When deciding where to teach, Sarah Stitzlein chose the University of New Hampshire, but not for some of the reasons one might think. She chose UNH because it was the least diverse campus out of all of them. “I wanted to teach at a university where I would have the biggest impact,” she says.

Stitzlein, assistant professor of education, a core faculty member in Women’s Studies, and a fellow in the Carsey Institute, teaches students about how racism and sexism play a prominent role in today’s classrooms.

Her award-winning book, *Breaking Bad Habits of Race and Gender: Transforming Identity in Schools*, was the first to include both theoretical and concrete suggestions for dealing with gender and race biases in the classroom.

Stitzlein encourages both her students and teachers to have more direct and open conversations about how race and gender work in society and how they affect the lives of all students. “I don’t want a student to say, ‘I don’t care if people are black, white, purple, or polka-dotted—I’m color-blind.’ I want students to recognize differences and talk about them.”

She admits she had to learn through her own experience. Raised in the Midwest on a hog and cattle farm—her first car was her uncle’s Chevy Camaro—she did not engage with people of color until she went to college at Miami University in Ohio. And there, Stitzlein also noted the stark contrast between wealthy students and students who came from families who were just trying to make ends meet.

“I encourage teachers to make children uncomfortable with their racial positions, especially white students who live rather privileged lives.” She also recommends that teachers help students reflect on themselves in ways that can make their habits of race and gender more flexible.

“Simply put, Sarah is an excellent teacher by any measure we use,” says Professor of Education Todd DeMitchell. And, he adds, it is rare to see an assistant professor with such a rich scholarly record.

“I love teaching,” she says. “There’s not a day I drag myself into the classroom. And I want my students to feel the same way.” And a vast majority of her students do. Their evaluations use superlatives and many note Stitzlein’s class is the very best they’ve taken at UNH.

—Kim Billings