

Trickle-Up Choral Pedagogy

Trans-Centered Approaches to Supporting All Singers

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Terms & Definitions

(all definitions excerpted from Susan Stryker's Transgender History, 2nd ed, 2017)

AFAB/AMAB: Acronyms for “assigned male at birth” and “assigned female at birth.” These terms point out that when we come into the world, somebody tells us who they think we are. Midwives, ultrasound technicians, obstetricians, parents, family members, and innumerable others look at our bodies and say what they think our bodies mean to them. They determine our sex and assign us a gender. We come into self-awareness and grow up in the context created for us by these meanings and decisions which predate our individual existence. Bodily differences are real, and they set us on different trajectories in life, but what people who use these “assigning” terms are trying to point out is that our bodies and the paths they put us on, however unchosen they were initially, need not determine everything about us. Our assigned categories remain situations within which we can make decisions about ourselves and take meaningful actions to change our paths, including reassigning ourselves.

Dysphoria: Literally a sense of unhappiness (the opposite of *euphoria*, a sense of joy or pleasure) over the incongruence between how one subjectively understands one's experience of gender and how one's gender is perceived by others. Partly in response to transgender activism that contested the pathologization of trans identities, *gender dysphoria* came back into fashion in the twenty-first century as part of an argument for why transgender healthcare should be covered by medical insurance. It suggests that it is the sense of unhappiness that is not healthful and that is susceptible to therapeutic treatment rather than that a transgender person is inherently disordered; similarly, it suggests that the feeling of unhappiness about gender could be transient rather than a defining characteristic of a kind of self.

Gender: Generally speaking, gender is considered to be cultural, and sex, biological. Gender is the social organization of bodies into different kinds of people. In the contemporary United States, this sorting into categories is based on sex, but historically and cross-culturally there have been many different social systems of organizing people into genders.

Gender-nonconforming, genderqueer, and nonbinary: These terms all refer to people who do not conform to binary notions of the alignment of sex, gender, gender identity, gender role, gender expression, or gender presentation.

Sex: The messiness of sex has to do with our cultural beliefs about what biological differences of reproductive capacity mean. It's a cultural belief, not a biological fact, that having a certain kind of reproductive capacity necessarily determines what the rest of your body is like or what kind of person you are, or that some of these biological differences can't change over time, or that biological differences should be used as a principle for sorting people into social categories or that these categories should be ordered in a hierarchical way.

Transgender/Cisgender: Transgender entered widespread use in the 1990s, although the word has a long history that stretches back to the mid-1960s and has meant many contradictory things at different times. When the word broke out into wider use in the early 1990s, however, it was used to encompass any and all kinds of variation from gender norms and expectations, similar to what genderqueer, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary mean now.

Queer: In the late 1980s and early 1990s, at the height of the AIDS crisis, some people reclaimed the word queer, which had been a derogatory term for homosexuality, and started using it in a positive way. Although it's now often used as a synonym for gay or lesbian, the people who first reappropriated the term were trying to find a way to talk about their opposition to heterosexist social norms, queer was less a sexual orientation than it was a political one, what the “queer theorists” of the day called being “antiheteronormative.” Queer is usually still associated with sexuality, and with gay and lesbian communities, but from the beginning a vocal minority insisted on the importance of transgender and gender-nonconforming practices for queer politics. Many trans people involved in queer cultural politics took to calling themselves “genderqueers.”

Trans-Centered Considerations

PROGRAMMING CONTENT

- » Does my repertoire about romance leave room for a variety of romantic experiences, or is it restricted to love between men and women?
- » When describing gendered experiences, does my repertoire describe a diversity of gender expressions, or does it describe only one (usually the dominant one?)

PROGRAMMING REPRESENTATION

- » Are the works that I program predominantly by people of only one gender?
- » What experiences or perspectives are missing from my programming (either on a specific concert, or in my programming in general?)

ENSEMBLE NAMES

- » What is the most accurate way to describe the intended or actual membership of my choir?

CONCERT ATTIRE

- » What concert attire can I wear that is both aesthetically-appropriate, as well as affirming and accessible for all people?

Additional Resources

TRANSITIONING VOICES

Valverde, Mari Esabel, "[Expanding the Definitions of 'Woman'](#)" For the Transgender Voices Festival organized by One Voice Mixed Chorus, 2018.

Vastine, Wendy, "[The Heights and Depths of Vocal Liberation.](#)" For the Transgender Voices Festival organized by One Voice Mixed Chorus, 2018.

PROGRAMMING DIVERSITY

Cor Flammae, "[LGBTQ+ Composer Database.](#)" corflammae.com/composers

Orange County Women's Chorus, "[Choral Music by Women Composers Database.](#)" ocwomenschorus.org/women-composers

Institute for Composer Diversity. "[Composer Diversity Database](#)" composerdiversity.com/composer-diversity-database

Yelton Rhodes Music. [yrmusic.com](#) (Catalog > Search > Topic > "LGB Specific")

CREATING AFFIRMING CHORAL CULTURES

Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), "School Climate Survey," 2017.

National Center for Transgender Equality, "[Supporting the Transgender People in Your Life: A Guide to Being a Good Ally](#)" 2016.

Nicolazzo, Z. "Imagining a Trans* Epistemology." *Urban Education*, August 2017, 1-26.

The Trevor Project. "[A Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Youth.](#)"

Wentling, Tre. "Trans* Disruptions: Pedagogical Practices and Pronoun Recognition." *Trans Studies Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (August 2015): 469-476.

LGBTQ+ HISTORY & CULTURE

Nicolazzo, Z. "Imagining a Trans* Epistemology." *Urban Education*, August 2017, 1-26.

Stryker, Susan, "Transgender History: Roots of Today's Revolution" Seal Press. Revised Edition, 2017.

Sylvia Rivera Law Project. [srlp.org](#)

Tolbert, TC and Trace Peterson, eds. "Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics." *Nightboat Books*. 2013.

Jackson Wright Schultz. "Trans/Portraits: Voices from Transgender Communities," Dartmouth College Press, 2015.