

# Chapter 11

## Investigating Social Justice Education Through Problem Based Learning: A Subject Area Resource Specialist's Perspective

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### Introduction

Social justice and anti-oppression education are foundational components of many teacher education programs.<sup>1</sup> However, many educators encounter resistance when helping preservice teachers to investigate what these concepts mean, why they are important, and how they might be pursued (Solomon et al. 2005; Kumashiro 2000; Kelly and Minnes Brandes 2001; Kelly and Brooks 2009). As the Department of Educational Studies' (EDST) representative to the TELL through PBL (Teaching English Language Learners through Problem Based Learning) cohort, I am responsible for helping our preservice teachers think through what these themes mean for their teaching and their identities. In the 8 years that I have been working with the PBL<sup>2</sup> cohort as a subject area resource specialist, I have come to appreciate the many ways in which the PBL pedagogy is exceptionally well suited to supporting these ends. In this chapter, I demonstrate PBL's strengths in teaching for social justice. First, I explore the role of the subject area resource specialist within TELL through PBL. I then articulate the conceptions of social justice and anti-oppression that underpin my teaching and discuss why PBL is an excellent model for facilitating preservice teachers' explorations of these concepts. Finally, I demonstrate what my work exploring privilege and oppression with preservice teachers looks like.

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<sup>1</sup>The newly revised UBC program also has social justice education as one of its foundational themes.

<sup>2</sup>When I joined the PBL cohort in 2006, it was a standalone cohort that focused on the principles and practices of PBL pedagogy. The PBL cohort merged with the TELL cohort as part of UBC's B.Ed. restructuring in the 2012–2013 academic year, becoming the TELL through PBL cohort

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## My Role as a PBL Subject Area Resource Specialist

I have been working with the University British Columbia (UBC) Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) PBL cohort as a subject area resource specialist since 2006. I fell into teaching with the PBL cohort, as many other first timers do, quite by accident. After a number of years teaching social justice education and philosophy of education courses<sup>3</sup> in the UBC's B.Ed. program, my department offered me the opportunity to continue this work within the PBL cohort.

When I accepted this invitation, I did not know much about PBL pedagogy. What I soon discovered was that teaching and learning in PBL was unlike any schooling I had been involved with as either a student or as a teacher. Very few of the conventional teaching tools I had come to expect were used. No formal course outlines. No assigned readings. No course-specific papers or projects. Instead, I would meet with my students face to face once every two-week case cycle. I would have ongoing opportunities to engage with them through my resource recommendations and my feedback on exit slips, annotated bibliographies, and research packages, as well as during the end of term triple-jump examinations. I would work closely with a team of PBL tutors, coordinators, and other subject area resource specialists. Our joint planning would be anchored by biweekly meetings where we could check in with each other about student progress, refine upcoming cases, better educate each other about emerging case issues, and inquire into our cohort's varied assessment practices. While I now deeply appreciate the student-centered, dialectical, and team-based learning that the PBL model enables, when I first came to the cohort, it did take some time for me to come to understand my role within the overarching cohort structure.<sup>4</sup>

The tutors are the first of the instructors to meet with the preservice teachers in each case cycle. They help spark initial curiosity about the case and its embedded issues, generating with the preservice teachers a list of questions for them to research. As a subject area resource specialist, I then review the identified case issues. I plan my teaching around the case questions, both asked and unasked. When it all works well, the tutors and subject area resource specialists help the preservice teachers to trouble assumptions made so as to deepen the complexity of the process and products of their inquiry. This collaborative, team-based approach invites an ongoing reframing of case questions, a layering of perspectives, and an enriching of the meanings constructed.

As the EDST representative to the TELL through PBL cohort, I engage primarily with the themes of social justice and anti-oppression education, the purposes of

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<sup>3</sup>From 2002 to 2006, I taught many sections of EDST 314: Social Issues in Education and EDST 427: Philosophy of Education for UBC's Department of Educational Studies.

<sup>4</sup>I am indebted to Margot Filipenko and the rest of the PBL team for helping me develop my understanding of how to better use the PBL structure to support student learning, particularly in that first year.

schooling, and ethical educational practice.<sup>5</sup> Of course, these themes are not strictly my purview. In fact, social justice education is one of the foundational strands in the revised UBC's B.Ed. program that began in 2012–2013; this strand is intended to be woven into all cohorts and courses.

There are many avenues through which the PBL team attempts to support the preservice teachers' inquiries into social justice education. We have worked through multiple case rewrites, planting hooks intended to capture the preservice teachers' curiosity about the evolving contexts in which privilege and oppression play out in schools and society. We have designed guiding questions to be used by the tutors and other subject area resource specialists in helping the preservice teachers unpack each case with a social justice lens in mind. The team's preparatory work with each case is an essential part of our ongoing curriculum development, as the preservice teachers' "content learning" emerges directly from the inquiries that each case sparks.

I further support the preservice teachers' inquiries into the institutional and cultural dimensions of privilege and oppression by sending them case-specific recommendations for anti-oppression education. Each case cycle, I send out my own annotated list of academic, policy, and classroom resources. I try to assemble this list in ways that make clear how my recommendations respond to the preservice teachers' stated interests, so they are more likely to filter through to their Week 1 annotated bibliographies and Week 2 research packages. Preservice teachers working in pairs produce these packages at the end of each two-week cycle. The research packages provide them with an opportunity to delve more deeply into one of the case issues. They also form the basis for their peers' further learning around the chosen theme. At the end of each case cycle, I give the preservice teachers feedback on what I see as the strengths, gaps, and framings of the social justice dimensions of their packages. As I will detail in more depth below, I also meet with the preservice teachers once during each two-week case cycle to help them inquire more deeply and reflexively into the direction, content, and implementation of their inquiries into social justice education.

It is also my goal to help support the tutors and other subject area resource specialists in thinking about how their areas of specialization intersect with the institutional and cultural dimensions of privilege and oppression. Similarly it is their responsibility to help me better understand how their areas of specialization complicate the process of social justice education. These conversations arise naturally at our biweekly instructor meetings, but we have talked about implementing a more regular, explicit process where 20 minutes would be set aside in our instructor meetings for mini-infusions of professional development. The suggestion is that on every Monday before the next case, each of the resource specialists and tutors would

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<sup>5</sup>While the specific framing and content of my courses has shifted in the revised B.Ed. program that began in 2012–2013, these general themes have remained consistent across programs.

speak briefly about how we understand the upcoming case issues, perhaps focusing on one foundational concept or question that we hope the preservice teachers will take away from the case. When tutors and faculty resource persons understand each other's areas of specialization better, there is greater likelihood of teaching in interdisciplinary ways. By bringing greater structure and intention to our ongoing conversations across disciplines and perspectives, our instructional team can help to better integrate learning across all TELL through PBL coursework and the entire cohort experience.

## **Social Justice and Anti-oppression Education in Teacher Education**

Before moving onto a closer look at why PBL is so well suited to doing social justice work with preservice teachers, as well as to what my work as the primary social justice education resource person looks like, I will say a few words about the conceptions of social justice, anti-oppression, and multicultural education that I bring with me to my role as a resource person. These concepts have evolved into buzzwords that are used differently across and within academic and professional contexts, both reflecting and contributing to disagreements about whether and how they ought to impact life in schools. I understand anti-oppression and multicultural education as two different approaches to the broader umbrella of social justice work.<sup>6</sup> Building from the official Canadian policy of multiculturalism,<sup>7</sup> multicultural education tends to take a celebratory approach to difference, recognizing diversity and welcoming it as a form of cultural enrichment. It tends to lend itself toward singular, isolated celebrations or one-off events that keep an analysis of oppression at the level of the individual. As such, it has been critiqued as inviting a "tourist approach" (Derman Sparks 1995) to social justice education that allows dominant discourses and cultural privileges to remain invisible and intact.<sup>8</sup>

By contrast, anti-oppression education draws attention to structural and lived inequities that play out across and within cultural differences. It examines privilege as well as oppression. It rejects the idea that oppression is caused solely or predominantly by individuals who intentionally do mean things to other individuals. Instead,

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<sup>6</sup>In BC schools, "social responsibility" is another purposefully nonconfrontational term used in classrooms and in policy documents to refer to a particular strand of social justice education.

<sup>7</sup>Pierre Elliott Trudeau began the discussion of multiculturalism as Canada's official state policy in 1971. This policy evolved into the Multiculturalism Act of 1988 (United Nations Association of Canada, 2002). In some ways, this policy has worked directly counter to social justice concerns by contributing to the national identity of Canada as a tolerant and multicultural mosaic of cultural and other diversities.

<sup>8</sup>Multicultural education is sometimes theorized as critical multiculturalism. This form of social justice education is far closer to the anti-oppression education described below.

it looks to “the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society” (Young 1990, p. 41) as they manifest across institutional arrangements, systems of communication, and opportunities for social participation. Recognizing that oppression and privilege play out systemically, it advocates for a systemic, ongoing, and integrated approach to social justice education. A multicultural celebration of difference might be a hopeful and strategic starting point for this approach, but only if supplemented by an exploration of the meanings, histories, complexities, and structural inequities associated with those differences. Anti-oppression education also underlines the necessity of working actively and ethically toward social justice across intersecting forms of oppression; it is concerned with process as well as product (Kelly 2012). Finally, it understands reflexivity to be a necessary component of effective social justice work, as existing beliefs, identities, and investments are the lens through which we experience and interpret our worlds. If we are to better understand their impact on what we know and how we act, we must labor to surface, and possibly alter, them (Kumashiro 2000; Kelly 2012; Kelly and Brooks 2009; Raby 2004; Kelly and Minnes Brandes 2001).

My work with the preservice teachers explores these differences between anti-oppression and multicultural approaches to social justice education. At the same time, I tend to slide easily and strategically between my use of the terms “social justice” and “anti-oppression education.” I do not want what we call this work to get in the way of engaging with its ideas and practices. The very mention of big, scary concepts like “oppression” and “privilege” can raise defenses and forestall open-minded inquiry. With this in mind, I tend to use the softer, fuzzier language of “social justice” with the preservice teachers to work through and around our potential resistances, especially at the outset of our conversations.

The ‘problem’ that anti-oppressive education needs to address is not merely a lack of knowledge, but a resistance to knowledge (Luhmann 1998 as cited in Kumashiro), and in particular, a resistance to any knowledge that disrupts what one already ‘knows.’ (Kumashiro 2000, p. 43)

I also use the language of “anti-oppression” with the preservice teachers to signal that I believe all social justice education ought to involve an exploration of historical and contemporary social contexts, a real grappling with the concepts and impacts of oppression and privilege, as well as an honest look inward. I am explicit in my beliefs that we all ought to explore how social structure, as well as our own lived experiences of privilege and oppression, shape how we make sense of the world. I argue that we must all attempt to investigate how who we have come to be as people impacts what we see and do not see and, therefore, who we are and can be in the classroom. I also recognize that genuinely opening up to such reflexive explorations can be threatening to identity, so I try to allow in-class space and time for working through any reactions that might arise.

By keeping the language of both social justice and anti-oppression alive in the classroom, I hope that the preservice teachers will come to see anti-oppression education as an essential part of the social justice work that they will want to do throughout their careers. At the very least, I explain to them that whichever approach

to social justice education they choose to take up, they should be clear both about the differences between multicultural and anti-oppression education and their reasons for choosing one approach over the other in any given context.

## **PBL as a Model for Facilitating Explorations of Social Justice and Anti-oppression Education**

The PBL structure offers many advantages for exploring social justice and anti-oppression education. One strength is that my conversations with the preservice teachers are not limited to our assigned, face-to-face meeting times. My interactions with them begin when they post the case issues that they have identified with the tutors to our online learning platform. These issues act as a pre-assessment tool, helping me to better understand what they already know, see, and feel about the case. In highlighting the preservice teachers' interests and assumptions, they also help me to get to know the preservice teachers a little bit better. My interactions with the preservice teachers continue when I post my own annotated bibliography of potential case resources near the beginning of each case cycle. Although the pedagogy of PBL does not require the preservice teachers to follow up on these specific resources in their research, I attempt to influence their evolving explorations by framing my annotations in ways that respond to their identified interests. I also try to link explicitly to these resources during our classroom time, so that the preservice teachers are more likely to understand their relevance to the case. Sometimes, our conversations about social justice also continue in one-to-one interactions via email and Skype. Always, they culminate with the feedback I give them on their completed research packages. I send them notes about the strengths and weaknesses of their packages. I also pose a few questions in an attempt to extend the thinking that they have already done. As the arc described above demonstrates, my classroom interactions with the preservice teachers are only one of the ways that the PBL structure supports me in uncovering and complicating the preservice teachers' existing knowledge and beliefs.

The interdisciplinarity of our cohort is another strength of PBL for pursuing social justice education; I am not the only instructor who explicitly takes up these themes. All too often in teacher education programs such themes are quarantined in singular courses, disconnected from other learning in the program. In PBL, the preservice teachers' investigations into anti-oppression education are supported and extended both through the learning they do with me and their other subject area resource specialists and through the Socratic dialogue of their 10–12-person tutorial group meetings. These smaller meetings take place three times over the course of each case<sup>9</sup> and provide support for their thinking around privilege, oppression, and schooling. Having this shared dialogue is important, because the very real themes of social inequity and

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<sup>9</sup>Originally, the tutors and preservice teachers met four times each case. Since the 2013–2014 year, they now meet three times per case.

justice cannot be easily “put back in the box,” particularly once the preservice teachers begin to question their own position within these social relationships. I know that we are truly making progress in our investigations when the tutors tell me that our class conversations have spilled over into their ongoing tutorial discussions. Because preservice teachers have opportunities to explore social inequities across all of their TELL through PBL inquiries, they are more likely to come to see social justice education as an essential and routine part of their work as teachers.

Another advantage of the PBL structure for exploring social justice themes is that the end of each case does not bring an end to our conversations. While each case has its own distinct foci and set of case issues, PBL conversations are never closed. By design, our themes, conversations, and questions loop back on each other. As the cases progress throughout the year, they intentionally move to more challenging themes.<sup>10</sup> In doing so, the PBL structure enacts Bruner’s (1960) arguments about the spiral curriculum: “a curriculum as it develops should revisit basic ideas repeatedly, building upon them until the student has grasped the full formal apparatus that goes with them” (p. 13). I elaborate upon this progression in my description of the relationship between Case 2 and Case 9 below, where the PBL structure offers the preservice teachers the opportunity to build from what they know so that they can gradually deepen their questioning and understanding over time.

The structures that support the development of strong cohort relationships are another advantage of teaching social justice education within TELL through PBL. Throughout the course of the year, the preservice teachers work within their own contained cohort of roughly 33 people, both as a whole group and in the important, relationship-building small-group tutorials. As Daniel (2009) argues, a “cohort facilitates a degree of familiarity and support amongst the teacher candidates” (p. 175). Connections grow, not only because of the sheer amount of time they spend together, but also because of the degree to which their learning is enmeshing with the learning and research of their peers. Our Orientation Week<sup>11</sup> programming has also evolved to provide varied opportunities for the preservice teachers to become familiar not only with the PBL pedagogy but also with each other. For example, in the 2013–2014 year, we introduced a very successful full-day exercise in multimodal, place-based autobiography to help the preservice teachers, subject area resource specialists, and tutors foster our connections as human beings outside of our institutional roles. Often the exploration of social justice themes can be identity threatening; therefore, it is important that institutional supports be in place to encourage the development of trusting bonds among preservice teachers and their instructors.

The unique opportunity I have to work with the same group of preservice teachers throughout the entire year only enhances these bonds and their benefits for social

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<sup>10</sup>I make this claim recognizing that, especially with respect to social justice themes, every person will have different experiences, resistances, and trigger points.

<sup>11</sup>Because PBL’s 2-week case cycle makes its scheduling mostly independent of the rest of the B.Ed. program, we have the opportunity to schedule in an orientation week where other cohorts generally do not.

justice education. Typically, instructors teaching EDST course offerings in the B.Ed. program stay with the same group of students for no more than one term. As the social justice resource person for PBL, I am hired across Winter Terms 1 and 2, a period spanning 8 months.<sup>12</sup> This means that the themes of the multiple courses offered by EDST can be woven throughout the PBL cases in ways that serve the complexity of the case narratives rather than the somewhat artificial boundaries imposed by the standard B.Ed. timetable. This ongoing and integrated approach invites a deepening, substantive inquiry.

## Explorations of Privilege and Oppression

Generally, I meet face to face with the preservice teachers for 3 hours once each two-week case cycle. Occasionally, I also meet with them in the special timeslots reserved for our TELL through PBL Workshop Series. During these meetings, my central task is to build from the case and the preservice teachers' identified case issues in ways that help them to deepen their research and self-reflection. I do very little in the way of straight content delivery; instead, I attempt to craft in-class activities that help to spark curiosity, refine the scope of the preservice teachers' research questions, and surface our deep-seated assumptions about oppression, privilege, and identity. While part of my task is to help lay the conceptual foundations upon which rest further queries into social justice and anti-oppression education, sometimes laying these foundations first involves destabilizing old knowledge systems (Kumashiro 2000). I know I am on a productive track when preservice teachers remark that their "brains hurt" after my class. Ultimately, while my explicit intent is to advocate for a specific conception of social justice education, my more fundamental, and also explicit, concern is that the preservice teachers develop good reasons to support their chosen professional principles and practices.

So what does my course work with the preservice teachers actually look like? How do I use in-class activities to help deepen thinking about the concepts and practices central to social justice education, as well as how we are all situated in relation to them? I will provide two examples of this work by examining two cases: Case 2, the affectionately known *Stinky Lunch*, and Case 9, otherwise known as *Day of Pink*. *Stinky Lunch* attempts to make real the subtle, systemic workings of privilege and oppression, broadly conceived. *Day of Pink* focuses more narrowly on privilege and oppression in the context of gender identities, performances, and discourses. *Stinky Lunch* departs from a simple, seemingly inconsequential phrase; *Day of Pink* unfolds robustly over the course of the entire opening paragraph, setting the context for the whole case. While these two cases use very different strategies in their attempt to hook the curiosity of the preservice teachers and spark an

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<sup>12</sup>Moreover, the same person usually also has the opportunity to work with the preservice teachers after they return from their long practicum placements for the duration of the summer term, extending these relationships and conversations across the entirety of their programs.



exploration of specific foundational concepts and questions, both are the result of our teams' work in trying to puzzle through how best to build a narrative that accomplishes these pedagogical goals.

## **Case 2: The Stinky Lunch**

In Case 1, the first case of the year, we introduce the preservice teachers to the importance, opportunities, and challenges of building a classroom community amid ethnic, economic, linguistic, cultural, and other diversities. For the most part, conversations and research at this point tend to take a multiculturalist approach to social justice education, focusing on how to use diversity as a resource. By Case 2, our goal is to complicate these initial explorations with a more anti-oppressive lens, bringing the concepts of privilege and oppression into the mix. However, many preservice teachers find engaging with these themes conceptually and emotionally difficult. As Solomon et al. (2005) note, it is difficult to admit that we are each implicated in systems of oppression. "It could also be argued that we unconsciously desire to learn only that which affirms our sense that we are good people" (Kumashiro 2000, p. 43). Perhaps even more difficult is the idea that our varied social locations bring us unearned privileges, making us complicit in the oppression of others (McIntosh 1990). One of my central challenges then is to help minimize preservice teachers' resistance and defensiveness, so that we can consider our responsibilities toward social change, both as teachers and as people.

The framing and language of Case 2 has evolved over time in an attempt to evoke a thoughtful exploration of privilege and oppression without using these potentially triggering words themselves. It references the concept of classroom community introduced in Case 1, but begins to subtly integrate the idea of conflict into the classroom. The relevant part of the case reads:

Although most of the children [in your primary class] have adjusted to the routines of the classroom and seem to be happy at school, a few have not yet settled into being part of the classroom community. When you mentioned this to their parents at the conferences, some seemed genuinely surprised. For instance, when you told Drew's parents that he seems quiet and withdrawn in class, they said, "At home he's always on the go and talking a mile a minute!" *When you explained to Kayla's mother that her daughter has been teasing her classmate, Nikesh, about his "stinky lunches," she told you that Kayla is so "caring" at home, "always helping with her two younger brothers."* It made you wonder: are we talking about the same child? [Emphasis added]

As case issues, preservice teachers typically identify "differences in home life and school life" or "differences in parent and teacher perception of students." Often, they also take up the problem of bullying, trying to determine the seriousness of Kayla's "teasing." Once or twice, the question of whether a 6-/7-year-old can be racist has been raised. Never have the ideas of privilege and oppression been foregrounded in the initial case unpacking. Given our emphasis on constructing a soft entry into these concepts, it is just as well.

When I meet with the preservice teachers for Case 2, I use an in-class activity to bring these concepts to the fore. After briefly reviewing their case issues and questions with them, I invite them to play with the question of whether food can be separated from culture and, if not, with what implications. How should the cultural contexts of the so-called stinky lunches, as well as the cultural backgrounds of Kayla and Nikesh, impact how we interpret and respond to the case?

I divide the room up into four stations that the preservice teachers then rotate through in groups. They have 10 minutes at each station to interact with one or two concealed, unnamed, strongly aromatic food(s). Each station also brings a set of questions. To pique curiosity and establish routine, each station opens the same way: What food is at your station? With which culture/social group/country do you associate it?<sup>13</sup> The ensuing questions then vary by station so as to highlight different dimensions that ought to be thought through in working toward a response to the case.

At Station 1, I place a tea egg and chopped egg salad. Both items are highly aromatic variations of the same food, but are strongly linked to different cultural backgrounds. Most, if not all, of the preservice teachers are familiar with the egg salad of White/Western culture; many have never seen the beautifully marbled tea egg common in China, Taiwan, Indonesia, and other countries in Asia. I leave two additional sets of questions at this station: (1) Are the cultural backgrounds of the children or food relevant to the case? Why? How? (2) Are the concepts of “privilege” and “oppression” relevant? What do they mean? So begins an exploration into the subtleties of these concepts. The preservice teachers are generally quite divided about their answers to these questions which makes the discussions animated, engaging, and meaningful.

It always fascinates me to see how the composition of each group of preservice teachers tends to impact their conversations. When most members of the small group have had previous exposure to tea eggs, they generally talk about their positive memories of interacting with the food and then get onto the business of the questions. When most of the group has no prior experience with tea eggs, there is often a good deal of wrinkled noses, recoiling heads, and high-pitched exclamations. These initial visceral reactions are usually balanced somewhat by an emerging curiosity. Still, all too often what this looks like is a group of predominantly White students sending subtle (and not so subtle) messages about a food or experience associated with the current or ancestral culture of some of the Asian students in the class. The irony is that in our opening exploration of privilege and oppression, these racially<sup>14</sup> and ethnically privileged students often do not realize that they are replicating the same systems that have allowed them to “remain oblivious of the

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<sup>13</sup>I place the name and cultural origin of the foods underneath the food containers, so that the bulk of the time at each station can be spent on the analysis associated with the ensuing questions. I also ask the preservice teachers to keep their discussion of the foods themselves to a maximum of 3 minutes, which sometimes works and sometimes does not.

<sup>14</sup>There is a healthy debate about the usefulness of perpetuating the “myth of realness” of the concept of race through its continued use. I would argue that although “race” is a social construct that mostly serves to reinforce systems of oppression, its structural and lived effects are ongoing. As such, we cannot simply abandon the term.

language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in [their] culture any penalty for such oblivion" (McIntosh 1990, p. 3). Of course, they intend no harm, but as Young (1990) argues, oppression operates most perniciously and effectively in the "everyday practices of a well-intention liberal society" (p. 41).

For me, the egg salad represents and reveals the invisible, normalized, and naturalized workings of privilege. In North America, people know what egg salad is, precisely because of its dominant, widespread representation. You can buy it in the deli cases of major grocery chains and in the sandwiches sold at airports, vending machines, and 7/11 convenience stores. While it might be hard to peg egg salad to a particular cultural group, its vague pervasiveness is exactly the point: the advantage of privilege is unearned, unsought, and unseen by those who have it (McIntosh 1990).

By contrast, for me the tea egg represents and reveals the workings of the symbiotic flipside of privilege: oppression. While egg salad is ubiquitous, I can not purchase a tea egg for this activity outside of a specialized Asian market,<sup>15</sup> not even in the city of Vancouver where up to 40 % of the population speaks some variation of Chinese as their first language.<sup>16</sup> This cultural marginalization is woven into the very social and structural fabric of Western culture from the level of individuals who internalize these norms (Schmidt 2005) to the level of "systematic institutional processes" and "institutionalized social processes" (Young 1990, p. 38).

Luckily, I don't have to try to make this argument to the preservice teachers from high on the teacher's pulpit. Because of the collaborative, inquiry model of PBL, I enter their evolving conversations only during our post-station rotation debrief. By then, the preservice teachers have had the opportunity to open up (to) these concepts. They have listened to each other's varied experiences and perspectives, learning from and questioning each other. Not only can their dialogue work to lessen their resistance to these challenging concepts (Daniel 2009), its dialectic often makes the argument far more convincingly than I alone ever could. While preservice teachers' exit slips reveal a very real and deep split in class opinion about the extent to which the *Stinky Lunch* is implicated in systems of privilege and oppression, their evolving reasons for their judgments are a far more important outcome than the specific content of their conclusions.

For me, the *Egg Station* is the most central and foundational of the four stations that the preservice teachers visit, but the remaining three also each bring forth a different piece of the puzzle. At Station 2, the preservice teachers might encounter a fragrant curry from Northern India as they are asked to imagine the concrete consequences of the so-called teasing.<sup>17</sup> How might Nikesh experience it? How might

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<sup>15</sup> Instead, I've downloaded a recipe for the tea eggs and cook them at home at the same time as I make the hard-boiled eggs.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/punjabi-and-chinese-top-immigrant-languages-in-vancouver-1.1213824>

<sup>17</sup> Over the years, I have used many different foods at the remaining stations, including durian, chopped liver, kimchi, spoilt milk, stinky tofu, and shrimp paste.

he feel? How might it impact his understanding of himself and his culture, as well as his social location or his behaviors at school?

This station brings the preservice teachers firmly back to the context of schools, helping them to explore how privilege and oppression might play out in their professional lives. It also provides a springboard into the academic literature, specifically Young's *Five Faces of Oppression*: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (1990). The preservice teachers have speculated that Nikesh might bring something else for lunch to school (cultural imperialism), that he might eat by himself or feign sickness so that he need not come to school at all (marginalization), that he might become anxious or distraught or physically ill (powerlessness), or that the teasing might escalate to physical bullying (violence).<sup>18</sup> Their concrete examples not only help to make real and accessible the *Fives Faces of Oppression*, they begin to underline the heterogeneity and situatedness of oppression that Young describes. From this point, there is a clear opening for us to discuss Young's idea that social justice can be understood as freedom from oppression. I also always point out that there are many different ways of conceptualizing social justice that the preservice teachers might pursue in their annotated bibliographies and research packages.

Station 3 might bring a pickled herring and *chrane* (horseradish) duo that are familiar to Jews of Eastern Europe ancestry.<sup>19</sup> This station places the preservice teachers squarely in the role of teacher, asking them to imagine what they might do in response: Would you respond directly or indirectly or not at all? How does the age of your students impact your decision? Who would your response involve: Nikesh, Kayla, your class, and/or the school? (How) would you discuss cultural and student diversity, as well as social inequities?

Bringing our discussion back to the richness of professional practice and judgment is important, because it helps to make learning relevant, authentic, and meaningful to the preservice teachers. Moreover, for them to become comfortable with the idea of working toward social justice in schools, preservice teachers must be given opportunities to imagine what that could look like, especially with young children. As Kelly and Brooks (2009) note, preservice teachers often shy away from addressing social inequities, because they feel that their students are too young to handle these conversations or too innocent to be implicated in systems of oppression. This station also allows us to link to Kelly's (2012) elaboration of what Young's *Five Faces* model of anti-oppression education might look like in schools.

At the final station, the opaque container holds a big question mark and the phrase "your lunch." Enacting Styles' (1988) metaphor of curriculum as windows

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<sup>18</sup>The preservice teachers generally do not generate examples that illuminate the face of exploitation.

<sup>19</sup>I like to include a food that links to Jewish culture, as it is my heritage. This link provides a springboard both for educating the preservice teachers about Jewish culture and for continuing the process of getting to know each other that we begin in the orientation week and Case 1.

and mirrors, this station encourages ongoing community building, cross-cultural learning, and reflexive analysis within the cohort. After discussing their own experiences with so-called stinky lunches, the station questions nudge their self-reflections further by asking: were you ever teased, marginalized, or simply made to feel different, because of your cultural foods, beliefs, or practices? What happened? The other set of questions at the station moves from experience to belief, attempting to draw out preservice teachers' existing knowledge about teasing and bullying: how is bullying based on identity (e.g., language, ancestry, skin color, class, gender, sexuality, etc.) different from or similar to generic bullying (e.g., your pencils)? Can you make a list of the similarities and differences? The question of where to draw the line between good-natured bonding and harmful, systemic practices that require the intervention of teachers is a perennial concern. The dual trajectories of this station's questions are designed to help the preservice teachers surface their own experiences and beliefs, so that they can begin to consider how who they are impacts who are they becoming as teachers.

At the end of our class, I ask the preservice teachers to respond in a brief exit slip about what they think is happening when Kayla teases Nikesh about his "stinky lunch" and what (if anything) they should do. Even though there is always wide variability in the extent to which the preservice teachers think the concepts of privilege, oppression, and social justice are relevant to this case, their exit slips give me a glimpse into how they are beginning to make sense of these concepts more generally. In 2012, some of their comments included:

- "It is interesting to me to think about this as more than just celebrating the diversity in the classroom, but rather thinking of ways of being 'anti-oppressive'" (Preservice teacher A, Sept 25, 2012).
- "I had never thought of how oppression could be well intended practices or done without the intention of harm" (Preservice teacher B, Sept 25, 2012).
- "To understand justice, it's important to look at injustice too" (Preservice teacher C, Sept 25, 2012).
- "Privilege can be invisible, especially for those who have it" (Preservice teacher D, Sept 25, 2012).

These comments demonstrate the kind of deep theoretical engagement that can be evoked when the preservice teachers are invited to ponder the school-based contexts in which social inequities can play out. The exit slip responses also give me immediate feedback about how concepts are landing and for whom. Particularly within the case cycle structure of PBL, where I typically do not see the preservice teachers again for two full weeks, finding ways to initiate ongoing assessment loops is an essential part of my role as a subject area resource specialist.

The exit slips also reveal how disruptive social justice education, and the PBL process itself, can be. Our work together is meant to open questions and avoid easy

answers. It is meant to surface what the preservice teachers believe, sometimes bringing affirmation, but often also bringing confusion, challenge, and the “brain hurting” phenomenon to which I refer above.

- “I think I have a better understanding of [oppression] now but still lots I don’t know and need to think about. I still feel a bit confused about everything and will need some time to process it” (Preservice teacher B, Sept 25, 2012).
- “I feel like I’ve been left with far too many questions than answers. After today, I’m anxious and really unsure about how to deal with these issues in a concrete manner. I felt I have learned a lot but I need more information” (Preservice teacher E, Sept 25, 2012).
- “It takes me time to process new information so, at this point, I don’t see how it all goes together – but it will come together eventually...The whole concept of privilege is not new to me – but recognizing what impact this has and the responsibility it brings is rather huge. Ummm...does that make sense? Did I even answer the question?! Still processing” (Preservice teacher F, Sept 25, 2012).

From my perspective as a social justice resource person who is hoping to spark an analysis of social structure and self, these responses are encouraging. Our work together requires time to process; it does not end when our meeting time does. Learning to live with grace amid uncertainty as conversations extend across time and place is central to the PBL process and the kind of work I hope to do with the preservice teachers.

The research packages produced in each tutorial group also give me a deeper picture of the ways the preservice teachers are engaging with the concepts of privilege, oppression, and social justice. In 2012, research themes of just one tutorial group included: The 5 W’s (what, why, who, when, and where) of cultural diversity; multiculturalism; social justice; barriers and strategies; self-examination; range of teaching methods; classroom atmosphere and learning environment; cultural awareness, assessment, and collaboration; culturally responsive classroom management; strategies for addressing diversity and social justice; incorporating diversity and social justice into the curriculum; communicating with culturally diverse parents; perceived barriers to teaching ELL students; and linguistic needs and register (Preservice teachers B and F, Oct 5, 2012).

Not only are the preservice teachers responsible for engaging with the research packages produced in their own tutorial groups, they are also responsible for those produced in the other two tutorials. This requirement serves to diversify even further the range of perspectives that are engaged with on each case issue. Other inquiries into *Stinky Lunch* offered in 2012 include: how bullying relates to Case 2; types of bullying; alternative views on bullying; preventing bullying (for teachers and parents); definition of racism; can a 6-year old be racist?; anti-racism education; teaching for diversity and anti-racism; making space: teaching for diversity and social justice throughout the K–12 curriculum; social responsibility performance standards for kindergarten to Grade 3; and lesson plans for diversity in the BC curriculum.

These lists of topics give a sense of the breadth of the research packages that the preservice teachers produce, but their work often also goes deep. The preservice teachers are meant not only to compile the work of others, but also to comment on

what lessons they believe are to be drawn from the work they have chosen to include in their final packages. For the 2012 Case 2 packages, such explanations included:

- “Doing a self examination allows teachers to assess how they address diversity and social justice within their own teaching practices...Other methods of self examination help teachers to realize their own assumptions and biases towards cultures and allows them to reflect and change their practices” (Preservice teachers B and F, Oct 5, 2012).
- “Boyd (1998; in Raby 2004) defines racism as ‘any action or institutional practice - backed by institutional power - that subordinates people because of their colour or ethnicity’ (p. 368). While many of us think of racism in more direct, concrete terms – i.e., acts of physical or verbal aggression on behalf of one or a group of people towards another person or group of people on the basis of race – Boyd is asserting that racism also includes institutional ideas or practices that act to marginalize individuals or groups indirectly, or subtly, on the basis of race. Thus, racism and indirect bullying are inextricably linked” (Preservice teachers G and H, Oct 5, 2012).
- “Raby (2004) in her article ‘*There’s no racism at my school, it’s just joking around*’: ramifications for anti-racist education presents the concept of anti-racism education as a more effective way of teaching for diversity than multiculturalism education...anti-racism education ‘shifts talk away from tolerance of diversity to the notion of difference and power’ (Dei and Calliste 2000, p. 21, as quoted in Raby 2004, p. 379). Anti-racism education emphasizes the inclusion of systematic, structural, unequal relations of power in the definition of racism. It is based on the premise that racism exists, and that as teachers we should encourage students to identify and explore the concepts of racism and power and oppression, and how these concepts are interrelated” (Preservice teachers G and H, Oct. 5, 2012).

As these samples of student work show, the PBL process supports the asking of some very rich questions. It is true that it takes many of the preservice teachers multiple case cycles to more fully develop their confidence in the PBL process and their ability to learn successfully through it. At the same time, the dialectical repetition of our eleven cases gives the preservice teachers ongoing opportunities to cultivate their abilities and dispositions toward open-minded inquiry about social justice themes and many other elements central to good teaching.

### **Case 9: Day of Pink**

By the time the preservice teachers encounter Case 9, *Day of Pink*, they are at a very different point on their journeys. The case arc and research routine have become second nature for most of them.<sup>20</sup> Case 9 capitalizes on this difference in capacity

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<sup>20</sup>In fact, many preservice teachers object vocally when the occasional Term 2 teacher who is new to the PBL cohort and pedagogy attempts to teach them in a more traditional style.

and disposition by asking them to reconsider the theme of bullying first broached in *Stinky Lunch*. It also invites the preservice teachers to stretch their learning in new ways by weaving this thread with that of gender variance. This potential for preservice teachers to loop back dialectically to prior learning, across contexts, and over time is one of PBL's fundamental strengths.

Case 9 is a special case for many of us that form the PBL instructional team, as its narrative evolved out of our own learning some years ago. While all of our cases build from and satisfy the curricular objectives of UBC's Teacher Education Program, this case is also a direct response to our own lived experiences of not being able to better support a past PBL preservice teacher who identified as transgender.<sup>21</sup> James'<sup>22</sup> experiences both on and off campus highlighted how we lacked sufficient conceptual understandings and classroom strategies to teach for and about those with fluid gender identities and expressions. This preservice teacher's visible and vocal presence in our group also helped us to see how our own case structure framed gender, and the resulting preservice teacher research, in problematic ways. While our cases have long offered preservice teachers an opportunity to explore the ways in which gender does and does not matter to teaching and learning, they had unconsciously assumed and reinforced an understanding of gender as a binary. James' difficult journey through our program,<sup>23</sup> along with our growing awareness of our complicity in it, prompted us to more clearly see the subtle workings of oppression in our case structure, pedagogical choices, and thinking. Around the same time, our team also began to encounter an increasing discussion of gender variance and gender nonconformity in academic literatures and practical classroom resources.<sup>24</sup> We committed to reworking the framing of gender within our cases and thus evolved *Day of Pink*. It opens:

It's the Grade 7 lead up to "The Day of Pink" and everyone in your school is busy preparing for the big event: assemblies are planned, the hallways are plastered with posters, and your class is choreographing an anti-bullying flash mob. At the same time, you've noticed that Jamie's gender non-conformity is increasingly being targeted. When you have intervened,

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<sup>21</sup>The following is a self-description offered by this former preservice teacher as we corresponded throughout the writing of this chapter: "since Teacher Ed, I've been identifying more as gender queer than male. My preferred pronoun is they. I decided to keep the name [removed for privacy] because after being on hormone therapy, I now get read as male and my "feminine" name complicates that (in a good way). Transgender or trans is also still a good word to describe me."

<sup>22</sup>The former preservice teacher's chosen pseudonym.

<sup>23</sup>This successful preservice teacher was one of the brightest, most capable students I have ever had the honor to know. Unfortunately, much of this preservice teacher's energy was directed toward repeated attempts to educate cohort members, instructors, school advisors, and others in the broader school community. An excellent, but problematic, example of Young's (1990) description of exploitation: where social groups with privilege profit from the uncompensated labor of others.

<sup>24</sup>The Gender Spectrum: What Educators Need to Know (Pride Education Network of BC 2011) is a comprehensive, local example produced by Pride Education Network BC (formerly GALE BC). Questions and Answers: Gender Identity in Schools (Public Health Agency of Canada 2010) and Bending the Mold: An Action Kit for Transgender Youth (Lambda Legal and the National Youth Advocacy Coalition 2008) are just two more of many others.



everyone, including Jamie, has said they were “just kidding around.” Still, you can’t help but wonder how well your school’s anti-bullying efforts are succeeding. Is Jamie being bullied? What should you do in response?

From my perspective as a social justice resource person, *Day of Pink* is notable as a PBL case study for a number of reasons. First, as described above, it demonstrates the flexibility of our cohort. We are forever reshaping the cases in response to identified needs. In fact, we have completely rewritten our cases twice in the 8 years that I have been with the program. For me, this flexibility is incredibly exciting. The knowledge that the team will alter cases when good reasons are offered invites ongoing reflection, both on the case groundings and on our own casework with the preservice teachers. How might a phrase be tweaked to better capture imagination, invoke deeper reflection, or shape the likely direction of interest and research? How might we build from preservice teachers’ beliefs and experiences, as expressed through the case issues they identify, to guide them toward perspectives and resources they otherwise might not have considered? The flexibility inherent in our model and realized through the predominantly collegial work of our instructor meetings keeps us learning and the cases alive.

*Day of Pink* is also notable from my perspective as a social justice resource person, because it exemplifies our emphasis on constructing authentic narratives grounded in real but messy contexts. We are constantly asking ourselves what broad concepts currently look like in the everyday lives of schools. When our cases link to the dynamics and events that the preservice teachers see unfolding in their concurrent practicum placements, they immediately understand the case issues as relevant to their careers as teachers. This connection made, it is far easier to engage their curiosity and care. Getting students on board with their own learning is a foundational challenge for any teacher, but especially so for one who is centrally concerned with the difficult and often dismissed task of anti-oppression education.

When it became clear that we needed to develop a new case that would foreground gender variance and bullying, we asked ourselves how they are expressed in schools, both productively and problematically. *Day of Pink* provides a current, complex entry point into these themes. Its narrative centers on the ever-growing annual event of the same name,<sup>25</sup> with real-life origins in the fall of 2007. In a high school in Halifax, a male Grade 9 student was bullied for wearing a pink shirt to school. In response, two Grade 12 students bought 50 pink T-shirts and started a chain of texts asking students to wear pink to school. The texts went viral. A “sea of pink” flooded the school.<sup>26</sup> Since then, Day of Pink has evolved into an international anti-bullying day that celebrates the power of the collective to stop bullying, with particular emphasis on expressions of bullying linked to gender and sexual oppression.

The real-life origin story of *Day of Pink* varies slightly in the different retellings publicly consumable, which makes it an even better grounding for a PBL case.

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<sup>25</sup>The Day of Pink annual event is also known as Pink Shirt Day. See: <http://www.pinkshirtday.ca> and <http://www.dayofpink.org> and <http://www.bctf.ca/DayOfPink/>

<sup>26</sup><http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/story/2007/09/18/pink-tshirts-students.html>

There is discrepancy in reporting as to whether the Grade 9 student who was originally bullied identified as gay,<sup>27</sup> was perceived as gay,<sup>28</sup> or identified as straight but simply failed to perform his gender according to dominant, normalized expectations. Some reports make links to the sexual identity of the Grade 9 student; others do not.<sup>29</sup> Some reports suggest that the bullying took the form of homophobic slurs.<sup>30</sup> Some reports suggest that the two Grade 12 students who organized the pink shirt response identified as straight.<sup>31</sup> For the purposes of our PBL case, the uncertainty of these details is an asset. It begs the preservice teachers to consider what difference these variables might make to how they understand and resolve the case. It invites them to consider the myriad ways in which the matrices of gender and sexuality are, and are not, intertwined.

The wonderful real-life messiness of this case is amplified by its reference to anti-bullying flash mobs. In Vancouver, they have become an increasingly common way for schools to take part in the Day of Pink anti-bullying campaign. In 2011, synchronous with the rising popularity of the musical TV show *GLEE*, two local schools joined forces to perform a flash mob in a local shopping mall.<sup>32</sup> By 2013, many PBL preservice teachers reported that they and their practicum schools were taking part in an ever-expanding range of anti-bullying flash mob events. One such event was a flash mob at a home game of the Western Hockey League's Vancouver Giants, where 17 schools throughout the Lower Mainland performed together and the hockey team wore pink laces to help show their support of the schools' efforts.<sup>33</sup>

Just like the Day of Pink itself, these anti-bullying flash mobs present a productive yet problematic launching point for inquiry. Are the flash mobs and pink T-shirts a bracketed, one-day event? What kind of learning precedes and follows them? Are they part of ongoing efforts across curriculum areas to explore bullying and normalized expectations of gender? Are they a foray into the humanist or multicultural social justice work described above that foregrounds a feel-good celebration of difference, but sidesteps difficult conversations about social inequities and discrimination? Do they open the pointed inquiries of anti-oppression frameworks, considering structural and historical expressions of oppression and privilege as it is lived across multiple contexts and facets of identity? To what extent are flash mobs and pink shirts an integration or extension of district, school, and classroom policies and practices throughout the entire year? As the case text itself begs: why, amid pink shirts, assemblies, and flash mobs, is Jamie's gender nonconformity increasingly being targeted? Because the narrative of the *Day of Pink* is set firmly in the com-

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.dayofpink.org/en/info>; <http://www.bctf.ca/DayOfPink/>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.thegalleryofheroes.com/david-shepherd-and-travis-price/>

<sup>29</sup> <http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20070925006>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/students-give-world-a-lesson-in-courage/article1092569/>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.dayofpink.org/en/info>; <http://www.bctf.ca/DayOfPink/>

<sup>32</sup> To see the performance of David Lloyd George Elementary and Churchill Secondary at Oakridge shopping center, visit: <http://vimeo.com/19310370>.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IT4qzVWGU8w>

plex, messy world of schools, not only are the questions generated powerful, they are also perceived as meaningful by the preservice teachers. This authenticity is precisely the advantage of the PBL case study, both from my perspective as a social justice resource person and, more generally, when considered as a pedagogical approach.

*Day of Pink* is also notable from my perspective as a social justice resource person, because it allows such natural links for learning across subject areas. The sound and movement inherent in flash mobs can provide easy entries for music and physical education curriculum specialists.<sup>34</sup> Social studies might consider how to choose a song or analyze lyrics and other expressions of pop culture. Visual art specialists might pick up on the *Day of Pink* posters that plaster the hallways. The breadth of the case narrative allows each resource person a unique but connected entry point into the case, inviting an increasingly complex and situated consideration of its issues from multiple perspectives. Moreover, it provides good modeling for the preservice teachers, as an interdisciplinary approach is central to good teaching and learning in elementary schools.

This case's natural links across subject areas also can work to counter the unwarranted perception that teaching for social justice presents an additional, onerous burden for teachers in an already packed school curriculum. It suggests that teachers can and should work across the curriculum to achieve multiple course objectives simultaneously. Instead of being seen as curriculum add-ons that teachers might choose to take up or disregard, concerns for social justice can and should be infused into every planning decision. Teaching for social justice is mandated by the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Education (British Columbia Ministry of Education 2008). Moreover, as I argue throughout my year with the preservice teachers, it is the moral responsibility of all good teachers. The interdisciplinarity of *Day of Pink* helps the preservice teachers to attend to the strategic question of how teachers might satisfy their multiple roles and responsibilities in the BC public school system. It also provides yet another opportunity for us to enter into conversation about the (moral) purposes of public schools and the place of social justice education within them.

Finally, *Day of Pink* is notable as a PBL case study from my perspective as a social justice resource person, because of its relationship to the PBL Workshop Series. Offered once a week, this series is built into the PBL case cycle structure as a way to extend the supported learning opportunities available to the preservice teachers. While not all workshops are tied directly to the investigations of the current case, we do often use workshop time to offer enriched, case-specific programming. This programming takes many forms, including: direct instruction designed to build foundational knowledge of a particular academic discipline or framework, visits by specialized guest speakers designed to bring alternate perspectives or experiences into view, field trips designed to take advantage of serendipitous opportuni-

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<sup>34</sup>The idea to include flash mobs in this reworked case stems in part from the multiple flash mob final assignments that have been performed throughout UBC's education building by physical education students in recent years.

ties for learning, and any other programming important to the preservice teachers' professional development that does not fit naturally within the case arc.

*Day of Pink* is an excellent example of the possible synergy between the Workshop Series and the preservice teachers' deepening case investigations, where experts can be brought in from the field to help them gain a better understanding of emerging case issues. During this case, we currently offer a workshop entitled, *Queer and Trans Issues in Education* in partnership with UBC's Positive Space Campaign.<sup>35</sup> We first offered this workshop in James' year. Attendance this first year was not mandatory. Still, we hoped it would help to cultivate an inclusive climate and respectful dialogue within the cohort. We also hoped to offer a space where James might find allies among those who opted to participate. Since then, we have continued to offer the workshop during the *Day of Pink* case cycle as a way to help the preservice teachers unravel the myriad ways that diverse gender and sexual identities and expressions might (and might not) intersect, so that they can better think through how these intersections impact teaching and learning in elementary schools. Given the complexity of the concepts, relationships, and languages involved, the opportunity to extend our discussions beyond our typical, singular 3 hour resource specialist meeting is particularly welcome.

The workshop itself is part practical and part theoretical. It opens with the preservice teachers trying to puzzle through some foundational terminology relevant to gender, sex, and sexuality. In this activity, each small group receives two or three terms, with past examples including: trans, cisgender, women, man, lesbian, gay, homosexual, heterosexual, straight, intersex, and closeted. The groups are then given time to work through four guiding questions: (1) What do these words mean (consider denotations and connotations)? (2) What is their relationship to gender, sex, and sexuality? (3) What is the history of these words? (4) How would you explain these words to your elementary students? While the preservice teachers work through these questions, we post the terms "gender," "sex," and "sexuality" in a triangle on a board at the front of the room. During the debrief, each group places their terms somewhere inside or outside of the triangle to visually display a preliminary understanding of the terms' relationships to gender, sex, and/or sexuality.

This first exercise begins to clarify the ever-evolving meanings of key terms, while still keeping them firmly rooted in world of schools. It works to demystify language and relationships, so that the preservice teachers fear less that they might inadvertently use a term that offends. At the same time, we try to underline that given the complex histories of the terms, and that people's experiences with them are heterogeneous and situated, there is no such thing as safe, universally accepted language. One of the fundamental lessons of this day is that language is continually evolving. Another is that we ought to reflect back to people the language that they choose to describe themselves and represent their identities.

The second half of the workshop turns attention fully to "what would you do?" scenarios, because these very practical explorations are always the central concern of the preservice teachers. In this exercise, each group receives a different scenario.

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<sup>35</sup><http://positivespace.ubc.ca>

We ask the groups to develop a response and supporting rationales and then present them back to the class. The scenarios vary from year to year, depending on the kinds of conversations that have already taken place in the cohort, but always try to present authentic, school-based moments where gender, sex, and/or sexuality emerge problematically. The following four scenarios are the ones we explored in 2013:

**Scenario 1:** Your grade 1 class is talking about their families. One of the students is telling about her two moms and some of the kids start to giggle. How do you respond? Why? How might you work proactively to incorporate strategies that create a safer space for all students?

**Scenario 2:** You live in a small community where news travels. The parent of one of your grade 4 students is in the process of transitioning. How can you support your student?

**Scenario 3:** You are playing a game with your grade 7 students. As you start to put them into teams, they beg to play “boys against girls.” One student calls out: “If we play ‘boys against girls,’ Riley won’t fit on either team!” How do you respond? Why?

**Scenario 4:** You are a teacher who identifies your sexuality and/or gender as “queer.” Should you labor to hide your identity at school? Why? In order to “pass,” what kinds of (extra) work would you have to do? Be specific.

The preservice teachers have indicated that they appreciate this opportunity to “stray from the case” and consider a broader range of how the case issues play out in schools. It shows them that they already have many of the tools they need to respond sensitively, confidently, and effectively. The workshop is also useful, because its investigation of foundational terminology and critical incidents addresses concerns that in past years have come to dominate our class time together. In doing so, the Workshop Series frees up our subsequent meeting time to work through the actual issues of the case.

## Conclusion

As the discussion of *Day of Pink* and *Stinky Lunch* demonstrates, the role of the subject area resource specialist in TELL through PBL is to design learning experiences that spark the preservice teachers’ curiosity about and passion for the curriculum themes that have been embedded in each case. As a resource specialist charged with exploring social justice education, my task is to help them deepen their engagement with the complex and difficult themes of privilege and oppression. I continue to be excited about my work with the TELL through PBL cohort, because it is so well suited to supporting these ends. As this chapter explores, the PBL pedagogy is an excellent vehicle for teaching for social justice, not only because of its complexity, authenticity, and flexibility, but also because of the meaningful, ongoing connections that it enables across curriculum areas and among both preservice teachers and instructors.

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