Alan rolls his eyes and turns his body away from Theresa, indicating that he is neither interested nor values the work that Theresa has done during center time. Emphasizing his disinterest, he continues to turn his body farther and farther away from Theresa as she talks about her drawing. Another time when Isabel discusses with the entire class about the possibility of boys not being able to go to the table toy center to play with Lego, because a group of girls had made a week-long reservation to play there, Alan slowly shakes his head back and forth every time Isabel mentions Lego work done by the girls. Finally, when Isabel describes the girls' Lego work as being "hot stuff," Alan closes his eyes, placing his hands on his head, while loudly moaning, "Ohhhh no!"

By understanding gender through binaries, rigid stereotypes, norms, and ideals, Alan often perceived girls, women, and femininity in negative ways, positioning them in relation to hegemonic masculinity. Rarely was Alan seen playing alone or with a female classmate. Instead, he was most often found laughing and talking with an adult. He seemed to be popular with the female adults in the school, such as the preservice teachers, teaching assistants, or the cafeteria workers. I often wondered why these women seemed to adore Alan. Was it his middle-class values, white skin, good looks, competence? Or was it his ability to initiate and maintain lively conversations with most adults? I soon discovered, that I too enjoyed talking with Alan and I always looked forward to seeing him on my visits to the classroom.

Becoming troubled

Realizing that I was involved in a gendered research relationship with Alan was troubling. This discovery caused me to question my role as a feminist researcher. The following examples attempt to show how Alan and I were a part of a gendered power

relationship and how we were positioned relationally within and through the heterosexual matrix.

Part of my study included locating the heterosexual matrix in the classroom, including how children embodied hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. While this was happening, I was also becoming aware of and troubled with my gendered role within the heterosexual matrix. Reflecting in my daily research journal, I wrote:

Something quite disturbing is happening while I'm "in the act" of researching in the classroom. Actually, it's my relationship with Alan that doesn't feel right. Why am I always so interested in his ideas, thoughts, and comments? What about the others in the classroom? It feels as though my whole research project is about Alan. Why is he the first student I look for when entering the classroom? Why do I tend to always notice and document his ideas first? Why do I find some students dull and boring, but never Alan? What might this mean? What have I done? What am I a part of? If I consider Alan to be an example of hegemonic masculinity and if I'm always tempted to document his talk and actions rather than the others.....Who gets left out, pushed to the margins.....Oh my god, I'm part of it too! The heterosexual matrix is regulating who I am, what I document, and most likely my analysis! Hegemonic masculinity is seducing me! Is it controlling the study? This is disturbing.....Can it [the heterosexual matrix] ever be disrupted?

This is the moment that I realized, *for myself*, the implications of the heterosexual matrix. My awareness of the heterosexual matrix and my role within it was troubling and raised new questions about data collection methods and the role of gender discourses in the research process. After locating myself within the heterosexual matrix, I attempted to change the ways in which I collected data. For example, before entering the classroom I reminded myself to focus on other children's talk and actions, not Alan and what he was doing or saying. I wrote myself a note, in large block letters on the cover of my field notebook that read, "THIS STUDY IS NOT ABOUT ALAN!" In spite of these efforts, I found that after approximately 30 minutes of being in the classroom, most of the children had disappeared from my sight. That is, I caught myself wondering what Alan was doing in the classroom. I also became conscious of how my body was physically turned towards Alan's play and I was actively listening for his voice! Although I was becoming aware of the possibility that this was connected to the heterosexual matrix, I was not prepared for the powerful ways in which it was also subverting the aims of the research project.

Seductions and temptations

One uncomfortable research moment that was significant occurred while Alan and I were analyzing data together. In this classroom, one student has the job of being the "teacher of the day." Responsibilities for this job include choosing stories and poems to be read during large group time, doing the calendar, and choosing partners when the entire class is required to line up and leave the room. Field notes indicate that as "teacher of the day" Alan never paired boys together with girls. In order to understand Alan's partner pairing

decisions, I shared my field notes with him regarding his partner choices. Our interview took place in the hall during free play and was audiotaped and transcribed.

- Mindy: Do you remember when you were the teacher of the day and Isabel asked you to sit in the chair and said, "I want you to pick partners." Do you remember that? I also wrote down who you chose and then I went home and typed it up on my computer.
- Alan: Did you make a copy for me?
- Mindy: Yes, I made a copy for you (hand him a copy of the list of partners). Plus I will make a copy of the tape today.
- Alan: OK, so **I'm** the researcher (pointing to himself) and **I** (pointing to himself again) tell **you** (points to me) everything **I** (pointing to himself) know.
- Mindy: Yes. So these are the pairs that you chose. (We go over the list together and he agrees that the partners are correct.)
- .
- .
- .
- Mindy: When you decided to have Majindra go with Keith, was it something that you thought he wanted to do, or did you think that he wouldn't want to be with Keith?
- Alan: It was **my** idea (pointing to himself). I didn't want it//it was something I want to do because **I** want to make this class, this whole class better.
- Mindy: *That's such a good idea Alan! Wow. You are such a good thinker.*(Tone of voice changes and the pitch gets higher.)
- Alan: Because if it's wrong you know what's going to happen? (He stands up). People are going to be so:00:00 strong (begins kicking the wall with his foot and making grunting noises)!
- Mindy: OK sit down Alan. ***So:000:000***, (tone of voice changes, it becomes softer) * if you're strong though are you bad? *
- Alan: No, I'm not strong so well. I'm just strong.
- Mindy: Who is the strongest in the class?
- Alan: Oh, I'll tell you (sits down next to me on the floor) Raoul, Keith, James.
- Mindy: Those are the three strongest boys?
- Alan: Yea.
- Mindy: Who are the three strongest girls?
- Alan: Nobody. (Looking directly at me. His voice and facial expression indicates that I have asked a ridiculous question.)
- Mindy: None of the girls are strong?
- Alan: (Turns away from me, shrugging his shoulders).
- Mindy: I saw some of those girls climbing that rope (in P.E.), they looked pretty strong.
- Alan: It was boys.
- Mindy: But I also saw Breanna, Katy, and Penny climb the rope//

Alan: //because they're { }.

Mindy: That doesn't mean that they're strong?

Alan: Na huh (shakes head). If they're strong they will have big, big, big muscles (makes a muscle with his arm and tenses his entire body).

Mindy: And they shouldn't have big muscles?

Alan: No, they **don't**. I don't see any. (Stands up, turns away, and begins kicking the wall.)

Mindy: Have a seat, ***please***. Now this is the other question I have. ***When I look at the pairs that you made, you have girls with girls and boys with boys.* * Did you do that on purpose? *(Tone of voice changes.)**

Alan: Um, let me see (takes the list of names out of my hand and we go over the partner pairs together).

Mindy: No boys and girls together.

Alan: Because, some I wanted to separate.

Mindy: Oh, who did you want to separate?

Alan: Here, let me show you (grabs the list out of my hands). Mary and Liza, because Mary was burning.

Mindy: Burning? What does that mean?

Alan: She was burning up. She was burning up mad.

Mindy: Why was she mad?

Alan: Maybe, no maybe. What is that? (Alan points to my handwriting and the conversation turns to my note taking. I get the feeling that Alan is tired of this conversation, so it is ended.)

This interview shows how Alan and I play the heterosexual game. We both take part in heterosexual performances while sitting in the hall discussing data. These performances are creating and reinforcing power relationships, which shift throughout the transcript. Alan and I both gain and give up power through our knowledge and use of heterosexual discourses. For example, Alan immediately gains power as he asks if I made a copy of my fieldnotes for him. Although I attempted to create collaborative research relationships with a range of children in the classroom, I am not certain that they all would have taken me up on it like Alan did. With authority and confidence, Alan states that he is going to tell me everything that he knows. As the discussion about his partner pairing decisions continues, it is important for Alan that I understand that these are *his* ideas. Soon, the power relationship between us changes. As illustrated throughout the transcription, the shaded areas show when I use my tone of voice to embody emphasized femininity. Instead of using a “no-nonsense” teacher voice to keep Alan in the game, I choose a more seductive tone of voice to keep him interested. Not only does my tone of voice get softer, but it also becomes high-pitched. It is as if I am using my voice to seduce Alan into being a “good” research participant. I can't help but wonder what kind of data I have produced through using this tone of voice? How did emphasized femininity and hegemonic masculinity subvert data collection?

Alan's understandings about who is physically strong in his class show his determination to keep boys' and girls' different. Even though Alan and I both watched several girls in his class climb the rope during P.E., he is unable to consider any of the girls as strong. He aggressively resists these gender contradictions by dismissing my point of view when he interrupts me and is abrupt with his actions as he grabs paper out of my hand. He also attempts to redirect the conversation to a topic that he wants to discuss. Why does Alan get so angry and upset when I contradict his understandings of what the girls in his class can do? When he gets up from the floor and begins kicking the wall, why does he choose to perform hegemonic masculinity? Is Alan trying to tempt me by expressing his "boyness" and enacting power?

Implications for research

These examples show that I did not exist in a simple collaborative research relationship with Alan, but rather a gendered one regulated by the heterosexual matrix. Subsequently, my research relationship can be considered as a form of heteronormativity. While carrying out this project, I became troubled with the implications this had for the research process. I knew that I was drawn to and interested in Alan and his talk and actions, but not sure as to why. Being seduced and tempted by hegemonic masculinity was not something I imagined when constructing and carrying out this study. Although it was initially hard to imagine how the heterosexual matrix could be regulating my research relationship with participants, these uncomfortable moments that I experienced while researching raise new questions about gender and its role in the research process.

The most noticeable way that gender influenced this study is through data collection. An informal quantitative analysis revealed that significantly more data was collected about Alan, than anyone else in the classroom. Not only was more data collected about Alan, but virtually none was collected about the minority girls. Gender discourses influenced what I considered to be important and exciting data in the classroom. Although I recognized this dilemma and attempted to alter my data collection strategies, the research process continues to be controlled by the heterosexual matrix as it reinforced gendered power relationships between Alan and myself.

These discoveries, which I believe are a result of enacting reflexivities of discomfort, have forced me to rethink how I will create and enact future classroom based studies aimed at challenging gender norms. Most studies are not intentionally designed to document the gendered and tenuous research relationships between the researcher and participants from a feminist poststructuralist perspective, especially with young children. Deliberately setting out to document these gendered moments is one way towards uncovering the complicated ways that gender is regulating the research process. Exposing the heterosexual matrix and the various ways that it maintains gender norms is vital if we intend to challenge gender discourses. However, as my experiences reveal, this is not an easy task. Uncomfortable reflexivity will take vigilance and must be built into our research designs.

Secondly, not only should uncomfortable reflexivity be built into future designs, but efforts to document these moments intentionally are necessary for allowing these

understandings to inform the direction of collaborative and field based research. This might mean bringing up these uncomfortable moments with research participants, and raising new questions with them about our relationships. For example, I could have shown the class how much data I had collected in the classroom, sharing with them that I had a significant amount on the boys, but hardly anything about the girls. It would have been interesting to ask the class for their opinions regarding this phenomenon. Or, when Alan and I were in the hallway, analyzing video data, I could have told him that I did not like the way he was kicking the wall and that I thought he might be doing this because I was a girl. Researchers need to invent and create a range of strategies for disrupting the heterosexual matrix while conducting research aimed at promoting gender equity.

Finally, the continued invisibility of gender discourses in research processes greatly limits feminist research aimed at restructuring the current gendered social order. Enacting reflexivities of discomfort helps expose the heterosexual matrix, highlighting how gender discourses play a critical role in shaping research and encourages new discussions about the role of reflexivity and reciprocity in feminist qualitative research.

Hopefully I will be more prepared for these uncomfortable research relationships and moments, understanding the impact that gendered research relationships have for the social construction of gender. This information enables me to locate these moments, making them visible for the classroom community, and taking action against them. Action might come in the form of bringing these ideas to the large group, highlighting the gender discourse with children, getting them to grapple with these hard issues, providing them time to challenge, resist, and support the gendered research relationship. Space might be made in the research process to have critical conversations about gender and power with young children, allowing children like Alan opportunities to discuss why they like to have power, how it makes them feel, and also how it might make others feel. Subsequently, the gendered power relationships between the researcher and participants would be revealed, rather than operating subversively.

Symbols Used in the Presentation of Transcripts

Symbol	Meaning
Bold	Words heavily emphasized by the speaker were written in bold
?,!	Exclamation points and question marks were used when they helped convey the question asked in an utterance or an exclamatory utterance
/	Indicates an interruption
...	Indicates a pause with the number of dots indicating the length of the pause
Do::n't	Multiple colons indicates a more prolonged sound
quiet	Talk that has a noticeably lower or higher volume than the surrounding talk
{ }	Indicates indecipherable comments
()	Enclosed statements in parentheses describe the context of an utterance and any other information recorded in the field notes
.	Indicates the deletion of data in a transcript
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