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Outside the Gender Binary: A Workshop on Gender Identity and Being an Ally

Jelea Kai Glover

A Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies

Outside the Gender Binary: A Workshop on Gender Identity and Being an Ally

The gender binary, or the idea of gender only having two expressions that are associated with people's biological sex, is the norm of expression in the United States (Dragowski, 2014). It is not realistic to how people express themselves on a regular basis; it ignores the diversity of gender identities such as transgender, intersex, and genderqueer individuals. My capstone project focuses on college students because this is a time where they ponder their values and identities without the heavy judgment of parents' or guardians' expectations. My capstone project was a one-day workshop teaching different gender identity terms, differentiating the terms gender from biological sex and provoking students to personally reflect on their own gender identities. The goal was to encourage psychological androgyny, or possessing the traits of both masculine and feminine, and acceptance of genderqueer identities as well as having the tools to be an ally to these diverse gender identities.

Needs Statement

Gender is "a social construct composed of behavioral and characteristics expected of people based on their biological sex" (Dragowski, 2014). *Sex*, or *biological sex*, is the "anatomical and reproductive structures comprised of chromosomal karyotype, hormones, gonads external genitalia and pubertal secondary sex differentiation" (Dragowski, 2014). The *gender binary*, or the idea of gender only having two expressions that are associated with people's biological sex, is the norm of expression in the United States (Dragowski, 2014). This norm ignores the diversity of gender identities such as transgender and genderqueer individuals, as well as people who are intersex. *Intersex* is an umbrella term for various conditions that involve chromosomes, genitalia, internal sex organs, and gonads not following the expected pattern of male or female (Glossary of LGBT Terms for Health Care Teams, 2018). Diverse

gender identity definitions are ever expanding. Definitions for terms such as *transgender-* "a person whose gender identity and assigned sex at birth do not correspond" (Glossary of LGBT Terms for Health Care Teams, 2018)- as well as *gender non-conforming* or *genderqueer-* "gender expression that differs from a given society's norms for males and females" or does not fall in the gender binary (Glossary of LGBT Terms for Health Care Teams, 2018)- encompass a large range of gender identities that do not follow the gender binary. It is important to be aware of these terms because students could be questioning their own gender identity.

People convey their gender identity through *gender expression;* this is performed through clothing, mannerisms, or even "compliance with traditional gender roles," (Dragowski, 2014). Compliance to traditional gender roles can also be called "doing gender," which describes how people conform to society's gendered traits expectations (Morgan & Davis-Delano, 2016). People who may be genderqueer can struggle with their gender expression because of the binary set up of what is considered masculine and feminine.

The social construction of masculinity is associated with characteristics of dominance. In the United States we are influenced by a patriarchal society, meaning it is mainly male dominated. This also encourages maleness to have more independent attributes and being more action-based. Masculine traits are valued more than feminine traits within America's society, so masculine traits in men and women are beneficial for psychosocial adjustment (DiDonato & Berenbaum, 2011). This is because masculine traits, like independence and assertiveness, are positively related to success in society (DiDonato & Berenbaum, 2011).

However, there are negatives to proving one's maleness in terms of masculinity. High levels of masculinity are also associated with substance abuse and reckless behavior (Wong, Wang, Miller, & Ho, 2017). There is also the expectation to have control over one's emotions.

This does not only include one's own emotions; there has been a study showing that when a person has more masculine identifying traits there is a higher likelihood of being emotionally manipulative (Grieve, March, & Doom, 2019). It did not matter if the person's biological sex was a male or female, it was the gendered traits that determined it.

The social construction of femininity is associated with submission or passivity, because masculinity is seen to be the superior and more desirable form of expression out of the two (Morgan & Davis-Delano, 2016). Traits described as feminine are agreeableness, selflessness, warmth and understanding (Bem, 1974; Pickens & Braun, 2018). There are limited studies on femininity alone without the involvement of masculinity. This is due to not only the patriarchy but heteronormativity ruling American society. Heteronormativity is the belief that heterosexuality is the superior relationship (Glossary of LGBT Terms for Health Care Teams, 2018); this includes enforcing the gender binary of masculine means male, and feminine means female. Femininity is subordinate to masculinity and although women have more acceptability of expressing masculine traits, there is a line where being too masculine is seen as undesirable. Women could face hostility for being too "un-feminine" (Pickens & Braun, 2018). Similarly, if men are not masculine enough, they get shamed into being called feminine and their "straightness" being questioned (Morgan & Davis-Delano, 2016).

Theses social expectations limit the expression people can convey. It is impractical and unhealthy, so androgyny should be taught and encouraged. Androgyny is the "integration of masculine and feminine characteristics" (Kuther, 2018). It is embracing both the "communal" and "agentic" traits, which Bem (1974) says is more adaptable in situations than being strictly feminine or masculine. This is called Psychological Androgyny, which is when one perceives themselves to "possess characteristics of both genders" (Bem, 1974; Pauletto, Menon, Cooper,

Aults, & Perry, 2017). More androgynous expression tends to show more often in older adults.

This is because everyday situations, such as a woman dealing with the death of a spouse or a

man mentoring younger individuals, both require a wider repertoire of skills to successfully

handle those situations (Kuther, 2018). Waterman and Whitbourne's (1982) study showed that

psychological androgyny has more advantages in flexible functioning. Masculine traits being

expressed in either gender was also beneficial but not as much as androgyny; there was a higher

mean score in androgynous individuals with masculine individuals following in second place

(Waterman & Whitbourne, 1982).

Understanding the complexities of gender helps college students explore different

worldviews. The gender, especially the gender binary, is a worldview because it is socially

constructed. Seeing the variance within gender is a reflective process and involves learning new

information to expand upon worldviews that were previously taught by family. Changing world

views is a process in college students' cognitive development (Arnett, 2000). Similarly, it takes

this practice of self-reflection and changing worldviews to become an ally. Especially,

individuals who are cisgender, or people whose gender identity matches with their biological

sex, they are the dominant group in comparison to genderqueer, transgender intersex individuals.

Cisgender people's awareness of their privileged identity is justice-cognizant identity (Reason &

Broido, 2005). This is one of the steps within the process of becoming an ally.

Theory and Development Application

Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory is applicable to my capstone project.

Erikson's Psychosocial Development theory involves eight stages of development that

individuals go through throughout their lifespan (Kuther, 2018). Each stage is unique to an age

group, from infants to older adulthood. Also, for each stage there is a central challenge for the

individual. The main stage being focused on for this project is stage five; this stage is Identity vs Role Confusion which occurs during adolescence. Within this stage an adolescent experiences moratorium, space to explore with little commitment to an identity (Steinberg, 2017). With enough time to explore, the adolescent then reaches identity achievement, meaning the time spent exploring has encouraged growth and commitment to an identity that gives the adolescent purpose and meaning (Steinberg, 2017).

Although Erikson's theory of identity formation focuses on adolescence, "research has shown that identity achievement has rarely been reached by the end of high school" (Arnett, 2000). Identity formation continues into the late teens and the twenties (Arnett, 2000); this age period is called emerging adulthood.   Emerging adulthood is seen, especially by the emerging adults themselves, as not an adolescent but not yet an adult (Arnett, 2000). Arnett (2000) defends that emerging adulthood is a separate period from young adulthood because young adulthood proposes that an individual has reached adulthood and has achieved identity formation.

Erikson's theory applies to my capstone because an emerging adult who is exploring themselves and what they believe in, ideally, is open to exploring different world views and identities suiting them. In terms of gender identity and rethinking the gender binary, the emerging adult will take the time to contemplate the idea of gender being a binary as an unhealthy standard people are held by. They could experiment with gendered traits that do not associate with their sex. They may even find some traits they identify with better than only expressing masculine traits or only feminine traits. Emerging adults gain knowledge and reflect on gender identity to become a support system, or ally, for peers that do not identify with the gender binary; which leads to gaining a sense of purpose.

Consideration of Diversity

At California State University Monterey Bay, Latinx students are the largest group with 44% (Institutional Assessment & Research, 2019). The next largest ethnic group is White, followed by Asian American, Black, and Native American and Pacific Islander (Institutional Assessment & Research, 2019). Gender expression and values are seen differently within ethnic cultures. What White people see as masculine and feminine may not be the same for Black people or Latinx people. For example, is the study done by Harris (1994) found that White people saw masculinity and femininity in the "traditional definitions" (Harris, 1994), in comparison to Black people who saw masculinity and femininity to be associated to both sexes. I focus on the diversity of ethnicity because culture has an impact on gender expectations and what is deemed acceptably feminine and masculine within society.

My capstone project's focus is on gender identity. CSU Monterey Bay has a greater population of women to men ratio and less than 1% of non-binary identifying students (Institutional Assessment & Research, 2019). Genderqueer and transgender individuals may be more accepting towards the concept of psychological androgyny than individuals who are cisgender. Also, they may already be aware of the dynamics of gender binary and how it influences society to practice toxic masculinity. However, since this particular group has been noted to be so small on campus, there could be the possibility they may not share their narrative on the subject of gender.

Learning Outcomes

This capstone project was a presentation for college students that addressed gender expression, gender identity as a spectrum rather than a binary, and androgynous expression

instead of solely masculine or feminine expression. The learning outcomes for this project were

the following:

1. Students will be able to distinguish the difference between *gender* and *sex* and several

   gender identities.

2. Students will be able to identify at least three benefits of androgynous trait expression for

   all people.

3. Students will be able to demonstrate two ways to be an ally for peers who are questioning

   their gender, who are intersex, genderqueer or transgender.

4. Students will be able to reflect on their own gender expression and gender identity in

   terms of a gender spectrum and how their identity was influenced by society's gender

   binary.

Methods

Participants

The workshop took place in the Otter Cross Cultural Center located in the Student Center

of California State University Monterey Bay in Seaside, California. The Otter Cross Cultural

Center acts as a campus resource and safe space for students to be able to start dialogues and

events geared towards social justice and personal self-reflection. The center makes it a goal to

promote social equity for the students on campus as well as for the general public.

There were six participants within the age range of 19 to 25 years old, all of whom

identified as women. Three of the women were white, two were Hispanic and one was Asian

Pacific Islander. They all are currently attending CSU Monterey Bay.

Procedures and Materials

The workshop occurred Tuesday, November 5th from two to four pacific time. This workshop was a one-time session that lasted an hour and a half. However, I did the workshop twice that same day due to half of the six students coming in late during the planned one workshop. Then another group of three students were present at the end of the workshop. That is when I did the workshop again. Each session of the workshop was an hour and a half respectively. The workshop was made up of a PowerPoint presentation with short periods of discussion, two videos and paper assessments.

The beginning of the workshop started with my personal introduction to the group of students then a pre-assessment activity (see Appendix A). This activity was based off Sandra Bem's (1974) Social Desirability Scale that consists of feminine, masculine and neutral traits considered desirable and undesirable by the general public. My pre-assessment activity contained eight traits from each gendered section of the Desirability Scale randomized and unspecified, in terms of which is considered feminine, masculine or neutral; the original contains twenty of each. During the activity the students were asked to choose eight traits they most identify with and then set it aside for the first part of the presentation of the workshop.

The first part of the presentation consisted of introducing the definition of *sex*, along with definition examples to better explain the term. Then there was a slide on the term *intersex*; this slide gave a glance of what the word meant and how it blurs the line between *sex* being a binary concept. A video titled "Human Rights Watch and InterACT Intersex Feature Video" was shown: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6JFw_gD97I&feature=youtu.be. It gave more perspective and highlighted the importance of advocating for individuals that identify as intersex. Afterwards. to transition into *gender* and its definition, I brought back the pre-assessment activity with a slide, that was like an answer key, containing all the gendered traits I used

organized in their respective gendered category. With this key, I had the students look at the

traits they circled and encouraged them to label the traits based off the gendered key. I asked

them if the traits they circled correlated exactly with their gender identity and received multiple

responses ranging from "yes" and "no". This question segued into the section about

psychological androgyny and its definition.

I broke down the term *psychological androgyny* into two separate words because the term

is very technical. I followed up with explaining why psychological androgyny is beneficial; I

tied it with the pre-assessment activity by using my own results from the activity. I broke down

how using both masculine and feminine traits are helpful in handling everyday situations and

how using those traits do not dictate one's gender identity; ending the section with saying the

traits one utilizes does not guarantee equating to one's gender identity.

The second part of the presentation continued with the definitions of *gender, gender*

identity and *gender expression.* Some general gender identities that people may identify with are

also listed such as, *cisgender*, *gender non-binary*, and *transgender.* Following this was a slide

on allyship; this focused on how students can support their peers who may identify with a gender

outside of what is strictly feminine or masculine, or as transgender or intersex. I described

explicit examples of how the students could be allies to their peers. I asked them for additional

ways they could advocate or support their genderqueer peers. I then mentioned the resources I

included on the back of their pre-assessment activity paper that had links to sites they could

access and get further guidance on being an ally.

At the end of the presentation there was a TedTalk titled "Saying Goodbye to the Gender

Binary": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DW5YctpK7pM. It summarized the main theme of

gender not being binary and being open to a society that is genderfluid. The final part was a

post-assessment that had three questions; one was about two ways to be an ally, the second was being able to differentiate gender and sex and the final one was to determine at least three benefits of androgynous expression. To get more details on how the students felt about the workshop, I also provided a post-survey workshop to gauge how helpful it was for them and what they think could have improved the workshop.

Results

Learning Outcome 1 was that students will distinguish the difference between *sex* and *gender* and several gender identities**.** The learning outcome was assessed through an open short answer questionnaire. This learning outcome was partially met on the post-assessment question section. 83% of the students answered the short answer accurately. The majority participants were able to determine the differences between *gender* and *sex*, there was a common theme of describing *gender identity* instead of defining *gender* itself. One answer sheet was blank out of the six paper post-assessments so that may have also skewed the accuracy.

Learning Outcome 2 was that students will be able to identify at least three benefits of androgynous trait expression for all people. Through an open answer questionnaire, learning outcome two was partially met with an accuracy of 50%. Five out of the six students provided three answers that were asked for and the sixth left the questions blank; three students gave the answers from the workshop. However, the rest of the students on the post-assessment had a common theme of explaining androgynous trait expression, or *psychological androgyny*, as an advocacy technique instead of being a way to express one's self in a healthy way that isn't solely masculine or solely feminine. Regardless, there was an understanding that following the gender binary is not a healthy form of self-expression.

Learning Outcome 3 was that students will be able to demonstrate two ways to be an ally towards peers who are questioning their gender, who are genderqueer, intersex and transgender. This learning outcome was fully met on the post-assessment questions. All the students were able to come up with appropriate strategies on how to be an ally. A reoccurring example was respecting peers' pronouns or the students introducing themselves with their own pronouns in everyday situations.

Learning Outcome 4 was that students will be able to reflect on their own gender expression and identity in terms of a gender spectrum and how their identity was influenced by society's gender binary. This learning outcome was not assessed in the post-assessment questions. I verbally prompted the students to free write about how they felt about their gender identity after experiencing the workshop but only one student made note of it on their post-assessment sheet. I did not make it mandatory for the students to answer the prompt I verbalized.

Discussion

The overall goal of my capstone project was to have college students be more accepting of gender diverse individuals as well as embrace androgynous expression instead of solely masculine or solely feminine expression. Overall, I think my capstone workshop was successful. I received positive feedback from the students who participated in the workshop. They were engaged and wanted to know more about the complexities of gender and different gender identities.

Some successes would be the students were confident in naming examples on how to be an ally to genderqueer, intersex, and transgender students. I believe what helped with this

success were the explicit examples on how to be an ally in the powerpoint. Another success was

the Bem Sex Role Inventory activity; students were very receptive to the activity and there was a

comment in the post-workshop survey asking for more activities that involved reflecting on

one's gender identity and gender expression. She said that, "I think when people learn in

reference to themselves, they're more likely to actually remember it," regarding to thinking about

one's own gender identity and how to better understand different gender identities. Erikson's

Psychosocial Development theory worked for this capstone because the students were able

demonstrate that they gained new knowledge on gender and how it expanded their worldview,

specifically through the post-workshop survey. The activity also showed the success of the

theory because the activity required the students to reflect on how they express themselves in a

gendered way and if that equated to their gender identity. It assisted with considering gender

identity as more diverse than a gender binary.

 Although the successes were exceptional, there were limitations. The workshop did not

have a diverse population of students; all the participants identified as women. There was one

transgender woman, she told me the workshop was more of a review of what she already knew

about gender. Another student mentioned in the post-workshop survey that the workshop

provoked more questions than answers for her. I think this was shown in the partial success of

the students being able to distinguish the difference between *gender* and *sex*. The students were

able to point out the difference between the terms, but for *gender* there was confusion in how to

define it. Most of the students defined *gender* as *gender identity* instead of defining it as a social

construct. Psychological androgyny was also a partial success because I focused more on gender

identity. There were more examples explaining gender and sex than the benefits of androgynous

expression.

Nonetheless, I think this capstone was a conversation starter for the students to think about their gender identity as well as their peers'. It encouraged reflection on how students can make society a better and accepting place for people who don't fit in the gender binary. My goal for the future is to create a workshop that includes more reflective activities and open dialogue about the influences of society's gender expectations and the reality of gender within the individuals' lives. I hope to be able to include a section of dialogue about how different cultures' influence people's gender identity as well. I want to have a workshop that also caters towards genderqueer, transgender and intersex students providing support and validation of their experiences leading to empowerment and a path to change the world.

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Appendix A

Bem Sex Role Inventory for Pre-Assessment Activity

<u>**Pre-Presentation Activity**</u>

Circle eight (8) traits you most identify with.

Truthful	Loyal	Compassionate
Sympathetic	Independent	Secretive
Tactful	Gullible	Athletic
Self-reliant	Competitive	Helpful
Warm	Ambitious	Dominant
Shy	Truthful	Adaptable
Friendly	Analytical	Likable
Individualistic	Conceited	Understanding

Appendix B

PowerPoint on Gender and Allyship

Breaking the Gender Binary

Jelea Glover
HDEV 400B
Human Development and Family Studies

Introduction

- In a stage of Identity Development
  - Connected with adolescence (Identity vs. Role Confusion)
    - Technically as Emerging Adults we are still in this identity development stage
- Although not talked about much, gender impacts us greatly in society
- Not everyone fits the gender binary
  - Support one another on their journey to finding themselves

What is Sex?

- **The identity of a person assigned at birth**
  - Male or female
    - Genetics
    - chromosomes
    - hormones
    - external and internal anatomy

What is Sex?

What happens when one's biological identity isn't strictly male or female

- Intersex
  - Umbrella term for a variety of identities with a diverse range of sex characteristics
  - Doesn't fall into the traditional male and female categories
  - Ambiguous genitalia
  - Historically surgeries were done without person's consent
  - NOT the same as being Transgendered
  - As common as individuals with red hair! [5]

  Video

What is Sex?

Aside from physical differences, there is a small percentage of differences between the sexes

- **Sex differences- Females**
  - Relational aggression
  - Verbal and reading comprehension
  - Variability in emotions and intensity

- **Sex differences- Males**
  - Physical aggression
  - Mental rotation
    - Spatial reasoning task

*Kuther, T. L. (2019). Gender and Sexuality. (p. 467-501) In *Lifespan development in context: a topical approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Gendered Traits

Look over your trait list and mark each one based off this gendered list.

- "Feminine"
  - Cheerful
  - Compassionate
  - Gullible
  - Loyal
  - Shy
  - Sympathetic
  - Understanding
  - Warm

- "Masculine"
  - Ambitious
  - Analytical
  - Athletic
  - Competitive
  - Dominant
  - Independent
  - Individualistic
  - Self-reliant

- "Neutral"
  - Adaptable
  - Conceited
  - Friendly
  - Helpful
  - Likable
  - Secretive
  - Tactful
  - Truthful

Discussion on Gender

Do these traits equate to YOUR gender identity?

Are your traits mixed?

Healthy Gender Expression

- *Androgyny* - **an integration of both feminine and masculine characteristics**
- Psychological adjustment- ability to navigate through situations
  - More adaptable
    - Greater "repertoire of skills"
  - High self-esteem
  - Life satisfaction

Some Gender Identity Vocabulary

- Cisgender
- Transgender (think adjective)
- Gender Non-binary
    - Genderqueer
    - Genderfluid

Allyship

- What is an Ally?
    - A person of a dominant identity who challenges the status quo for inclusivity and social justice
- What does it mean to be an Ally?
    - Willing to unlearn and learn
    - Advocate
- How to be an Ally?
    - DON'T ASK ABOUT SOMEONE'S "REAL NAME"
        - Respect the identity and name the person gives you
    - Start the conversation with your pronouns
    - Advocate for transgender, intersex and gender non-binary visibility
    - Change your language
        - Utilize the pronoun "they/them" instead of she/her, he/him

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Appendix C

Post-Assessment Questions

<u>Post-Presentation Activity</u>

1. Name two ways to be an ally for gender non-binary/transgendered/intersex folk.

    a.
    b.

2.   What's the difference between sex and gender?

3.   What are three benefits from embracing more androgynous expression?

    a.
    b.
    c.

Appendix D

Resources provided to students after the presentation

<div align="center">Resources on Gender Diversity</div>

<u>TedTalks</u>

- *Living as a Non-Binary in a Binary World*
- *Saying Goodbye to the Gender Binary*
- *Trans-forming Our Thoughts on Gender*
- *Toilets, Bowties, Gender and Me*
- *The Gender Tag: Authentic Gender Expression*

<u>Websites</u>

- https://www.thetrevorproject.org/trvr_support_center/trans-gender-identity/
- https://interactadvocates.org/resources/intersex-brochures/ (Intersex resources)
- https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms
- https://counseling.ufl.edu/resources/online/bam/part-4/#intro (Intro to Allyship)
- https://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/support/gender-pronouns/ (Intro to Pronouns)

Appendix E

Capstone Festival Presentation

Outside the Gender Binary: A Workshop on Gender Identity and Being an Ally

Jelea Kai Glover
Human Development and Family Studies

Purpose of Capstone

- Teaching students that the gender binary is not realistic to the human experience and their identities

- It is unhealthy and impractical to live a life solely as "masculine" or solely as "feminine"

Statement of Capstone

- Encouraging the combination of feminine and masculine trait expression in all gender identities

- Being accepting of individuals who are intersex, transgender and genderqueer

Needs Statement

- Defining Gender vs. Sex
- Understanding Masculinity and Femininity
- Providing examples of Psychological Androgyny
- Introducing ways to be an Ally

Learning Outcomes

LO 1. Students will distinguish the difference between *sex* and *gender* and several gender identities

LO 2. Students will be able to identify at least three benefits of androgynous trait expression for all people

Theory and Development

Erik Erikson

- 8 Stages of Psychosocial Development
  - Stage 5: Identity vs. Role Confusion
    - Foreclosure
    - Negative Identity
    - Moratorium
    - Identity Achievement

Methods

- Location - Otter Cross Cultural Center
  - CSU Monterey Bay, Seaside, CA
- Audience
  - College Students
  - Open to anyone
    - Women were present however
      - 3 White, 2 Hispanic, 1 Asian Pacific Islander
  - Ages 19-24

Learning Outcomes

LO 3. Students will be able to demonstrate two ways to be an ally towards peers who are questioning their gender, who are genderqueer, intersex, and transgender.

Successes

- Explicit examples
  - Allyship
  - Gender Identity Terms
- Positive Feedback and engagement towards BSRI Activity

Limitations

- Focus on Gender and Sex differences
- Not enough detail on Androgynous Expression/Psychological Androgyny
- More of an Introductory on Gender than filling a need

Diversity-Inclusiveness

Although the workshop was opened to anyone, only individuals who identified as women (3 white, 2 Hispanic and 1 Asian Pacific Islander) were present

Future Direction

- Creating more discussion about gender identity
- Providing a resource for Genderqueer, Intersex and Transgender individuals

Thank You Very Much