Grappling with Cisgender Positionality in Applied Linguistics Research with Trans Participants
Julia Donnelly Spiegelman, University of Massachusetts Boston
American Association of Applied Linguistics Annual Conference, March 19th, 2023

Deconstructing Cisnormative Models for "Gender"

Is "gender" relevant to my research questions? If so, which aspect(s)?			
Aspect	*Definition*	*Example*	*Why might this matter?*
gender identity	How one names or categorizes their gender	Girl/woman, boy/man, agender, non-binary, bigender, two-spirit, hijra, genderfluid, genderflux, etc.	When referring to participants in a narrative (e.g., "Alex is a woman" / "Gina is pangender") or gathering demographic data on gender
gender modality	Relationship to one's gender identity relative to sex assigned at birth	Transgender, cisgender, etc.	Research investigating aspects of cisgender and/or transgender experiences; always paired with an identifier ("a transgender man," "a cisgender man")
gender socialization	One's experience being raised as or perceived as a "boy" or "girl" or other gender	Having been socialized as a boy, having been raised as/perceived to be a girl, etc.	Research investigating socialization into gendered speech patterns, experiences in single-sex schools, etc.
gender expression	How someone expresses their gender, including clothes, hair, accessories, gestures, etc.	Feminine, masculine, androgynous, etc.	Research using visual observation data sometimes uses gender expression to assume identity or pronouns. Remember to ask about someone's gender identity and language if relevant to the analysis.
gender in language	How to refer to someone with appropriate pronouns and/or other referents	Language-specific: includes pronouns (e.g., he, she, they, ze, ey, fae, all pronouns), morphemes in languages with morphological gender, etc.	When referring to participants using pronouns or other referents that contain social or grammatical gender ("Jaime loved *xyr* teacher"; "*Un.e participant.e*"; "*una profesora*")
***sex assigned at birth**	Medical designation based on external genitalia as a baby	Assigned male at birth (AMAB), assigned female at birth (AFAB), intersex	Research on participants' relationships to their assigned sex or external genitalia (unlikely to be relevant in Applied Linguistics research!)

*not gender, but often conflated

Further Reading and Resources

- Gender Spectrum - https://genderspectrum.org/
- GLAAD - https://www.glaad.org/
- GLSEN (Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network) - https://www.glsen.org/
- Human Rights Campaign - https://www.hrc.org/
- The Trevor Project - https://www.thetrevorproject.org/

Grappling with Cisgender Positionality in Applied Linguistics Research with Trans Participants
Julia Donnelly Spiegelman, University of Massachusetts Boston
American Association of Applied Linguistics Annual Conference, March 19th, 2023

Reflection Protocol for Cisgender Researchers

Whose identities?
- How does my experience of being cisgender, intersecting with other identity positions such as race/ethnicity, class, geography, sexual orientation, and ability, shape my perspective (as a researcher)?
- Is "gender" relevant to my research questions? If so, which aspect(s)? (Identity? Modality? Socialization? Expression? Language? Sex assigned at birth?) How can I glean necessary information in an inclusive, appropriate, affirming, optional way?

Whose knowledge?
- What are the limits of my own knowledge? What are the sources of the knowledge I do have? What sources are missing?
- What are my assumptions going into this research? How can I challenge them?
- Who are the true epistemic authorities? How can I foster participant agency and hear diverse perspectives?

Who benefits?
- How do I benefit from doing this research?
- What do I have to offer to the community that I am seeking to benefit? What benefits are desired?
- How can I recognize and directly compensate labor from this community?
- How can this work contribute towards systemic change?

Recommended Reading

Gofman, A., Leif, S. A., Gunderman, H., & Exner, N. (2021). Do I have to be an "Other" to be myself? Exploring gender diversity in taxonomy, data collection, and through the research data lifecycle. *Journal of EScience Librarianship*, *10*(4), 0–17. https://doi.org/10.7191/jeslib.2021.1219

Jourian, T. J., & Nicolazzo, Z. (2017). Bringing our communities to the research table: the liberatory potential of collaborative methodological practices alongside LGBTQ participants. *Educational Action Research*, *25*(4), 594–609. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2016.1203343

Keenan, H. B. (2022). Methodology as pedagogy: Trans lives, social science, and the possibilities of education research. *Educational Researcher*, *51*(5), 307–314. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X211065740

Knisely, K. (2021). Teaching trans: The impetus for trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming inclusivity in L2 classrooms. In K. Davidson, S. Johnson, & L. Randolph (Eds.), *How we take action: Social justice in K-12 language classrooms*. Information Age.

Knisely, K., & Paiz, J. M. (2021). Bringing trans, non-binary, and queer understandings to bear in language education. *Critical Multilingualism Studies*, *9*(2), 1–17.

Nicolazzo, Z. (2017). Imagining a trans* epistemology. *Urban Education*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085917697203

Puckett, J. A., Barr, S. M., Wadsworth, L. P., & Thai, J. (2018). Considerations for clinical work and research with transgender and gender diverse individuals. *The Behavior Therapist*, *41*(8), 253–262. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10865-006-9085-0.Wiech

Radi, B. (2019). On trans* epistemology. *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, *6*(1), 43–63. https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-7253482

Robinson, B. A. (2022). Non-binary embodiment, queer knowledge production, and disrupting the cisnormative field: Notes from a trans ethnographer. *Journal of Men's Studies, 30*(3), 425-445.

Zimman, L. (2020). Transgender language, transgender moment: Toward a Trans Linguistics. *The Oxford handbook of language and sexuality*, 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190212926.013.45

Zimman, L. (2021). Beyond the cis gays' cis gaze: The need for a trans linguistics. *Gender and Language*, 15(3), 423–429. https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.20883